



For immediate release

New Brunswick agricultural producers mourn lack of understanding of Premier Higgs of the true reality of work in agriculture.

Fredericton, May 3, 2020 -- Farmers in New Brunswick are unanimous: Premier Higgs does not understand the complexity and level of knowledge required for agricultural work. This misunderstanding jeopardizes the 2020 crops and presents agriculture as a second-class sector.

"The decision not to allow temporary foreign workers to enter the province and the approach proposed by the premier to alleviate the labor crisis that this decision causes demonstrate a flagrant lack of knowledge about what is happening on our farms and operations. It is not possible for farmers to train new employees or to ensure the production capacity that we need so our companies can meet the demand of the province's food chain," explained Rebéka Frazer-Chiasson, President of the National Farmers Union in New Brunswick.

Temporary foreign workers who join agricultural businesses in the province have knowledge and expertise that they have developed over the years. They also have a physical capacity that comes from this lengthy experience in farming.

Farmers in New Brunswick have always been open and happy to be able to hire people from here. However, in a context where agriculture has not been valued for decades, few people have the knowledge to quickly become involved in this industry.

"Our members hire people from their communities every year. The sad fact is that for many of these people the experience does not last long when they realize the physical demands of the job and the complexity of the tasks. It has nothing to do with the idealized version of working in the wild that some imagine," said Lisa Ashworth, president of the Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick.

The agricultural sector is urging the premier to reconsider his decision and learn more about the industry. Agriculture is specialized field. Trying to train new workers during the most crucial period of the year jeopardizes production and harvests.

"Our farmers feed the province. Their work is vital to the survival of us all. The simplistic solution put forward by the premier comes at our expense. Citizens are not informed of our

reality. We will always be happy to welcome more New Brunswickers to our operations and to agriculture. But it must be done in an orderly and organized manner. We are all in this COVID-19 crisis together. For the agricultural sector, here to continue to supply the population with food, we need these temporary foreign workers,” concluded Kent Coates, president of Really Local Harvest.

AANB had done quick survey last week with 18 producers who usually hire Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW). Here is a resume of some data collected:

How many years using TFW program:

- *7.3 years (ranges from 1 to 20 years)*

Total number of TFW hired by those 18 producers:

- *Around 165*

What is the time or product loss in efforts to train new staff?

- *Between 10 and 50 weeks*

Total lost (\$\$)

- *\$6,965,000.00 (total for farmers consulted)*

-30-

For info:

Lisa Ashworth

President

Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick

Alliance@fermenbfarm.ca

Tel : 506-452-8101

Rebeka Frazer-Chiasson

President

National Farmers Union in New Brunswick

frazer.chiasson@gmail.com

Tel : (506) 627-0057

Maxime Gauvin

Executive Director

Really Local Harvest

maxime@recoltedecheznous.com