

December 14, 2010
NEWS RELEASE

News Release:

Positive perceptions of Canadian farming on the rise, survey shows

For immediate release

Guelph ON, December 15, 2010 - Canada's love affair with food and farming is intensifying, a new survey shows. According to results from an online study by Ipsos Reid, more than half – 57 percent – of Canadians surveyed have a positive impression of agriculture in this country, a figure that has risen 16 per cent since the survey was first conducted four years ago. In 2006, only 41 per cent of Canadians had a positive impression of Canadian agriculture and 52 per cent reported a positive impression in 2009.

“Canadian farmers work hard to produce quality food, protect the environment and care for their animals,” says Crystal Mackay, Executive Director of the Ontario Farm Animal Council and AGCare, which commissioned the study. “Farmers have really been going the extra mile to open their proverbial barn doors these past few years to talk about what they do and why. These poll results reflect those efforts and demonstrates that the Canadian public appreciates having conversations with the people who grow their food.”

Although nearly all provinces showed an increase in the overall positive impression of Canadian agriculture, the strongest gains were found in Ontario. Positive perceptions in this province jumped 10 per cent from 56 per cent in 2009 to 66 per cent in 2010. Only nine per cent of Ontarians reported a negative image of Canadian farming in 2010, compared to 21 per cent in 2006. Interest and investment in farm tours, farmers markets and agricultural awareness and education efforts is also at an all time high in Ontario.

“To know that the majority of Canadians trust us and think that we’re doing a good job producing food is a great honour,” says Stewart Skinner, a young hog farmer from Listowel, in South Western Ontario. “We know we’re doing our best to protect the environment and produce healthy and safe food and these results are very inspiring.”

The survey also showed that farmers enjoy a high rate of public credibility on issues related to food and farming, such as animal welfare. Ranked second only to veterinarians, farmers jumped eight points to 67 per cent from 59 per cent a year earlier.

“Farmers have always been credible and trusted spokespeople about food and farming as they’re the ones directly involved with raising animals and growing crops every day,” says Mackay. “This study shows there’s a real opportunity for farmers to keep the open and honest dialogue going about how their food is grown with everyone who eats, so we can continue to build that sense of trust and pride in Canadian farming.”

The survey was conducted as part of the Ipsos Reid Online Express Omnibus with Canadians aged 18 and over from November 26th to November 28th, 2010. Results are considered to be representative of the Canadian population. For more information on food and farming in Canada, read “Real Dirt on Farming II” at www.ofac.org or tour a farm without putting your boots on at www.virtualfarmtours.ca.

The Ontario Farm Animal Council represents 40,000 Ontario livestock and poultry farmers, associations and businesses on issues in animal agriculture and AGCare is the voice of Ontario’s field crop, horticulture and greenhouse farmers on environmental issues.