

D.Growing Small and New Farms

Moderator: Representative Carolyn Partridge, Vermont

- a. Whitmore Project, *Senator Donovan Dela Cruz*
 - b. State Incentives for Small/New Farms, *Representative Jay Edwards, Rhode Island*
 - c. Small Farm Accelerator Program, *Minister Keith Colwell, Nova Scotia*
 - d. From Family Farm to Retail Sales, *Ray Price, Sunterra Farms*
 - e. Farm Succession, *MNA Carlos Leitão, Quebec*
- Brief introductory remarks from Rep. Carolyn Partridge (VT)
 - In VT because of dairy and milk prices, the state has lost number of dairy farms. There were 1,800 dairy farms about 20 years ago now there are under 700 dairy farms.
 - In 2010, the state kicked off the Farm to Plate initiatives. A few years later, the working lands initiative also began. In the last 7 years, the initiative created over 6,500 new jobs and 742 businesses (mostly related to food).
 - Sen. Donavan Dela Cruz (HI) –
 - Hawaii was known for sugarcane and now there is zero in the state. Pineapple has decreased as well because HI cannot compete with production in other countries.
 - There is lots of land for sale in HI. The King owned all the land and sold in the 1800s and few owners bought all the land. In HI, most farmers do not own and lease and it was going to be too expensive for farmers to buy.
 - In 2008, the legislature, city council and army started buying land. This included 1,700 acres for \$25 million and 500 acres went to the office of HI Affairs. Each year more land is added through the state budget.
 - Previous use for growing pineapple didn't need a lot of water, so land now needs to have the infrastructure for water.
 - The state allows for up to 65-year long lease (vs. 5- or 10-year leases that are more typical of private owners).
 - The Hawaii brand is strong. There is interest with a new rum company as well as cookies, candies and juicing. HI imports 90% of its food and need better price points so don't have to import.
 - Rep. Jay Edwards (RI) –
 - Very small state; but there's been an increase in agriculture in state, starting with aquaculture. The state was looking at utilizing the large bay more and the clam and oyster industry had died off. The state is now spending money to restart the industry.
 - Farm to table has been working with aquaculture. Restaurants on the bay use the oysters from the water. Also, using this approach for land-based agriculture and purchased a few hundred acres to lease to farmers. Farmers are marketing to small farmers markets and direct sales to restaurants. The restaurants market which farm they use.
 - Another program – brownfield to green fields for agricultural use.
 - Also, supporting niche farmers. Example of small farm in Providence which produces eastern Asian foods for Laos, Mung and other communities.
 - Most number of per capita women-owned farms in the country.
 - Minister Keith Colwell, Nova Scotia

- Discussed the small Farm Acceleration program – which can allow farms to grow larger if they wish. Overall, goal of the program is to supply citizens with food and help farmers make a living.
 - Can apply if making less than 30,000 gross/year; participants set their own goal and needs for expertise or funding.
 - Program can help part-time transition to be a full-time farmer.
 - 85 applicants so far in 2019; Applications should increase next year; 95% are business plans done themselves with lots of support. Some examples of farms/products are – honey bees, Christmas trees, livestock, etc.
- Ray Price, Sunterra Farms
 - Sunterra Farms thinks of themselves as a tiny food company; has farming in two provinces and two states. Our definition of family farm – large enough to sustain family on.
 - They need to be cost competitive and food safe, especially to export and to sell to the world. Example of brother selling pork to Tokyo. It is easier. You can value-add (i.e., Salami) in Canada and be more efficient to decrease the environmental footprint.
- MNA Carlo Leita, Quebec
 - In Quebec, about half of ag sector is dairy and the other half is very diversified. Dairy is family farms; rest is a mixed bag of large and small. How to sustain family farms?
 - Facing big issue of farm succession, especially for dairy. There is a demographic trend of aging and declining population in rural areas. Agriculture is the main economic base for rural areas now; previously there were other industries like mining and forestry.
 - Attractiveness is very important to convince youth and women to rejoin the ag world.
 - Also issue of access to capital – it is expensive to take over the farm and banking industry isn't always interested in assisting. There are strange rules with selling a farm to a stranger vs. a family member. Working to address that issue.
 - Also, looking to build on trade agreements – looking for opportunities for nice products in Europe or other markets.
 - Investors are also looking to buy land and farms and then sell to a fund. There is a lot of local resistance, especially to foreigners or outsiders buying land.
- Open Discussion and Q&A
 - Rep. Kevin Stratton, UT – asked about success in engaging on the ground?
 - Hawaii agriculture has a weak lobbying effort in comparison environment/conservation. Talking with the local Farm Bureau on their efforts. When farmers start hiring people from local communities, there will be a better tie to represent the industry better.
 - In Vermont, there is recognition of young people leaving. There are also young moving to the state and wanting to farm. At Farm to Plate meetings, they heard of the need for access to land, capital and knowledge. Farm to Plate really went out and heard what people needed.
 - Discussion on long-term ramifications for agriculture with succession. Outside purchasers do not seem to have the same buy-in as the family farm concept.
 - Outside money isn't a solution. Farmers don't expect to make as much as an investor would. There are tools in Canada with the Family Farm Rule.
 - Subsidization of farms only works for a little while.
 - Discussion on bringing in people whose parents were not in agriculture.

- In Vermont, a lot of young folks are wanting to farm, including CSAs. But, there are also successful organic vegetable farms now having a hard time finding someone to take over.
- Nova Scotia – if you cannot make money farming, no one will farm.
- In Hawaii, seeing young people going into processing, including 2 rum processors who moved to Hawaii. They need to have drive and sacrifice in the beginning.
- Rhode Island has a mentoring apprentice program through the university.
- RI – mentoring program through university to apprentice on farms
- Quebec – in rural areas with declining population it is hard to maintain services (hospitals, schools), you won't be able to attract people. Technology has an important role to play with broadband.
- In British Columbia, there is a land matching program with database of owners with land for a fair lease program. The high cost of living in urban areas can draw young families to live rural.
- Canadian Pork Council shared that small scale farmers can be the biggest risk (food safety). Smaller producers have limited knowledge and dollars. Question – How to support these farmers? What they are doing can put the industry at risk.
 - In Vermont, there are not large-scale pig farmers. There are stringent laws on what can be fed to pigs.
 - In Quebec, there are strong producer associations. Cannot rely on self-policing.
- Question about the RI brownfields to green fields program? Federal and state contribute dollars to the program.
- Question about farm succession?
 - In RI, it's a much smaller scale. You can sell development rights and keep farmland in production. Local land trusts.
 - In Quebec, farmers are expanding. Farms remain in operation and increases in scale.