

ECOLOGICAL FARMERS OF ONTARIO- ANNUAL REPORT 2013

MEMBERSHIP

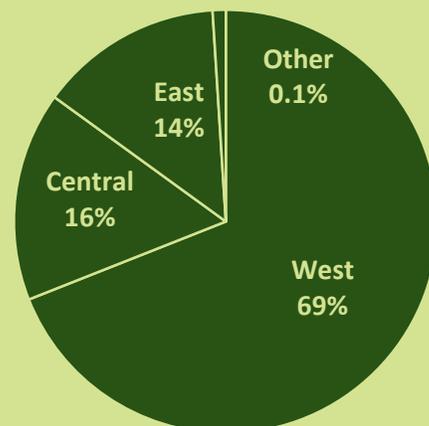
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MEMBERSHIPS ACROSS
ONTARIO

↑ 19%
MEMBERSHIP INCREASE

Active membership across the province increased by 19% over last year. The majority of new memberships were purchased by individuals eager to take advantage of discounted pricing on courses and workshops. Access to the print newsletter is also a draw for new and returning members.

Membership continues to be skewed to the West Region. Efforts to increase membership in all regions involves connecting with local farmers and organizations to offer practical and relevant programming and support.

REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION



Ecological Farmers
OF ONTARIO

2013 PROVINCIAL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DAVE SMITH

President, East Region

GREGORY HILL

Vice President, East Region

HUGH MARTIN

Treasurer, West Region

ANGIE KOCH

Secretary, West Region

BOB GARTHSON

Central Region- Outgoing

ALLISON MUCKLE

North Region

ROGER RIVEST

West Region

KARL SCHIBLI

West Region- Outgoing

TOM WALLER

East Region

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EFAO has been offering farmer-to-farmer training and support for nearly 35 years. This year, we held over 40 events that brought together hundreds of individuals. We redesigned our website and added more functionality to meet the needs of an expanding membership. We have enhanced our communications efforts, reaching new audiences and covering more topics. We launched a joint project with the West End Food Cooperative to explore opportunities and challenges for building positive relationships between small-scale retailers and producers. All of this has been made possible by our hardworking staff and a number of engaged volunteers.

Many of our events of the past year were supplemented by foundation grants. We wrapped up a partnership grant with FarmStart from the Trillium Foundation and completed the first year of a two-year grant from the Metcalf Foundation in partnership with the West End Food Cooperative. These grants have allowed us to subsidize many of our courses, workshops, and operating expenses. As these grants come to a close we will be exploring new, diverse ways to keep our organization sustainable.

This includes developing pricing structures for courses, workshops, and advisory services that are fully cost recoverable. We aim to pair this with more scholarship options to keep our programs accessible.

Our membership has increased this past year, likely as a result of our expanded workshop offerings. Many of the participants were new to the EFAO and are eager to attend more events. Our challenge going forward is to retain these new members, encourage more members to get involved by hosting and attending farm tours, kitchen table meetings and sharing their perspective in the newsletter. We also need new leaders to step forward who are willing to join our regional or topical committees, to take up positions on the board of directors and educate their fellow farmers to get involved in the EFAO. This organization thrives on active members and we need to see more of the over 500 members getting involved.

Overall, this past year has been one of successes. The EFAO is thriving and meeting the needs of a growing community of ecological farmers. There are so many possibilities for providing ecological farmers with the knowledge and support they need. I am excited to see where this coming year will lead us.

-Shauna Bloom, EFAO Executive Director

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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WORKSHOPS AND SPEAKERS

FACILITATOR TRAINING

- 2 Essentials webinar training sessions
- 1 Training for composting workshop
- Trained 1 new Essentials Facilitator in the East Region

FARM TOURS

- Go East Bus Tour included 10 individual farm tours over 3 days
- Manitoulin Tour included community abbatoir tour and farm tour
- 2 Regional tours coordinated by the West Committee
- 1 Seed saving tour in partnership with the Bauta Family Initiative for Canadian Seed Security
- Total of 15 tours throughout the season

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Social potluck on GO East Bus Tour
- 4 Scholarships offered to encourage young people to participate
- Reconnecting with EFAO founding members on Manitoulin Island

SPECIAL TRAINING EVENTS

- 2 hands-on *Poultry Processing Events*, 30 attendees
- EFAO Staff participating in 2 *Bring Food Home* sessions
- 2 Free Panel Discussions on *Developing the Producer-Retailer Relationship*, 35 attendees
- 1 Town Hall Meeting as partnership event, *Moving Beyond Sustainability in Agriculture; Why Regenerative Agriculture?* 110 attendees

These events were supported by enthusiastic volunteers and partner organizations. Offering practical and appropriate training and education opportunities requires the continued support of valued partners and members. Many of these sessions have sparked conversation within the EFAO community and will continue to influence program choices in the coming year.

- 7 Workshops at the Guelph Organic Conference
- 211 Attendees at GOC workshops
- Workshops earned \$10,400 in revenue
- 5 Events in partnership with other organizations

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Featuring authors Richard Wiswall, Jean-Martin Fortier, and Michael Phillips, and hands-on workshops like *Working with your Butcher*.
- Partnering with CherryVale Farm, Farms at Work, Eco Farm Day and the Central Ag Conference

KITCHEN TABLE MEETINGS

- 8 KTMs, all initiated by staff, most were attended by EFAO staff

COURSES

- 2 Essentials of Ecological Agriculture courses, 1 in Toronto, 1 in Kingston
- 30 Participants, most became new members

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE TOWN HALL : Generating Enthusiasm and Support for EFAO

In partnership with members and other organizations EFAO presented a panel, featuring *Darren Doherty* (Heenan Doherty), *Mark Shepard* (New Forest Farm and Restoration Agriculture Inc) and *Tony Weis* (University of Western Ontario). EFAO supported the event by creating and distributing promotional materials, taking online registration and collecting donations.

Response for this event was enthusiastic with 75 people registering online and 110 people in attendance. Many found out about the event through the EFAO e-News. As a fundraising effort the event raised \$1130, a portion of which will be designated to provide scholarships to new farmers seeking education and training in ecological farming. A recorded version of the session will also be made available through EFAO by donation.

TOTAL # OF ATTENDEES AT TRAINING EVENTS IN 2013

[970]

211 PEOPLE

attended EFAO workshops at the 32nd Guelph Organic Conference

205 PEOPLE

attended EFAO farm tours, including the Go East Bus Tour which was made up of 10 individual tours

79 PEOPLE

attended Kitchen Table Meetings

2013 EFAO

STAFF

SHAUNA BLOOM

Executive Director

ALI ENGLISH

Programs Manager- On Mat Leave

REBECCA HODGES

Training and Resources Coordinator

EMILY HANSEN

Metcalf Sustainability Intern

FIONA CAMPBELL

Production Editor

CHERIE BAUMAN

Administrative Manager

KAREN MAITLAND

Membership Services Coordinator- Retired

Big thank you to Karen Maitland for 8 years as Membership Services Coordinator and EFAO caretaker!

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

This has been an exciting year for finding new and engaging ways to communicate with members.

Facebook provides a free and accessible forum to connect with members and supporters. Benefits include: driving traffic to the website, widespread event promotion, ability to post and share news from other farm-minded organizations (FarmStart, COG, Rodale) and providing posts of interest about food, farming and farm life. With an active Twitter account we are also able to promote events, share relevant information and highlight our partnerships with organizations across Canada. The EFAO Facebook page currently has 1,117 “likes” and the Twitter feed is followed by 242 people.

The newsletter continues to be of value to members and serves to promote the value of membership with potential supporters. We’ve received positive feedback from members on the cross-section of articles published and the mix of writing style and tone, from the technical to the personal. The last issue (Nov-Dec 2013) had 13 ads, which is the maximum we can accommodate in a 20-page format. Rebecca and Emily have done a tremendous job to enlist event and program attendees to write summaries for the newsletter, which makes up the bulk of our Regional Reports. Some summaries will be republished on the EFAO blog, providing another promotional tool as well as program/event archive.

Launched in September 2013 the new efao.ca now facilitates online registration for workshops, membership renewal and all payments while allowing staff to share up-to-date information with members and supporters.

Since launching the website has received an average of 287 visitors per week. Now that we are entering the busy event and membership renewal season the website will drastically decrease staff time devoted to registration and management of the membership database.

EFAO continues to circulate a monthly e-News events bulletin which has grown significantly this year now reaching 810 inboxes across the province. We are also able to circulate special event announcements, make calls for volunteers and encourage ongoing engagement with the organization. Joining the e-News mailing list is a free and simple process providing potential members with an accessible introduction to the activities of EFAO. We would like to see this list continue to grow at a steady rate throughout the next year.

ACTIVE COMMITTEES

The **West Committee** met regularly this year and planned three summer farm tours. Thank you to Committee Chair *Tony McQuail* who will step down after many years of volunteer service to EFAO.

The **Genetic Engineering (GE) Committee** has played a vital role in keeping the EFAO community informed about changing regulations related to genetically modified alfalfa. Thank you to GE Committee Chair *Ann Slater* for compiling and distributing updated information.

The **Energy Committee** encouraged discussions on the role of energy in sustainable farming practice. Committee member *Rick Munroe* has been collecting information related to the Line 9 pipeline reversal and has also prepared a report.

OF SUBSCRIBERS TO THE E-NEWS LIST

[810]

AVERAGE WEEKLY VISITORS TO EFAO WEBSITE

[287]

ISSUES

EFAO members have been involved in raising awareness and circulating information about pressing issues affecting ecological farming across the province. Some of these issues include:

Neonicotinoids pesticide ban in connection with the Friends of the Pollinator Action Coalition (*Sierra Club Canada*), GM Alfalfa regulation (*receiving regular updates from the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network*) and Line 9 Pipeline reversal (*with support from the Energy Committee*). Many thanks to all the member volunteers who have worked to gather and circulate information.

ORGANIZATIONAL

PARTNERSHIPS

We are grateful to have worked in close partnership closely with numerous organizations and individuals across the province. We look forward to continuing these collaborations in the coming year.

FUNDING PARTNERS

Thank you to our **funding partners** for making it possible for EFAO to continue to serve members and continue to offer practical training opportunities in ecological farming.

