

Guest editorial

# Cheap food at farmer's expense

By Henry J. Stanley, Agricultural Representative

Have food prices really increased lately? A new publication by the Ontario Food Council gives an insight into this question

Recent publicity over rising food prices may have left some consumers confused and concerned. The frequency of food purchases makes consumers more aware of food prices than prices of other consumer goods and services. Consumers may wonder why food costs should increase in a country where food is so plentiful and agricultural surpluses a frequent occurrence. There's no doubt that food prices have been increasing. A dollar will not buy as much food as it did 10 years ago. However, since 1961 the cost of virtually all Canadian consumer goods and services such as transportation, housing and clothing has increased.

The Consumer Price Index is a measure of change in the cost of consumer goods and services. Since 1961, all items have increased by 29.4 per cent. Food has increased by 28.4 per cent, housing by 23.5 per cent and clothing by 31.4 per cent. Housing has not increased as rapidly as food over the last 10 years.

However, when we look at the change from 1969 to 1971, all items have increased in price by 4.3 per cent, with housing up by 4.7 per cent, clothing 2.9 per cent and food by only 1.8 per cent. This would indicate that food prices are not out of line with other prices, and in fact, were lagging other sectors.

This can easily be seen by the farmer—the disastrous prices for hogs and eggs during the past two years and the reduced price for lambs in 1971 over the previous year. Recent increases in the price of

beef, pork, eggs and broilers will bring the Consumer Price Index on food products more in line with other goods and services.

The percentage of take-home pay the average Canadian spends on food is declining each year. While the percentage of take-home pay spent on food was 23.4 per cent in 1961, by 1969 this percentage dropped to 18.8 per cent.

All these comparisons have led Canadian farmers to the conclusion that Canada has a "cheap food" policy at the expense of the farmer. The farmer sees the cost of his inputs — labor, machinery, taxes, etc. jumping rapidly in recent years with relatively similar prices for his produce. He feels that he should be sharing in a little higher portion of the consumer's dollar.

The consumer often fails to realize that the farmer receives only about 40 per cent of the price paid for the food in the store. Sixty per cent of the cost is for the services provided to that food after it leaves the farm or the marketing costs. These services have increased greatly in the past few years.

How has the Canadian farmer been able to survive with lower prices for his produce than in most other developed countries? He is more efficient than farmers in these countries. He is able to produce more per hour of work. Our technology is more advanced and the management of our farms gives us an advantage over others.

Thus, to continue to compete in a country with a "cheap food" policy, our farmers must continue to become even more efficient. Those who stand still will not be able to compete. They will lose the race.

## Pond owners alarmed about weed and algae

by J.P. Myslik, Agricultural Engineer

Many pond owners have become alarmed this year due to heavy infestations of aquatic weeds and algae in their ponds. No one can really explain why this occurred other than the fact that there was a delayed spring which was accompanied with below normal temperatures. Snow melt and runoff due to rain

was quite high and there may have been an increase of soil erosion which provides the bulk of the nutrients for algae growth. When the warmer weather and sunshine hours increased, conditions were such that aquatic plants and algae seemed to grow overnight. Perhaps nature made up for lost time.

In any case, there are pros and cons of aquatic vegetation.

Higher aquatic plants and algae are important for maintaining an oxygen balance essential to fish life, and they also contribute to keeping water temperatures at the low levels essential to certain species of fish. Water plants provide a suitable environment for the production of aquatic invertebrate organisms which serve as food for fish. Numerous aquatic plants are utilized for food and or protection by many species of waterfowl.

On the other hand, ponds and lakes may become unsightly because of the presence of dense mats of decomposing surface-type algae. Recreational uses such as fishing, swimming or boating may be impaired by accumulations of algae or growths of aquatic plants. Winter-kills of fish may result from oxygen depletion in the water caused by a decomposition of plants under the ice during certain winter seasons.

Control of aquatic plants may be achieved by either mechanical or chemical means. Simple raking and chain-dragging operations may produce temporary results but the plants soon re-establish themselves. More elaborate methods such as underwater mowing and dredging machines can be useful but a considerable expense is involved.

Chemical methods of control are the most practical considering the ease with which they can be applied. At the present time, there is no one chemical which will adequately control all species of algae and aquatic plants. Chemicals currently available generally provide control for only a single season.

The Ontario Water Resources Commission Act provides that "No person shall add any substance to the water of any well, lake, river, pond spring, stream, reservoir or other water or watercourse for the purpose of killing or affecting plants, snails, insects, fish or other living matter or thing therein without a permit issued by the Commission." There are provisions to this section which the Commission can explain.

Chemical control is easy yet difficult. In order to get good results the aquatic plant must be identified, the proper chemical be used in the correct quantities so that the balance of nature is not overly disturbed, and all legal obligations are met. Assistance on such matters can best be obtained from, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Biology Branch, Attention Miss D. MacKenzie, P.O. Box 213, Rexdale, Ontario.

## Will teach urban farmers

Many urban residents, in an effort to get away from the rat race and pollution of the city, are buying country estates and farms. Some leave their jobs behind to become full-time farmers. Others, who are maybe more apprehensive, move to the country to dabble in farming and commute to their jobs in the city.

One thing is certain however—the trend is growing and in an effort to provide this "growing crop" of new farmers with practical information so that they can operate a successful farming enterprise, the University of Guelph will offer a special program in applied agriculture this fall.

Offered through the University's Office of Continuing Education, the special program will be given by Guelph faculty starting in September, twice weekly in the evening at two locations—the University of Guelph campus and York University.

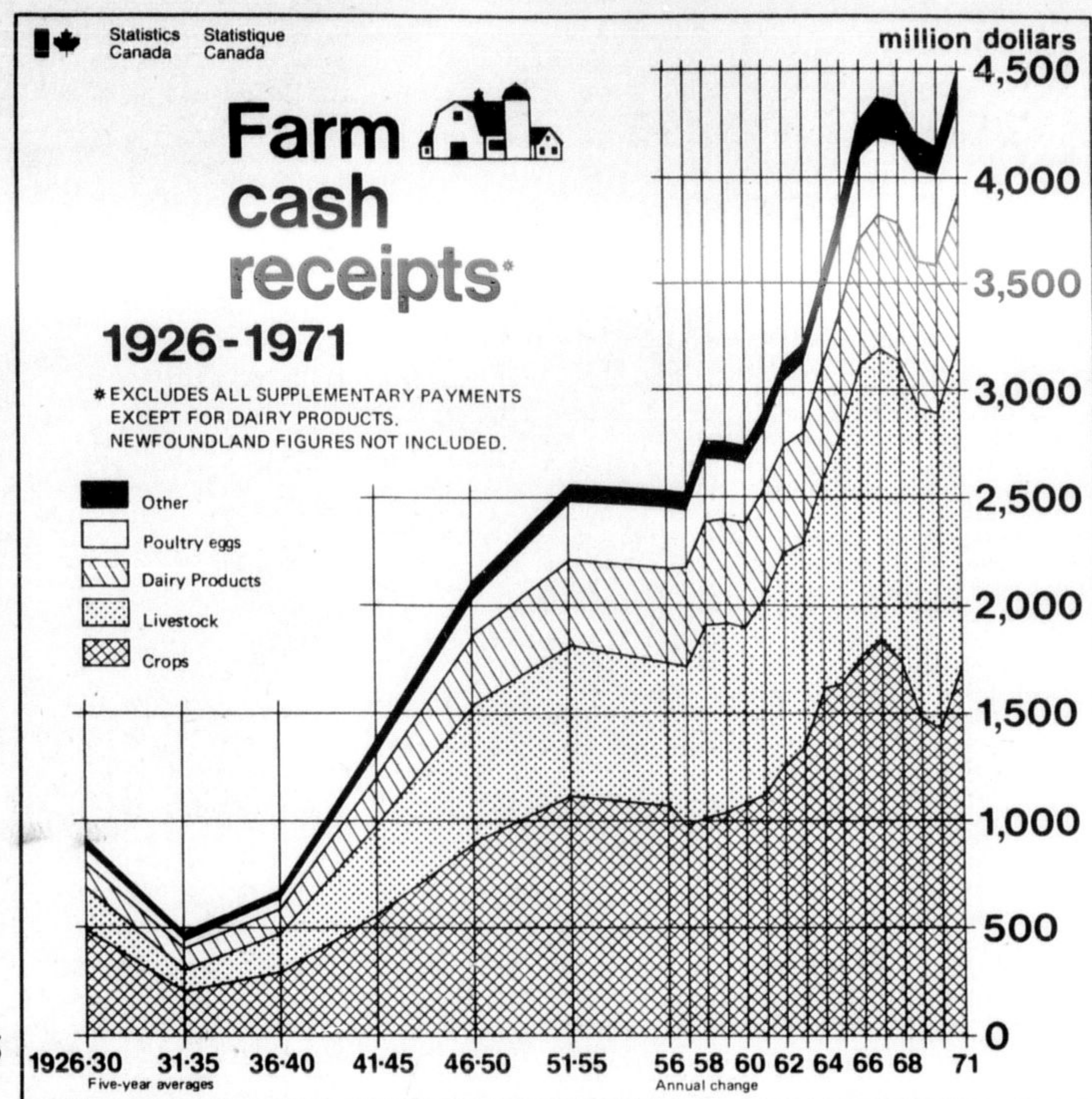
It is generally accepted that more farmers are not needed in the industry, but BETTER farmers are. Some of the "urban farmers" who have demonstrated their management ability in their city jobs, need technical farm training. This is what the Guelph course hopes to give the aspiring farmer.

It is hoped that the knowledge learned in the classroom will result in substantial savings to new farmers, through reduction of losses and through better farming practices. To qualify for a certificate in applied agriculture, a student must complete six courses.

## Okay grant for flood mapping

Flood plain mapping along the Fourteen Mile Creek and the Joshua Creek in Oakville will be carried out by Halton Region Conservation Authority.

The Honorable James Snow MPP for Halton East and Minister of Government Services announced recently approval for a \$9,750 grant had been approved by Leo Bernier, Minister of Natural Resources.



STATISTICS CANADA reports that Canadian farm cash receipts, which had been declining slightly each year since 1967, turned upward again last year and reached a new record high of \$4,495 million. Chart above traces farm cash receipts over a 45-year period and shows how the revenue was divided.

Cash receipts were almost 10 times as high in 1971 as they were during the depression years of 1931-35, except in the same period, dairy products seven and a half times, poultry and eggs 10

times and livestock 14.7 times. The big increase in livestock receipts accounted for the major change in product "mix". Livestock brought in only 21.9 per cent of cash receipts in those depression years, as compared with 33.6 per cent in 1971. Crops accounted for 43.7 per cent of farm revenues in 1931-35 and only 38 per cent last year. Dairy products provided 20.5 per cent of cash receipts in the 1930s and 15.6 per cent last year. Poultry and eggs held about the same proportion of the market—8.9 per cent in 1931-35 and 9.1 per cent in 1971. "Other" receipts represented 4.9 per cent of the total in the 1930s and 3.7 per cent last year.

## Evaluation day results

by Henry J. Stanley

On Thursday, July 13 39 4-H club members from Halton County travelled to the University of Guelph for the annual livestock evaluation competition. Classes of dairy, beef, sheep and swine were evaluated and reasons given by the members.

In the senior section, for those 16 years of age and over, the winner was Paul Stewart, Hornby with 380 out of 400. Runners up were: Ken McNabb, Georgetown and Marg Robinson, Georgetown with 379; Bill Stokes, Campbellville, 378, and Tom Parker, Campbellville had 375.

In the intermediate section, for those 14 and 15 years of age, Barb Brown, Acton was the winner with 376. Runners up were: Keith McKinnon, Milton, and Valerie Knight, Campbellville with 366; Debbie Butchers, Acton, 362; and Bill Allison, Georgetown, 358.

In the junior section, for those 13 years of age and under, the winner was Sheila Anger, Norval 1, with 369. Runners up were: Stephen Stanley, Rockwood, 365; Peter May, Hornby, 362; and David Stanley, Rockwood and Diana Lepa, Milton, with 361.

Club leaders assisting with the competition were Bert Stewart, Hornby 1, Joe Willmott, Milton; and Jeff Nurse, Georgetown.

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## Rose chafer can damage plants

By Robert W. Stokes

Many local residents are concerned over a small beetle they are finding in their garden. This insect probably is a "Rose Chafer" and known commonly as a "Rose Bug". The adult of this insect you are seeing now is a slender fawn-colored beetle about one-half inch in length with long copper colored legs.

This insect eats the buds, flowers and leaves of plants and is very injurious to roses and peonies but may also be found on many other plants including apple, peach, pear, raspberry, strawberry, cherry, bean, beet, cabbage, corn, dahlia, elm, hydrangea, small grains and grasses, etc. These insects often appear in large numbers and it is not uncommon to walk out of your garden with some adhering to

your clothes.

Proper control

Control may be by handpicking or spraying with Malathion 25 per cent WP applied to one-day before harvesting of infected crops. Your local hardware or chemical outlet should have a supply on hand. Always follow the directions on the label and never apply more than the recommended amount. For further information regarding this pest, contact your local Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food office.

INFLATED TIMES

We moderns do rather well as dollar-chasers — haven't caught many yet, but have worn them down to 35 cents.

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