



## **From the City to the Farm**

*Philippe Gervais, Region 1 Youth President  
Spring 2017*

Starting a career in agriculture is difficult but as a first generation farmer, the challenge is even greater. That is the reality I am facing. It is not a way of life that I know and knowing what to do is not always obvious. When you do not know where to look, who to approach, the different types of productions happening in the region, it can be intimidating.

Two years after I started farming, I realize that there are many opportunities and I would like everyone to know because we have an urgent need for agricultural succession in Canada, particularly in the Maritimes. The ability to be aware of the opportunities that are present in agriculture is almost entirely related to the people we meet. The reality is that, "It's all about who you know!" I believe it is important to share some of the organizations and groups that have helped me build my network and ideals so far in the hope that they can help those who are thinking about a future in agriculture.

### **World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farm (WWOOF)**

It all started with WWOOF on a trip to British Columbia. WWOOF is an excellent tool and network for learning about the lifestyle of agriculture if you are not sure that you want to be completely involved. For me, it was obvious that after this experience I wanted to work on a farm.

### **Stewards of Irreplaceable Land (S.O.I.L.)**

With little experience, it can be difficult to find the perfect employer that makes available a paid learning experience. So I used the Stewards of Irreplaceable Land program (S.O.I.L.), which allowed me to make an agreement with my first mentor.

### **Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN)**

When I returned to Atlantic Canada, I started attending events organized by ACORN. It was at one of their events that I met my second mentor who was a guest speaker. After listening to his presentations, I only had to take the bull by the horns and ask him if he had all his workers for the next season. The answer was no and he hired me. It is absolutely important to approach these potential employers who possess a wealth of know-how and who are real leaders in our farming communities. It is preferable if you can ask them in person if a learning / hiring experience is possible with them.

### **The National Farmers Union (NFU)**

Afterwards, I wanted to engage politically and find a way to bring together and mobilize the new and not so new farmers of the Maritimes. It was at this point that I joined the NFU as the youth president for the Maritimes. This official representation allowed me to travel and meet other young farmers across Canada. To observe the presence of this beautiful energy that exists



National Farmers Union - NB  
Union nationale des fermiers - N.-B.



info@nfunb.org  
nfunb.org  
(506) 260-0087

all over the country has done me the greatest good. There is hope and things are changing little by little. We are not alone.

### **Farm Apprentice and Worker Network (FAWN)**

There are many others, but I will finish this text by speaking of FAWN. It is a network that most of you will not know but that is, in my opinion, paramount. The purpose of this network is to bring together farm workers and apprentices of the Maritimes once a month on a different farm while creating a space where a farmer can share his or her know-how for a few hours in exchange for a volunteer work bee. The whole is crowned with a farmer Pot Luck and time to socialize and relativize the experience of each other on their farm. If you are not part of this network, as a farmer, worker, apprentice, future apprentice, join today! The network will work with Young Agrarians in the coming months. Stay tuned!

Strong Communities. Sound Policies. Sustainable Farms.

Des communautés solidaires et des politiques sensées pour une agriculture durable.