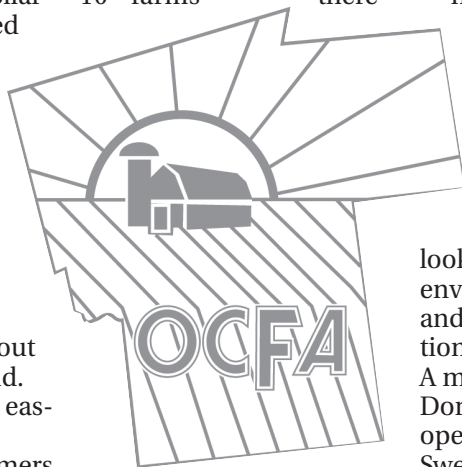


Bigger not always better, OCFA president

By Tara Bowie

Technology, size and environmental issues are the main things influencing farmer decisions today, says the Oxford County Federation of Agriculture. Since the Canadian dollar went par and surpassed the US dollar, the price of technology has become affordable for farmers, said President John Van Dorp. "GPS systems are all coming down in price and with one inch steering capability the guess work is coming out of the industry," he said. "Things are becoming easier on that front." GPS systems allow farmers to map their fields and eliminate double planting and double spraying of crops. With farms becoming more efficient many are

expanding in size. "The general trend is everything is getting bigger and bigger. It's all a matter of point of view," he said. "I'm a believer in the family farm. It gets to a point when a farmer owns 10 farms there



are no people living in the houses. Less people going to the local schools and shopping in the businesses."

Although larger farms are often more profitable for individual farmers, Van Dorp worries what the change means to the community.

"I see the community changing with the largeness and business," he said. "Bigger does not always mean better." Also peaking farmers interests these days is green energy. The relatively new genre of farming is enticing many to take a look at its benefits to the environment as a whole and to their own operations.

A main concern for Van Dorp, who owns a hog operation just outside of Sweaburg, is a new drinking water source protection act still being worked on. The act is being drafted by the Conservation Authority and will stop the

spreading of manure on any farm that would have run off make it's way into a main watershed in less than two years.

Van Dorp's farm would be affected by the new legislation.

"Farmers affected should

be paying attention to what is happening in their area. The time for comment is coming shortly." An information session will be held at the OCFA meeting on Aug. 7 at 8 p.m. in the OMAFRA building in

Woodstock. To find out if your farm will be affected, Van Dorp suggests mapping your farm on the Oxford County website, www.county.oxford.on.ca.



Farms are getting bigger and bigger, according to the OCFA president, but is it necessarily a good thing?







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