

Hopcotts win OYF Canada with sustainable practices

Family-run operation committed to community

PETER MITHAM

PITT MEADOWS – Third-generation farmers Travis and Brad Hopcott of Hopcott Farms in Pitt Meadows took top honours at the Outstanding Young Farmers Canada event in Laval, Quebec, November 22-26.

“We are so excited to receive this award,” says Brad Hopcott. “The judges had an extremely hard decision to make with all of the fantastic honourees. We would like to thank our families and our team for all of their support because without it we wouldn’t be able to do what we do.”

“This award, ultimately, recognizes all of the amazing young farmers across all seven regions of this country,” adds Travis. “Each had to overcome trials, maintaining a drive to continue improving and displaying pride in producing a safe high-quality product to feed people. It is truly an honour to be recognized among this class of young farmers.”

The brothers won the OYF BC & Yukon title in March, which allowed them to advance to the national finals.

During the regional event, the brothers’ stewardship and development of their grandfather’s farm won out against strong showings by Johannes and Julaine Treur of Creekside Dairy in Agassiz and Matthew Carr of Linden Lane Farms of Krestova.

Originally a dairy operation, Hopcott Farms has diversified since its start in 1932 with the addition of a feedlot operation in 1957 and 72 acres of cranberry bogs in 1996. The original 105 acres is now 185 acres, including 55 leased acres.

In 2000, an agritourism dimension was added with a corn maze followed by a farm shop in 2006. The corn maze became a wedding and events venue in 2018, and in 2022 the farm opened a provincially inspected abattoir.

All this has happened despite being in the middle of a rapidly urbanizing region home to 2.5 million people.

The family-run operation sees Brad steer the beef side, Travis oversee the cranberries and their sister Jennifer running the retail and wedding venue.

“We are siblings working together on the same property, same business. It’s pretty unique,” Travis told the

judges at the regional event in March. “We’re really proud of that success and we think it really adds to the sustainability story.”

Sustainability is a key criteria as both local and national judges assess the excellence of nominees.

Speaking in Laval, the Hopcotts noted their efforts to renovate 20% of their cranberry acreage with new varieties that make them more efficient while a reservoir allows them to recycle 30 million gallons of water through the cranberry bogs during harvest.

To allow for full integration of the beef operation and reduce the farm’s carbon footprint while also addressing animal welfare and quality issues, a \$5 million abattoir was added to

the operation in 2022.

Utilizing waste tissue composting units has allowed for the integration of animal waste back into the forage fields, further enhancing the farm’s sustainable credentials.

Having receiving support as they assumed full management of the operation, the brothers hope to return the favour and mentor future BC farmers.

The Hopcotts were selected as winners alongside Alberta seed producers Greg and Sarah Stamp, beating out five other finalists from provincial programs across Canada.

Open to participants 18 to 39 years of age, OYF competitors must derive the majority of their income from agriculture.



Dressed to impress, brothers Travis (left) and Brad Hopcott of Pitt Meadows were named Outstanding Young Farmers Canada award recipients in Laval, Quebec, at the end of November. OYF CANADA

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BC United’s tax reforms will make farming more affordable

As the cost-of-living continues to skyrocket, many people across this province are living paycheck to paycheck, with over 50 percent of British Columbians less than \$200 away from not being able to pay their monthly bills. The NDP’s policies have only added to the financial strain, making life more unaffordable for British Columbians. Farmers and ranchers in particular have been feeling the strain of rising costs.

We know that severe weather, rising costs, and economic pressures are impacting the agricultural sector. It’s a crucial time to recognize the unwavering determination of our farmers and ranchers and, more importantly, to address their concerns.

The agricultural industry plays a vital role in ensuring food security, supporting local economies, and fostering community resilience. However, the hurdles faced by our farmers are substantial, from unpredictable weather to the increasing costs of feed, fuel, fertilizer, labour and rising interest rates — these are some of the barriers that define their challenges.

Operating a farm in B.C. has become increasingly unaffordable, with farmers grappling with the burden of 30 new and increased taxes introduced by the NDP and a myriad of other challenges. In response to these concerns, BC United has put forward a slate of bold tax reforms aimed at providing immediate help to those grappling with the cost-of-living crisis, including farmers and ranchers.

Among these wide-ranging reforms,

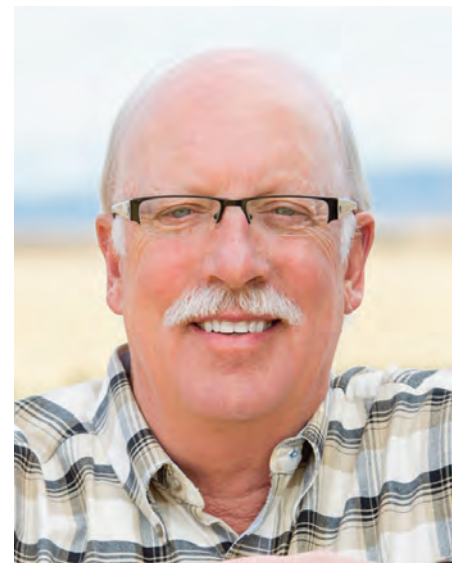
the key proposals for the agriculture sector are the removal of the carbon tax on on-farm fuel use and the elimination of the provincial sales tax on gasoline, saving people up to 15 cents per litre of fuel. These measures directly address some of the significant financial pressures on farmers, making it more cost-effective to fuel machinery, heat barns, green houses and operate grain dryers. Lower operating costs for farmers translate into lower costs for food production, contributing to more affordable groceries for British Columbians.

Consider any farmer in British Columbia who is battling with difficult decisions when it comes to the cost of production, feeding their families and doing everything they can to hold on to their livelihood. For them, the elimination of both the carbon tax for farm use and the provincial fuel tax is not just about cheaper gas; it’s a very real reduction in operating expenses.

These proposals are tangible changes that would reach every dinner table in British Columbia.

While BC United’s proposed tax reforms aim to provide immediate relief, we also understand the challenges of farmers and ranchers extend beyond operating cost pressures.

The agriculture industry needs comprehensive support, including measures to address housing affordability, enhance the cattle industry, combat climate-related disasters, and improve legislation against trespassing on farms. Farmers



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deserve better access to water for livestock and irrigation to weather droughts that threaten their herds and products and the ability to build additional dwellings on their properties to preserve their multi-generational farming traditions.

Farmers are not isolated from the broader cost-of-living crisis. The BC United Caucus recognizes that farmers, like all British Columbians, need results, not just promises.

As we look forward to the future, our caucus knows these initiatives can address some of the key challenges our agriculture industry faces. We hear the concerns of our farmers and ranchers and are committed to taking decisive action to create a more affordable future for all British Columbians.