
AGRICULTURE SUCCESSION PLANNING RENDEZ-VOUS



ISSUE: Refocusing on youth

ITINERARY 1B

Date: Wednesday, September 11, 2013

Location: Church of St-Georges-de-Windsor

PROMOTER

Olivier Brière, Inode Estrie and Corporation de développement de Saint-Camille | E-mail: info@corpo-st-camille.ca

Presentation of the issue:

While it is the first expression of the entrepreneurial fabric in rural areas, a decline in the number of farms in the Eastern Townships is observed (loss of about 10 farms per year since 1997). Actors involved in this sector, whether governmental, labor-union, legal or financial, must coordinate their efforts to mitigate the challenges of start-up, make the choice for the profession easier and preserve this important economic activity for the vitality of our environments.

In 2007, only 413 companies throughout the region had planned their succession, which corresponds to 17.5% of Estrie farms. This figure is particularly alarming since, according to the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec (FRAQ), 68% of the Quebec farmers are aged 55 and over.

The farming profession is a lifestyle that requires major personal and financial investments. Among the challenges identified, we note the high value of agricultural assets that require from the young people who want to start their business significant capital investment for the acquisition of farm property, and this, at a time of their lives when they generally have very little financial resources.

Many young people are attracted to the profession and decide to undertake agricultural-specific training. The issue is to determine what this sector can do to ensure that these future entrepreneurs have all the tools to achieve their goals.

Project description:

The Corporation de développement socioéconomique de Saint-Camille is an NPO that aims to promote agribusiness and socio-cultural development, industrial-commercial growth and defense & integrity of the natural environment for the municipality of Saint-Camille. To this end, the organization works to inform residents and outside populations about the agri-food and socio-cultural benefits, and about the commercial, industrial and environmental opportunities of Saint-Camille.

Since 1999, the organization holds an annual event called "The regional exhibition on agricultural diversification". This exhibition's main objective is to highlight the diversification of agricultural activities in rural Quebec. Over the years, the organization has developed a very unique expertise on integrating agriculture with the different realities of rural farming.

The agriculture succession planning rendez-vous were thus perfect in the wake of the leading actions the organization wants to achieve for the advancement of agriculture in the region.

The agricultural succession planning rendez-vous is actually a day of networking that aims to provide approximately 125 students currently training in agriculture a concrete opportunity to plan their farming future in the region. With a dynamic concept alternating field visits, workshops, flash meetings and booths, the young participants have the opportunity to establish close contact with experienced farmers, potential sellers and key stakeholders in the agricultural world. For the region, this event is only an excuse to address farm succession proactively, position the region with these future entrepreneurs and to identify future candidates for internships, jobs or farming business succession.

The event aims to promote to the young agricultural students the services available to facilitate start-up or the recovery of agricultural enterprises in the Eastern Townships, to let them establish a direct contact with agricultural stakeholders and to develop their professional network BEFORE the end of their studies. Indeed, it appears that the network is an important success factor for a project start-up or business recovery in the agricultural sector, and that it will help the entrepreneur survive the crises that always come at one time or another.

The event also aims to familiarize the young students with accounts (field visit and testimony) of successful start-ups or business recoveries, in order to share with them the pitfalls and success factors.

For the region, the event is also an excuse to proactively address farm succession and position ourselves with these future entrepreneurs. It allows several players from different backgrounds to work towards a concrete realization, setting the table for a much broader reflection on the subject.

RESEARCHER

Jean-Marc Fontan, UQAM | E-mail: fontan.jean-marc@uqam.ca

Summary of the researcher's presentation:

Objectives of the presentation:

- show the importance of the integration dimension in the efforts toward agricultural succession planning;
- remind the participants that this integration activity must be based on local institutions, the location and role within the environment being the guiding principle.

To do this, it is important to:

- clearly identify the nature of the population-based urgency;
- make available to the future entrepreneurs a set of territorial resources;
- consider the local project as an integrative finality: meeting the integration challenges, carrier of positive answers to the urgency identified, and promoting local initiatives, reflecting the intention of the rural laboratories.

As an example, the researcher presents the *Living Lab for trans-territorial innovation in bio-food*. This project is a rural laboratory led by the MESRST, in partnership with the Cégep de Victoriaville's CISA and UQAM's CRISES. And with the participation of three partners and testing sites: the Mauricie UPA Federation, the MRC d'Argenteuil and the City of Longueuil. The result generated three products:

- the creation of three trial communities;
- a mobilization and collective entrepreneurial support process in the bio-food sector;
- the development of business networks.

QUESTION PERIOD

Q.: What is your assessment of the impacts from this event?

R.: Generally positive, the event is gradually becoming recurring. After Saint-Camille and Coaticook, the event will move to Weedon in the Haut-Saint-François region for 2013.

Q.: What is the profile of the young people targeted to bring the missing expertise?

R.: The young in the 25-40 age group, interested by agriculture and the problems linked to farming succession, etc.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

NOTE: All linked documents (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) are only available in their original French version.

PowerPoint from Olivier Brière, Inode Estrie and Corporation de développement de Saint-Camille

Website: www.rendezvousreleve.org

PowerPoint from Jean-Marc Fontan, UQAM

Website: www.crisis.uqam.ca