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Get the expert opinion
on the Ontario agriculture
job market



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**MEDIA
PLANET**

March 2013

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE



FROM FARM TO FAMILY

Job opportunities, delicious foods, and family activities.
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3
TIPS

HOW TO
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CHANGING LIVES
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CHALLENGES

Mark Wales, President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, weighs in on the current state of the industry.



CHOOSE ONTARIO
CRAFTED WINES OR
BEERS TO MATCH
YOUR LOCALLY
PRODUCED FOOD



WE RECOMMEND



**Careers in
Agriculture**
Why you should
consider agriculture
as a career choice

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MEDIA PLANET

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE,
1ST EDITION, MARCH 2013

Publisher: Matthew Dyer
matthew.dyer@mediaplanet.com

Designer: Jasco Chan
jasco.chan@mediaplanet.com

Managing Director: Joshua Nagel
joshua.nagel@mediaplanet.com

Editorial Manager: Maggie Ritchie
maggie.ritche@mediaplanet.com

Contributors: Dr Stephen Bocking,
Kelly Daynard, Diana McLaren,
Pauleanna Reid, Mark Wales, Marlene
Werry, The Ontario Ministry of
Agriculture and Food and Ministry of
Rural Affairs

Cover Photo Credits: TOP IMAGES
Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance.
LEFT TO RIGHT The Ontario Ministry
of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of
Rural Affairs; Conestoga College;
iStock.com

Distributed within:
Toronto Star, March 2013
This section was created by Mediaplanet
and did not involve the Toronto Star or its
Editorial Departments.

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Ontario agriculture is both big business and family business

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the many facets of food production in this province. Ontario farmers, like me, take a great deal of pride in growing a variety of safe, affordable foods for consumers to enjoy. We are proud to meet the growing number of needs of our changing population, from the demand for both organic and conventionally grown foods, to exploring markets for new foods that are culturally significant for certain populations.

Big business

Ontario farming is big business. The Ontario agri-food industry contributes \$33 billion annually to the Ontario economy and represents 10 percent of the province's entire workforce with 700,000 jobs.

Ontario agriculture is the most diverse agricultural system in the country. Farmers here grow more than 200 different agricultural commodities—including a variety of fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy products, greenhouse vegetables, and ornamental flowers. Each farmer produces enough food to feed 120 people a year. Ontario is also home to an expanding bioproducts industry, and world-class agricultural research and innovation centers.

Family business

Farming is also a family business. More than 98 percent of the farms in Ontario are family owned and operated. Farmers incorporate carefully planned land and water stewardship practices to keep land healthy and productive for generations to come.

As the needs of our province continue to evolve, there is an



Mark Wales
President, the Ontario Federation
of Agriculture (OFA)

BEST TIP

Simple ways to support Ontario agriculture

- Connect with a community supported agriculture group in your area
- Ask your school and community centers about sourcing local food
- Watch for seasonal Agri-tourism events in your area for activities like apple picking, maple syrup, pumpkins, and corn mazes
- Look for Ontario food features on local restaurant menus

opportunity for Ontario to demonstrate leadership in determining the future of food in this province. Issues of food accessibility and food knowledge need to be addressed, as well as a vision for continuing strong food production in Ontario.

Moving forward

I encourage you to ask questions about the articles you find in these pages. Learn about the Ontario foods you can prepare at home, and take the time to visit a farm or meet a farm family in the coming year. On behalf of Ontario's farm families, thank you for supporting Ontario agriculture.

MARK WALES

editorial@mediaplanet.com



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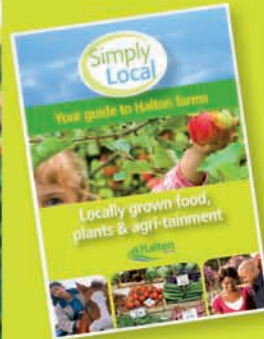
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Get to know Ontario's farmers.
After all, to know farmers
is to know your food!



INSPIRATION

Question: Are you seeking an exciting profession which involves creativity and innovation?

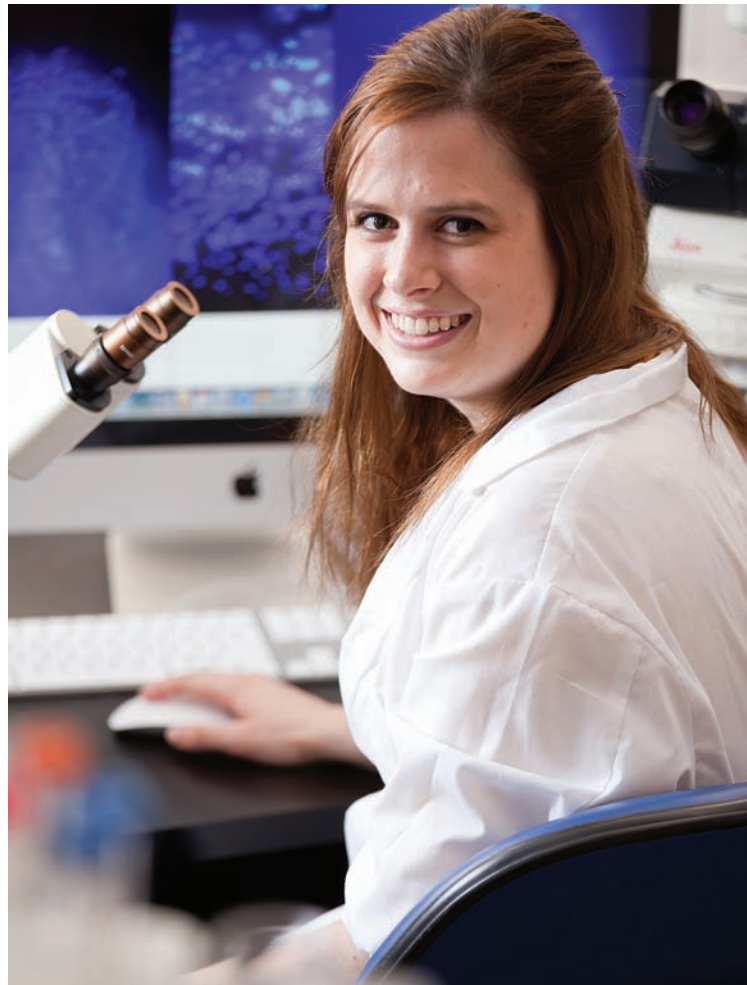
Answer: Southern Ontario is overflowing with job offers which reward persistence and passion.

Your ideal career is where you least expect it

Due to lack of knowledge, careers within the agriculture sector aren't at the forefront of many wish lists. But what most people don't know is that it provides job security and a life-long learning opportunity. In the landscape of Ontario's growing economy, our province is one of the top agricultural regions in Canada. With 50,000 farm businesses which employ over 2 million labourers, the agriculture industry here in Ontario is the number one economic driver in our province. In today's job market stability is hard to come by, but a career in this particular field offers leadership opportunities, rewarding experiences and most importantly, a safety net. "In many ways, the sector is largely recession resilient because people will always need to eat," says Dr. Robert Gordon, Dean of the Ontario Agricultural College.

New experiences keep life interesting

The key to career success is to realize your potential. "There are great opportunities for creative individuals. We need people in product development, entrepreneurship, and product innovation,"



STUDYING IN THE FIELD

Holly McGill is an animal science undergraduate student in the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph.

PHOTO: THE ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

states Amy Proulx, Professor and Academic Coordinator, Culinary Innovation, and Food Technology Program, Niagara College. The excitement lies within the significant level of innovation which currently exists in this field. This sophisticated industry will always have a massive demand for individuals with a background in trades, research and development, food science and nutrition, engineering, technology, food production, business management, and mechanics. If you enjoy problem solving, trouble shooting and would like to contribute to the growth of our rural communities, this is the career path for you.

Passions can take you anywhere

Once you've decided what specialized area takes your interest, make good use of your available resources. In terms of education and training there are several universities and community colleges which offer academic programs to help you thrive in your area of expertise. "We need to encourage students to see themselves playing a role in the whole value chain. This is an industry that is glob-

ally recognized for its leadership," affirms Dr. Gordon. The highlight of this career choice is having the ability to step onto a platform where your opinions are valued and in some cases, you can jump into a leadership role even before you graduate.

The future looks bright

There will always be a massive demand for skilled workers within the agricultural sector. The food processing industry is the third largest in North America with over 3,000 processing companies here in Ontario. As new opportunities arise within the farm community and food system, job seekers can expect rapid technological and innovative advances. "In the future, I see a lot of cooperation between the agricultural sectors and the food processing sectors and more decisions made for the benefit of both," predicts Mihaela Simion, Program Manager, Institute of Food Processing Technology, Conestoga College.

PAULEANNA REID

editorial@mediaplanet.com

PANEL OF EXPERTS



Marlene Werry

Rural Economic Development
Officer, Regional Municipality
of Durham



Kelly Daynard

Communications Manager,
Farm & Food Care Ontario



Dr. Stephen Bocking

Professor, Environmental &
Resource Sciences / Studies
Program, Trent University



Question 1:

With respect to job opportunities and options, how does the Agri-food industry in Ontario shape up in relation to its competing provinces?

The Ontario Food Cluster welcomes international investment to its thriving cluster of 3,200 food and beverage companies that harvest success from within Canada's largest pool of agri-food talent, Ontario. Food and beverage processing in the province is expected to grow to a \$40 billion industry by the end of 2013, and the agriculture and agri-food sectors are Ontario's number one employers.

Think about who made your food today. Agriculture is more than Canada's 200,000 farmers. The agri-food sector is one of our largest employers with over 2 million jobs. A recent study shows three jobs waiting for every agriculture and food graduate. Ranging from science to business to marketing, there are many fulfilling career opportunities.

The Agri-food industry in Ontario is evolving rapidly, with many new opportunities emerging, including non-conventional sectors such as community food networks, agro-tourism, and sustainable farming for local markets. The industry also presents environmental management opportunities, such as nutrient management planning, source water protection, and soil and water analysis.

Question 2:

How did you start off in the agriculture industry and what do you enjoy most about it?

I was born and raised on a family farm in Eastern Ontario, which instilled a passion for the industry. Agriculture is an innovative, dynamic sector and what I enjoy most is the diversity and the great people you have the opportunity to work with.

Like countless others, my family has farmed in this province for many generations—and that's what I like best about agriculture. It's the continuity, the people, the passion and the commitment to caring for the land and farm animals. It's so much more than a "job". It's a business and a way of life.

I became involved in agriculture through the development of Trent University's Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Program. The most enjoyable part of this work is meeting the many students interested in working in, and transforming, our agricultural economy.



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NEWS

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KEEP YOUR EYE
OUT FOR SEASONAL
AGRI-TOURISM
EVENTS

PHOTO: THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD AND MINISTRY OF RURAL AFFAIRS

THE VALUE OF OPTING FOR HOMEGROWN

LOCAL PRODUCTS

Ontario is passionate about local foods

Food products that are grown and produced in Ontario travel shorter distances to your table and support our farmers, local businesses and communities along the way.

When you choose local Ontario grown foods like fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, eggs, grains, and speciality products like maple syrup and honey, you are getting the best quality food available, because it's grown right here.

Our province is home to wonderfully diverse cultures, and our local foods reflect the global community we live in. Ontario farmers grow a variety of foods to meet that demand, such as yard-long beans, okra, and Asian purple eggplant.

Buying local goes beyond food. For example, Ontario greenhouses produce more than 75 varieties of cut flowers and 120 varieties of indoor potted plants, so when you pick Ontario flowers, you sup-

port your local nursery.

Ontario's food processors support local too. They buy about 65 percent of the good things that are produced on our farms to make things like biscuits, jams and pizza. This benefits our agri-food industry and our economy, since Ontario has one of the largest food processing industries in North America.

From the farm gate to your dinner plate, choosing local is good for you and for your community.

Buying local is definitely about taste, but it also feels good. It's about knowing that your food came from a farm or food business nearby and feeling connected to the food you serve your family.

We all want the best for our families and making the local food choice is exactly that!

ONTARIO MINISTRY
OF AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD AND MISNISTRY
OF RURAL AFFAIRS
editorial@mediaplanet.com



FACTS AND TIPS

It's easy to buy local! On your next shopping trip:

- Look for delicious Ontario foods including meat, dairy, eggs, honey, apples, rhubarb, mushrooms, root vegetables, and greenhouse produce in stores, available year-round.

- Bring your family and visit a local farm market. Meet the people who produce your food.

- Discover the variety of food products available at your local farmer's market.

- Choose Ontario wines or craft beers to complement your next meal.

- Brighten up your table with Ontario potted plants and fresh cut flowers.

About Ontario's agriculture and food industry:

- Ontario's agri-food industry is a major economic contributor to our province. This sector contributes \$34 billion to the economy every year, and provides jobs for more than 700,000 people.

- Only 5 percent of Canada's total land base is classified as prime agricultural land, and more than half of the best soil in Canada is in Ontario.

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Agri-Tourism

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NEWS

Question: How can Ontarians learn where their food is coming from, who has a hand in bringing it to their table and maybe enjoy a few taste-testers along the way?

Answer: Agritourism! Learn more about this exciting possibility and how you can get involved with it.

Edible experiences creating new tourism opportunities

Agri-tourism is a winning combination of two of Ontarians favourite things: travel and food. As well as providing fun and tasty activities, it brings us closer to our food sources and choices fueling both local food and tourism economies. Taking things one step further, culinary tourism goes beyond food and farming to connect our province's wineries, artisans, chefs and much more.



Rebecca LeHeup
Executive Director, Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance

"Culinary tourism adds the experiential piece so visitors take away something beyond food," says Rebecca LeHeup, executive director of the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance.

"Culinary tourism isn't a niche market. One thing every tourist does every day is eat," says LeHeup. "Our province has been identified as a world leader in culinary tourism, a hotspot."

Specialties

There are travel companies that specialize in culinary adventures. One of these in Toronto takes culinary tourists in canoes and kayaks from Queen's Quay, around the Toronto Islands landing for a gourmet dinner picnic and view of the city skyline as night falls.

For something completely different there is Stratford's Bacon and Ale Trail, a self-guided tour of the pork-producing area's food shops and pubs. Technically a tourist is defined as someone who travels 40 km from home so that makes Southern Ontario with



FACTS ON AGRI-TOURISM

Industry findings on culinary tourism

■ Ontario's foodservice sector forecasted sales of \$22.5 billion in 2010 employing more than 404,000.

■ Dining is one of the top three favourite tourist activities.

■ A university study showed average culinary tourist spent double that of generic tourists.

its dense population ripe with local tourism in addition to the international travelers who want to sample our history and culture.

Profiles of culinary tourists indicate they are generally affluent and active, interested in visiting historic sites, attending music and theatre festivals and participating in outdoor activities. While some tourists and city-dwellers

don't have a car, LeHeup points out that trains, bus tours and car-sharing are all inexpensive and environmentally sound ways to take to the culinary trails.

Farm and markets

Farmers markets and sales from the farm gate have grown in recent years. Statistics provided by Farmers' Markets Ontario indicates that 30 years ago Ontario had approximately 30 farmers markets. Today that number is 120 and growing and they're located in big cities and small towns. Trends indicate that on-farm marketing is increasing as well as the number of visits to farm markets.

Regions are combining local food and beverage experiences (visits to chef schools and micro-breweries) with activities their areas are known for; this could be mountain biking in Blue Mountain or Shakespearean theatre in Stratford.

"In Ontario our culinary palate changes with the season," says LeHeup, "so right now there are all kinds of experiences built around maple syrup that go beyond the traditional."

Statistics show that 70 percent of culinary tourists take home regional food, recipes, wines, etc. to share with family and friends "forming an emotional experience that people carry home with them."



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editorial@mediaplanet.com

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