



Ecological Farmers of Ontario- Annual Report 2012

Staffing and Grants

2012 was a year of change for EFO in terms of staffing. Michelle Jory completed her term as interim Executive Director and Shauna Bloom came on in the spring until her mat leave at the end of September to continue with some of Michelle's work. Christie Young stepped in one day a week as a strategic advisor focussing on fundraising and governance. We also hired Ali English and Rebecca Hodges as part time programs developers. Karen Maitland continued in the office three days a week. Much of this increased capacity was due to our Trillium partnership grant with FarmStart that will be completed in the spring of 2013. It will be a priority this winter to secure funding that will allow us to continue the work that this extra staff has allowed EFO to do.

Education

On the formal side of EFO's training efforts, January, 2012 saw 9 of our experienced and new workshop facilitators gather to work on their skills and review the revised Introduction course now called the Essentials to Ecological Agriculture. This course was first offered at the Guelph Organic Conference, 2012. It is EFO's intent to develop more regional facilitators so these trainees came from the east and central regions of the province. EFO will continue training of these facilitators this winter.

On the more informal side, the big event for EFO this summer was the US bus tour to the Rodale Field Day in July. Forty three members travelled by bus to the Nordells, Beech Grove Farm, Steve Groff, Cedar Meadow Farm, Rodale, and the Christensen Organic Dairy Farm in Pennsylvania and New Your State. Two more members joined for the Rodale Day only. All participants felt the three days on a bus were well worth the opportunities to see these operations. Walking in the rain all day at Rodale was also refreshing in the middle of the Ontario drought.

Membership

Membership is currently at 430 members with the majority, 300 members, west of the 400. There has been an influx of new farmer members thanks in part to our work with FarmStart. While membership rates have not changed, the membership year will now run from January 1st to December 31st.

Communication and Outreach

Fiona Wagner continues to do a great job with Ecological Farming in Ontario. The newsletter has maxed out its advertising space so EFO will need to look at increasing ad prices or increasing the number of pages of the publication. EFO also continue to use the website, Enews and our Facebook page as a way to connect with the membership and others.

EFO has also been present and/or involved with a number of partners and events. The list includes FarmStart, Sustain Ontario, Guelph Organic Conference, EcoFarm Day, Organic Council of Ontario, Canadian Organic Growers, Canadian BioTechnology Action Network, Eat Local Sudbury, Feast of Fields, Grey Bruce Farmers Week, Farms at Work, Everdale Learning Centre, Ontario Environmental Network, and the United Church International Development Committee.

Issues

Beyond organic farming EFO members are interested in a large array of complementary issues. Through committee work, work with other organizations, events or newsletter articles, EFO members want to know about Raw Milk, Abattoirs, Preserving Farmland, Genetic Engineering, the Organic Standards, Energy, and Meat chicken quota, just to name a few.

Board

The 2012 AGM was the last meeting for Chris Litster, the outgoing president, who has completed 6 years on the board and must step down. Ron Gerwing, the outgoing secretary, and Cathy Hansen also departed from the board this year. Thank you to all.

Funders

Ecological Farmers also gratefully acknowledges the Trillium Foundation and the Metcalf Foundation for funding in 2012.