

2024-25

# Annual Report



01

# a word from the president

As you read this Annual Report, you will see that this has been an extraordinarily busy year for the National Farmers Foundation (NFF). Thanks to the donations we've received from organizations and individuals across the country we have successfully engaged in research, education and projects geared to enhance the practice of food sovereignty in Canada. Over the past year, we have focused on:

- Building a database on alternative land tenure models in Canada;
- Conducting legal research to better equip ourselves to accept land donations;
- Collaborating with the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts to organize the InSOILdarity Webinar Series that successfully explored the transformative potential of community owned farmland;
- Learning how communities in other countries are building alternative land tenure systems; and,
- Working with the National Farmers Union (NFU) on The World We Want, the NFU Youth Retreat and food sovereignty campaigns in BC and Nova Scotia.

Importantly, this year we submitted an application to the Charities Directorate of Canada to alter our charitable purposes so that we can more easily reach our goal of accepting land donations. Our goal is to preserve farmland by making it accessible for future generations through alternative agricultural land tenure systems. By working with organizations and groups across the country, our access to farmland program will prioritize the protection of land, water and climate through the use of agroecological practices to provide fresh, healthy food for local communities, and build resilient regional food systems. This is what food sovereignty is all about.

I invite you to read our Annual Report that explains in detail what we have accomplished as a result of the generosity of various organizations and individuals across the country. My hope is that this Annual Report will prompt you to donate to the NFF again this year.

In solidarity,

Annette Desmarais

# vision mission

02



## **Vision**

The NFF supports the promotion, creation and enhancement of food systems based on the principles of food sovereignty: sustainability, equity, and justice.

The National Farmers Foundation (NFF) officially incorporated in 1987 and became a registered charity in 1996. The NFF's charitable purpose is to organize and implement programs of education and research concerning the development of rural Canada and to direct these programs toward both rural and urban populations.

## **Mission**

The NFF, an independent, farmer-led, charitable organization, works to: identify and mobilize land and other resources to support and engage in research, education, and projects that advance the principles of food sovereignty, agroecology, and social, economic and environmental justice for food producers and provisioners, workers, and rural communities in Canada.

# 03

# values



The NFF strives to integrate and reflect the following values in our work and organizational practices:

#### **COLLABORATION and COOPERATION:**

We create greater impact by seeking common interests and using collaborative and cooperative strategies within our organization and among the organizations with which we work. We collaborate closely with organizations with whom our values and mission are aligned, for example, the National Farmers Union.

#### **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE:**

We advance social and economic justice in our work. We reject the corporate control and exploitation of our food systems.

#### **DECOLONIZATION and RECONCILIATION:**

We are committed to partnering with and decolonizing our relationships with Indigenous communities as the original stewards of the land.

#### **SUSTAINABILITY AND CONNECTION TO NATURE:**

We support food systems that value the contributions of nature through both agro-ecological production and provisioning methods that protect and enhance ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as improve resilience and adaptation, especially in the face of the climate crisis.

#### **RESPECT and EQUITY:**

We value and respect the identities, experiences, and rights of those who have traditionally been marginalized and excluded from our food systems, including small scale family farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolk, forest dwellers, Black, Indigenous, people of colour and their communities, and agricultural and fisheries workers who cultivate, grow, harvest and process food. We reject colonial, racist, and patriarchal policies that have sought to undervalue, divide, discriminate against, and eliminate them.

# our team



## Annette Desmarais President

Annette Aurélie Desmarais was the Canada Research Chair in Human Rights, Social Justice and Food Sovereignty from 2013 to 2023 at the University of Manitoba and is now a Professor Emerita. She is the author of *La Vía Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants* (Fernwood Publishing, 2007), co-editor of three books on food sovereignty, and editor of *Frontline Farmers: How the National Farmers Union Resists Agribusiness and Creates our New Food Future* (Fernwood Publishing, 2019). Prior to obtaining her doctorate in geography, Annette was a small-scale cattle and grain farmer in Canada and she also worked with La Via Campesina for over a decade.

## Wyanne Sandler Treasurer

Wyanne is a family farm member and board member of the National Farmers Union in Nova Scotia (Mi'kma'ki). She brings to her role skills and experience in non-profit management together with a passion for farming, food sovereignty, and social, ecological, and climate justice. Wyanne grew up on a small mixed farm in Prince Edward Island, and has worked with farmers throughout her life, first in PEI, then in Guatemala, and finally in Nova Scotia, where she now lives on a small homestead with her partner (a beekeeper) and their two young children. Locally, she is involved in organizing on food security, economic justice, as well as supporting migrant and climate justice initiatives.



## Katie Ward Secretary

Katie Ward is a 9th generation family farmer from West Carleton-March, northwest of Ottawa. Along with her husband, Mathieu-Andre Chiasson, she raises sheep, pigs, and chickens on pasture which she direct markets to farmer's markets and restaurants. She also grows hay, wheat, oats, barley, and vegetables. In the past, Katie also served as elected president of the National Farmers Union.



# 05



## **Jamie Baxter** Director

Jamie Baxter is an Associate Professor at the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University in Halifax, where he works on legal issues related to land, food, agriculture and local government. Jamie first pursued his graduate studies in economics, focusing on rural and community development, and was a visiting Fulbright Scholar at the Appalachian Center, University of Kentucky. He went on to study law at the University of Toronto, clerked at the Federal Court of Canada and completed his doctorate in law at Yale. Jamie's research group works closely with community organizations, most recently on projects about collaborative urban-regional food systems governance, shellfish and sea plant farming, and farmland tenure transitions.

## **Dianne Dowling** Director

Dianne Dowling grew up on a mixed farm north of Toronto and has lived for almost 50 years on a farm east of Kingston, Ontario. She was an elementary school teacher for 32 years and has been active in food and farm organizations in the area since her retirement from teaching in 2008. She served as a director, vice-president and president of her National Farmers Union local, and as member and chair of the Food Policy Council for Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox-Addington; she was a founder and continues as a board member of the Kingston Area Seed System Initiative, an organization that supports regional seed-saving. She is a member of the National Farmers Union national farmland committee and has co-chaired several regional and national NFU conventions. She is proud that two of her children have established their own farm businesses on the farmland she and her husband owned.



## **Kirstin Pulles** Director

Kirstin is a community organizer and researcher focusing on climate justice, housing and transportation and holds a master's degree in Community Engagement, Social Change, and Equity from the University of British Columbia, centered on community-based and participatory research methods. Kirstin recently served as the Farmland Committee Organizer for the National Farmers Union (NFU) in British Columbia and is aspiring to own farmland in the near future.



## **Yuill Herbert Director**

Yuill is an internationally recognized expert in climate mitigation and adaptation with two decades of experience. Yuill is an active participant in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change processes, has led model development for the International Energy Agency, and was a fellow of Project Drawdown. Yuill serves as a director on the boards of the Canada Research Chair on Sustainable Community Development, the Canadian Worker Cooperative Federation, and Tatamagouche Community Land Trust, where he lives at Waldergrave Farm.

## **Stewart Wells Director**

After receiving a degree in Agricultural Engineering in 1976, Stewart returned to the family farm near Swift Current, Saskatchewan (located in Treaty 4 Territory) where he farms with his partner Terry Toews. Over the years, Stewart has been elected by farmers to serve in various positions including: a Delegate to Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the President of the National Farmers Union of Canada, a Board Member of the Canadian Wheat Board, and a Board Member of the Western Grains Research Foundation. Other connections have included Advisor to the Board of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, working with farmers in the UK and Mexico, and participating as part of the official Canadian delegation to the 2005 World Trade Talks in Hong Kong.



## **Glen Koroluk Coordinator**

Glen Koroluk has spent most of his career in the non-profit and charitable sectors as a community organizer, coordinator and executive director working on issues such as inner city housing, food sovereignty, community development, and environmental sustainability. He is the former executive director of the Manitoba Eco-Network and in the past was with the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition, Resource Conservation Manitoba and the Daniel McIntyre / St. Matthews Community Association. He holds a BSc. degree from the University of Winnipeg that focused on geography, climatology and statistics.

# 07

# our strategic directions

## **1. Continue to build and sustain financial and human resources**

After hiring our first ever staff person in January 2022, we are able to maintain a Coordinator for a fourth consecutive year, moving into the 2025/26 fiscal year.

We amended our governing by-law to increase the size of our Board from seven members to eight members.

We continued to diversify our income by obtaining funding to conduct research on the following three projects: Alternative agricultural land tenure systems (ALTS), legal research to amend charitable purposes and activities, and building a comprehensive ALTS database.

Over the course of the year, we hired three students to help us on our legal research and database project. (Thank you, Philip Taiwo, Tyler Kinahan, Madeleine Fournier)

## **2. Build relationships and strengthen engagement with key partners, including the National Farmers Union (NFU) and allied organizations**

### Treaty Land Sharing Network

We are honoured to be a partner organization of the Treaty Land Sharing Network (TLSN) which recognizes and respects the Inherent and Treaty rights of First Nations and Métis people to practice their way of life throughout their territory. The TLSN connects farmers and other landholders in Alberta and Saskatchewan with First Nations and Métis people needing safe access to land.

This past year, TLSN formally launched the creation of an Indigenous Advisory Committee that will provide guidance in developing land sharing protocols. TLSN was also successful in obtaining federal status as a non-profit corporation.

## The World We Want

The World We Want (TWWW) project fund is a partnership of the National Farmers Foundation (NFF) and National Farmers Union (NFU). TWWW is designed to build capacity for community organizing and engagement to support farmer-centered farm and food systems that advance food sovereignty and rural development. Its main purpose is to strengthen regional activities of the NFU while also supporting national priorities.

Since its inception three years ago, TWWW has raised nearly \$100,000. These resources are funding activities that support research, education, communication/outreach, and policy advocacy. Money raised in the past year supported the following:

- NFU-Ontario's access to farmland program,
- Manitoba's Choice of Voice campaign,
- An NFU organizer in Saskatchewan,
- Depth of Field film outings,
- The emergence of a food sovereignty campaign in BC, and
- Funding to all three national caucuses of the NFU.

## Nova Scotia Food Sovereignty Project

The NFF is in its third year of partnership supporting the Nova Scotia Food Sovereignty Project that funded a NFU organizer in Region 1, District 3. Activities included the continuation of half-day agroecology exchanges, Depth of Field film screenings, and community outreach and relationship building with like-minded organizations. The project enabled the registration of NFU-Nova Scotia as a society in the province and it is working towards certification as a Farm Business Organization.

# 09

## NFU Youth

The NFF provided funding and grant writing assistance to support the Youth Caucus in organizing their annual retreat in November 2024. These youth gatherings are spaces for young farmers to become re-inspired, re-connected, and empowered to continue efforts to engage in agroecology, build food sovereignty, and strengthen the collective work of the youth farmer movement across Canada. The retreat, held in Saskatchewan on Treaty 6 land, focused on strategic planning, agroecological education, social connections, and hands-on experiences with story telling.

## BC Food Sovereignty Campaign

Highlights of the campaign included an Eat Think Vote all candidates meeting to uplift policy issues related to sustainable food systems and food sovereignty; NFU participation in the Premier of B.C.'s Task Force on Agriculture and Food Economy; and, co-hosting a policy jam event with Young Agrarians. The project has been successful in relationship-building with allied organizations, facilitating more connection and cooperation amongst those allies, building awareness amongst the public and policy makers about food sovereignty issues, and especially those related to farmland access, control, and stewardship.

## Advancing Succession Planning Land Access Solutions in Ontario

We continued our partnership with NFU-Ontario, who are working with new, young, and equity-deserving farmers to ensure they have resources, networking opportunities, and the support needed to access farmland. This work involved hosting a series of regional events (webinars, panels, field days, meet-ups) and facilitating strong community connections. The project also advanced policy change to ensure that these prospective farmers can be successful in their agricultural careers. As a policy directive, Rooting For Tomorrow, An Equitable Land Access Policy Framework for Ontario's Next-Generation Farmers, was developed through the support of the Ontario Land Access Coalition.

Many retiring farmers care deeply about keeping farmland in agricultural production and out of the hands of developers. Meanwhile, the barriers to transitioning their land to a new generation of farmers are numerous, and relationship building between the generations takes time. Current farmers need support to explore non-family succession planning models while new, young and equity-deserving farmers need support in building these relationships.

## InSOILdarity Webinar Series

InSOILdarity is an ongoing webinar series digging deeply into the transformative power of community-owned farmlands. A collaboration between the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts and the NFF, the series invites changemakers to present both innovative and time-tested land tenure models that prioritize community-based stewardship, equitable access, and long-term sustainability.

**All Our Relations Land Trust** is an Indigenous-led charitable organization located in Katarokwi within Dish with One Spoon wampum territory, and on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat. This webinar emphasized goals to promote biodiversity, Indigenous food sovereignty and strengthening connections with the land.

What happens when you combine the strengths of the cooperative and community land trust models? Legal experts Jamie Baxter and Anna Giddy explained their recent work in supporting the legal development of a hybrid **Community Land Trust-Cooperative** farmland project in Nova Scotia.

**Protec-Terre** is an organization whose mission is to “preserve the environment and living spaces by supporting communities in the creation of agroecological social benefit trusts” (Translated from Protec-Terre’s website). These trusts in Quebec are known as “fiducies d’utilité sociale agroécologiques” (FUSA). Hubert Lavallee, Executive Director of Protec-Terre, provided an overview into this unique Quebec model and introduced best practices that can be used in many places across Canada.

While **Community Land Trusts** in Canada have primarily been utilized for urban residential land and housing, the growing crises in farmland affordability, access, transition, succession, and land justice call for new approaches to land tenure. Madeleine Fournier, who is obtaining her Masters degree, provided an overview of community land trust models across Canada and how they can be adapted for agriculture, rural communities, and food production, offering a sustainable, community-centered alternative to traditional farmland ownership.

### **3. Increase the internal capacity of the NFF through the development of relevant policies and procedures**

We did a lot of internal work this year! We successfully:

- developed a new three-year NFF Strategic Plan for 2025 to 2027,
- initiated a Fundraising Strategy to increase and broaden our donor/supporter base,
- updated our Gift Acceptance Policy to ensure that our values and mission are not compromised when accepting donations, and
- applied to the Canada Revenue Agency to amend our charitable purpose and activities to ensure transparency when accepting land donations.

Additionally, we are developing a policy that supports decolonization, reconciliation and Indigenous Sovereignty. We are also updating and are near completion of a new MOU with the NFU that will reflect changes in charitable law and enhance partnership opportunities.

### **4. Raise our public profile through communications, advocacy and outreach**

We worked with the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts (CNCLT) and developed a webinar series on rural community land trusts and other alternative agricultural land tenure systems. We also participate on the CNCLT's Agricultural Community Land Trust Working Group, a member-led discussion space focused on agricultural and rural community land trusts.

We supported two local groups (Crows Commons Cooperative in Nova Scotia and Stratford Affordable Housing Alliance in Ontario) in their campaigns to advance the rural-agricultural Community Land Trust models.

In partnership with NFU, we held a Legacy Giving webinar as a first step to expand our knowledge and develop tools necessary to advance charitable bequests.

We participate in the NFU Farmland Policy Action Committee and the Ontario Land Access Coalition, led by the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario and NFU-Ontario.

## 5. Develop research and education programs/projects that align with our mission, vision and purpose

This year we continued the following three major research projects – all related to developing our capacity to help build alternative land tenure systems in Canada.

### Alternative Agriculture Land Tenure Systems (ALTS) Research

This project investigates what lessons we can learn from the experiences of alternative land tenure models in the United States, France and some that have been established here in Canada. The research will help us to determine the potential for us and other regional and national organizations to foster and support farmland tenure transitions in Canada.

### Legal Research to Amend the NFF's Charitable Purpose and Activities

This research is geared towards building our understanding of the feasibility of charities to accept and manage land donations and making those lands accessible to small-scale farmers interested in practicing socially-just and ecologically sustainable agriculture. By investigating the legal opportunities and barriers while also engaging with the Charities Directorate of Canada, we hope to set a precedent for Canadian charities seeking farmland tenure transformation. Our application to the Charities Directorate this past year to amend our charitable purpose is ongoing.

### Developing a Comprehensive Canadian Database on Alternative Land Tenure Systems (ALTS)

We are compiling and documenting publicly available data to build a national database of ALTS that will be hosted on our website. We have also started the second stage of the research that involves interviewing participants involved in ALTS to learn more about the goals, motivations, experiences and challenges of establishing and operating an alternative land tenure system in various places in Canada. A report on these interviews will accompany the database and be available on our website.

## 6. Broaden activities to include land protection and stewardship to support/implement food sovereignty

We are actively seeking donations of land and are currently engaging with farmers seeking a transition of farmland that supports food sovereignty, agroecological farming and bringing in a new generation of farmers. The Board remains committed to strengthening its relationships within and beyond the NFU to support access to charitable resources that further our collective work. We view any role for the NFF related to farmland tenure and access as complimentary to and mutually reinforcing with our well-established pursuits and goals. The Board is full of energy and excitement about the opportunities to grow our impact through this new direction.

# Our Supporters



thank you

We are deeply grateful to you!

All that we have accomplished this year was made possible because of the generosity of our donors. Your donations are an investment in the future of the progressive farm movement, and every gift we receive helps to strengthen the voice of farmers across the country by supporting policy research, communication and education, and advocacy.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the following organizations that have supported our work over the past year:

Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Uplands Foundation, Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, Richard Eppler Fund / Austin Community Foundation, Canadian Bar Association - Law For the Future Fund, Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada, Nancy Bradshaw and Robert Brown Fund, Endswell Foundation, Common Ground Network.

We are also deeply grateful to all of you who donated to the NFF this year. You are making it possible for us to continue working to build food sovereignty.

In addition, we would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation for those individuals who donated +\$1000:

Stewart Wells & Terry Toews, Michael Gertler, NFU Property Consortium Inc., Annette Desmarais, Manuel & Cheryl Buchwald, Anonymous, Ron Watson, Laura Hoimyr, Nettie Wiebe, Victoria Odebkoff, Sepideh Rezania, Marilee Iverson, Jim Handy.

# 14 financial statements

|                  | 2024       | 2025       |
|------------------|------------|------------|
| GRANT REVENUE    | \$117,168  | \$157,499  |
| DONATION REVENUE | \$43,063   | \$39,258   |
| OTHER INCOME     | \$3,371    | \$2,741    |
| TOTAL            | \$163,602  | \$199,498  |
| PROJECT EXPENSES | \$134,180  | \$155,048  |
| SALARIES         | \$37,059   | \$47,211   |
| INSURANCE/AUDIT  | \$5,274    | \$8,910    |
| OTHER            | \$3,789    | \$3,519    |
| TOTAL            | \$180,282  | \$214,688  |
| PROFIT/LOSS      | (\$16,680) | (\$15,190) |

# contact us

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## How to donate?

The National Farmers Foundation is a Registered Canadian Charity (# 882622368 RR0001) and official tax receipts are issued for all contributions of \$20.00 or more. If you are in a position to give, please consider making an online (one-time or monthly) donation at:

[www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/national-farmers-foundation/.](http://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/national-farmers-foundation/)

(When prompted select General Fund)

You can also donate by cheque or e-transfer. In addition, the NFF gratefully accepts charitable bequests (instructions in a will leaving either a percentage of one's estate or a stated dollar amount).

Cheques can be sent to:

National Farmers Foundation 2717 Wentz Ave, Saskatoon SK S7K 4B6

E-transfers can be sent to our Affinity Credit Union account in Saskatoon:

[donate@nationalfarmersfoundation.ca](mailto:donate@nationalfarmersfoundation.ca)