

## Business

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### Showing they CARES

In recognition of numerous initiatives undertaken by the Toyota-Boshoku Canada plant in Elmira, the Township of Woolwich Environmental Enhancement Committee (TWEEC) this week presented the company with the CARES (Community Award Recognizing Environmental Stewardship) award. The presentation took place during Tuesday's Woolwich council meeting.

### Basic income event

Basic Income Waterloo Region is hosting an event Oct. 26 (6 p.m.) at the Kitchener Public Library, looking to engage politicians and residents in a conversation about a basic income guarantee for Canada. The group notes that polls show some 60% of Canadians support a basic-income program.

# Women make major contributions to ag. sector

Research by Farm Management Canada determines there are no typical roles, but there are many of them

**Leah Gerber**

Observer Staff

**THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN** agriculture has largely gone under studied, experts say.

This month, a new study – Expanding Opportunities for Canadian Agriculture by Understanding the Experience of Farm Women – on the experience of women in agriculture and the roles they play on their farms was released by Farm Management Canada.

“From our own experience and research, we knew that women are crucial to farm success. We struggled to find data on farm women beyond the Census, which was limited to reporting the number of farm operators and production sectors reported,” said Heather Watson, executive director of the non-profit organization that provides farm management resources.

“We wanted to gain a better understanding of what’s going on in the world of farm women – their experiences, challenges, motivations and aspirations to provide a foundation of facts we can use to do better.”

The research included a scan of existing literature and data, one-on-one interviews with farm women and a nationwide survey with farm women. The study began in 2021

and the final report was launched in 2023, said Watson. Funding came from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and industry partners.

The researchers found that there is no typical role of a woman in farming. This corresponds with the experience of local farmers Jocelyn Shantz, Doreen Shantz and Susan Martin.

Jocelyn and Doreen Shantz both help run their family’s dairy farm near Yatton, and Susan Martin operates a sheep production farm with her husband near Elmira.

Doreen says she married into farming, and hadn’t thought she would become so involved in it, but looking back she says it was an excellent career. Now, she focuses on providing childcare so her son and daughter-in-law can focus on their roles on the farm.

Jocelyn says her role on the dairy farm is calf and reproductive management, though she also is heavily involved in record keeping, administration and other duties.

Jocelyn grew up on a beef farm, and worked full-time as an artificial insemination technician before marrying into the Shantz family and joining their dairy operation.

Martin grew up on a dairy farm. She says she left the industry to work in an office, but then went



Susan Martin, Jocelyn Shantz, Doreen Shantz and Anna Shantz in the Shantz’s dairy barn. In their experience, and now in the research, there is no one-size-fits all for women in farming, but many different experiences. **Leah Gerber**

back to farming.

In the first phase of the new study, researchers interviewed 21 women across Canada, and found that women filled many roles on their farms. This was echoed in actual experience by the three local women.

“When someone says, ‘Oh, you’re just a farmer?’ [The answer is] ‘No,’” said Martin. “You’re a veterinarian, you’re a steward of the land, you’re a bookkeeper or an accountant. You’re a problem-solver, because you have to figure out how to make everything work. So we juggle a lot of different roles.”

The results of the study interviews helped shape the nation-wide survey

that was sent out for the second phase of the research.

The project team identified a total of 31 roles and activities under four categories of types of farm work, including farm business management, livestock and poultry management, crop production and management, post-harvest and marketing.

Some highlights from the survey’s findings include:

Women tended to have difficulty giving themselves the label of farmer, regardless if they were heavily involved in the farm or not.

More than half of the women surveyed grew up on a farm, 17 per cent had

no previous farm experience, and 23 per cent either had youthful experiences on a farm or were employed on a farm.

51 per cent of the women surveyed joined an existing farm, for example, through marriage, 24 per cent said they purchased or started a farm, eight percent said they anticipated inheriting or taking over the farm, and 11 per cent said they already inherited or took over the farm.

The survey also looked at ownership of the farm; 41 per cent said they are a full partner or joint owner through legal agreement, 23 per cent said they have equity ownership through marriage or common-law, 11 per cent said they have

no ownership, and 10 per cent said they were the sole owner.

The local women spoke about the challenges they face as farmers and some of the stressors that cause them worry, such as disease in their herds, the price of commodities or others.

“Crop failure – how am I going to feed my animals? Commodity prices skyrocket, you didn’t budget for that. I think that’s the same on every farm, I don’t think that’s unusual. A fire. You don’t want to create those problems, but you’re always thinking about how you’re going to handle [a problem like that],” said Martin.

“Every farmer’s biggest nightmare is a barn fire,” agreed Doreen.

They also spoke about the strength found in community to overcome challenges. When a community member’s barn does catch fire, Martin says the community works together however they can like helping at the scene, providing food, cleanup and rebuilding.

“I remember Rick whipping in the lane, grabbed my father-in-law, said, ‘[A neighbour’s] barn is burning,’ and they went whipping over. And then my mother and I went over probably within half an hour. And they already

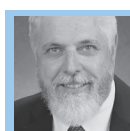
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## Cost of food top of mind, says report

Federal politicians are being called naive by some critics for asking food retailers to help reel in food prices. Naysayers say it’s a complex issue that can’t be laid solely at the feet of retailers.

That’s true. Many factors are at play that don’t make memorable sound bites.

But given the latest findings about public trust in the food system, you can’t blame frustrated and confused politicians for trying something, anything, to address the situation.



**OWEN ROBERTS**  
Food For Thought

This week the 2023 Public Trust Research Report was released, showing how food prices have more and more people on edge.

As the report notes, nearly half of Canadians say they are very concerned about food affordability. Concern has increased a significant eight points compared to 2022 and 19 points since 2020.

It’s not hard to see why politicians are targeting retailers. The report shows that last year, people bought the argument that food prices were rising because supply chain costs such as fuel and materials were increasing. More than 55 per cent said they believed this.

Not this year. There’s been a huge shift, with blame shifting directly to businesses wanting to increase their profits. Last year, just 20 per cent of respondents felt this way. This year, that number has climbed to

almost 35 per cent.

The report shows consumers are trying to adapt. Those who campaign against food waste will be pleased to know almost half of the survey’s 2,670 respondents said they have reduced food waste. More people changed recipes, bought frozen food, and overall, bought less food.

And 20 per cent say they’ve changed grocery stores, looking for cheaper prices.

“While no one person or stakeholder controls

the cost of food,” says the report, “each person can control what food they buy and eat.” That’s exactly why the government has stepped in... this issue is huge. If prices are going to be reined in, it will take a herculean effort.

Notable in the report is how sustainability has taken a backseat to food prices, as far as consumers are concerned.

Most survey respondents were satisfied farmers were effectively looking after the environment. Practices such as crop rotation and

cover crops to improve soil health scored the most points with the public. So did automated irrigation systems that reduce water waste and improve crop yields, along with precision farming to optimize resources and reduce fertilizer and pesticide use.

I’m surprised people knew about that kind of technology, let alone felt comfortable enough to applaud its use on farms. Good on them.

What’s ironic though is that while many sustain-

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↓ FAMILY ALBUM

In Memoriam



**HAFFNER, Agnes**

**July 13, 1933 - October 22, 2018**  
Gone but not forgotten,  
gone but ever here.  
No longer living in this world,  
but always and ever near.  
Forever loved, forever missed.  
*Donna, John, George,  
Crystal and families*

Obituary

**Brubacher, Henry M.**

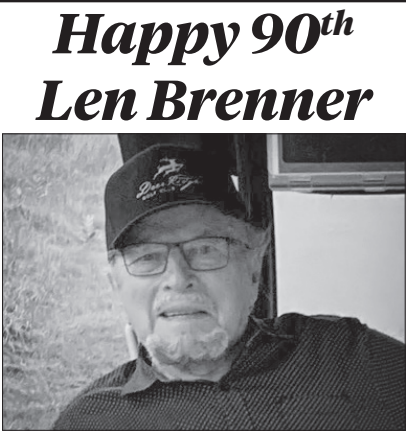
Henry was born on November 23, 1943 and passed away peacefully on Wednesday, October 11, 2023 at Listowel Memorial Hospital at the age of 79 years. Henry leaves to mourn his wife Sarah (Martin) Brubacher, seven children Miriam (Elmer) Horst, Marlene (Mark) Burkhardt, Steven Brubacher, Wilma (Walter) Martin, Florence (Harvey) Shantz, Pauline (Albert) Frey, Laura (Wayne) Weber, 35 grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, sister-in-law Lovina Brubacher, brother Isaac (Leona), Clarence (Elmeda) and Emanuel (Velina). Henry will be missed by many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his parents John and Lovina Brubacher, brother Israel, sisters Elizabeth and Susanna and grandson Mark. Family received relatives and friends on Thursday, October 12, 2023 from 1-4 and 5:30-8 p.m. and on Friday, October 13, 2023 from 2-5 p.m. at the family farm, 5705 Buehler Line, Wallenstein. A family service was held at his home on Saturday, October 14, 2023 at 9 a.m. then to Weaverland Mennonite Meeting House for burial and public service.

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Birthday



**Happy 90<sup>th</sup>  
Len Brenner**

Our family invites you to an  
**OPEN HOUSE**  
Sunday, October 29, 2023  
1pm-4pm Waterloo Legion  
316 Marsland Dr Waterloo  
(Enter off back parking lot)  
*Best Wishes Only*

Obituary



**DeLong, James 'Jim' David**

Passed away at his home in Petersburg on Saturday, October 14, 2023 at the age of 69 years. Loving father of Craig and Vanessa DeLong, and Jenna and Bud Merner. Cherished grandfather of Quinn; Riley, Bree, Harlee and Maycee. Loving son of Dorothy and the late Fred DeLong. Dear brother of John DeLong, Dolly (Ray) Kuntz, Donna (Bruce) Dammeier, and Brenda (Stewart) Cope. Jim will be lovingly remembered by his many nieces, nephews and their families. Predeceased by his father Fred DeLong, and great-nephew Taylor Laverty. Jim was a dedicated and proud employee of Home Hardware Stores Ltd. for 50 years and will be deeply missed by his many friends and colleagues. To honour Jim's wishes, cremation has taken place. As expressions of sympathy, donations to the Heart and Stroke Foundation or Sunbeam Community and Developmental Services would be appreciated and may be made through the Dreisinger Funeral Home, Elmira.

❖ [www.dreisingerfuneralhome.com](http://www.dreisingerfuneralhome.com)



Doreen Shantz with her two-year-old granddaughter Anna on the family farm. [Leah Gerber](#)

**FARMING:** The work involves wearing many hats

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had all these women in the kitchen making food and it was unbelievable," said Doreen.  
"That's our biggest strength," agreed Martin. "Community. If you don't come from a community like that, it's hard to explain."

The three also spoke about never being able to actually "turn off" and get away from farming.  
"Weekends, you're still on mentally. We still go to church on Sunday morning, but then the first thing we do when we come home is we go through the barns, make sure everyone's okay, no one's calving or stuck," said Jocelyn.

Jocelyn spoke about some of her specific struggles as a mother and full-time farmer. "We want our kids at home to experience the farm. But also we can't get everything done with kids. The farm would not look this way [if we didn't have family to provide childcare]. The management would not be the

same, because I would not have the mental capacity to do it with a toddler."  
Added Doreen, "And when everybody's choring, like when [Jocelyn is] feeding calves, when my husband's running around with tractors, skid steer, there's just so much going on with the chores."

"Or field work in the summer. That's a big juggle with making sure before the week starts that I know where my daughter is, I know what barn I'm taking care of, who's in the fields, who's making food. Everyone has a job," she said.

Joecelyn's struggles showed up in the survey results as well. Sixty-four per cent of the survey's respondents said caring for children due to a lack of daycare concerns them from a safety perspective.

Susan, Jocelyn and Doreen are all future minded; they think deeply about farm succession, the future of their business and families, and adapting to changing times.

Watson says the study

concluded with 30 recommendations, and that the next steps will be to share findings and use them to improve her organization's programs and services.  
Despite the challenges in farming, Jocelyn, Doreen and Susan all love the industry and couldn't see themselves doing anything else.

"I just really like agriculture. I like everything about it. Well, not everything. There's some frustrations with regulations and things like that," said Martin. "Raising the livestock. That new life being born, that feeling when that last bale comes off the field, or that great yield that you got with your soybean harvest, like all of those things feel like..."

"Victories," added Jocelyn.

"Yes, successes," agreed Martin. "That we might live to see another year, you know? And when you know that your kids are interested, it's that passing on [to the next generation], and you see that. That's big."

**ROBERTS:** Earning the public's trust takes effort

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ability approaches have been developed and refined by university researchers, categorically, trust in university researchers dropped two percentage points from last year. Study authors called that a "significant" decrease.

Still, when it comes to

trust in food, university researchers are among the top three groups cited by Canadians, behind farmers and a group called "scientists," which, in reality, are also university researchers.

The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity, which commissioned the report, urges the food sector to dig deep and keep its foot on

the gas.  
"Growing public trust in Canada's food and agriculture industry is not achieved through a single advertising campaign, infographic or shiny website," it says. "Public trust is a nuanced concept requiring a long-term commitment to collaboration and continuous improvement."

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