
LA PAYSANNE FAMILY FARM



ISSUE: Focus on the natural rural resource

ITINERARY 2A

Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2013

Location: La Paysanne Farm

PROMOTERS

Yvon Bégin and Sylviane Bégin, La Paysanne Family Farm | E-mail: paysanne@live.ca

Presentation of the issue:

The need for innovation when faced with the reality of the markets and production challenges. The Haut-Saint-François MRC is not a region favored by abundant crops (often poor soils and weak thermal units). It is traditionally a ranching region because it has mainly a fodder potential. The different farms have each suffered their crises (beef, pork, etc.) and some are less accessible (e.g. milk). As for hay, prices are relatively low and are highly dependent on the seasons. Thus, the search for new cultures becomes a must to maintain and develop agriculture. Which markets have the potential? What crops can be profitable in a region like the eastern part of the Eastern Townships?

Project description:

Presentation of several cultures for different markets: energy, health, gluten-free diet. The focus is on the potential of these crops, but also on their challenges for both production and marketing.

The key elements to remember according to the promoters:

The desire to provide a succession to the family farm and perseverance despite the difficulties.

SPEAKERS

Huguette Martel, MAPAQ, Regional Directorate for the Eastern Townships | E-mail: huguette.martel@mapaq.gouv.qc.ca
Luc Fontaine, MAPAQ, Regional Directorate for the Eastern Townships | E-mail: luc.fontaine@mapaq.gouv.qc.ca

Summary of the speakers' presentation:

Mrs. Martel and Mr. Fontaine support their promoters in their attempts in culture diversification. Mr. Fontaine and Mrs. Martel summarize the approach of the company which is testing the culture of perennial crops, such as switchgrass, reed canary grass and giant miscanthus. Switchgrass being a C4 plant, such as corn, which requires heat, the cultivar selection is important. Mrs. Martel states that the harvesting techniques selected depend on the intended use of the plant (e.g. pellets, litter/mulch). The combustion equipment required to burn agricultural biomass is still being tested. Mr. Fontaine also shows the particular features of the culture for some non-timber forest plants (NTFP) being tested at La Paysanne farm, such as the goldenseal, the black bugbane and the ostrich fern. He provides guidance to the promoters on the implementation means and stages to harvest the different cultures.

The key points to remember suggested by the speakers:

The choice of cultures adapted to local conditions and the selection of the best cultivars.

SPEAKER/RESEARCHER

Stéphane Demers, Cultur'Innov | E-mail: stephane.demers@culturinnov.qc.ca

Summary of the speaker/researchers' presentation:

Mr. Demers presents the particular features of the different medicinal plants presently tested by the developers. He mentions the different selection criteria for the plants and raises some of the challenges encountered to secure a return on these cultures, such as the mechanization of the harvest and the processing of the products. The need to increase production volumes could be accomplished by a grouping of the producers.

The key elements to remember according to the speaker/researcher:

The organization in order to increase the production volumes and achieve the profitability target.

QUESTION PERIOD

The main issues related to the technical aspects of the farming methods used or recommended. Each speaker as well as the researcher answered according to the targeted cultures.

A question was also raised about the ethics of using agricultural land for the cultivation of perennial crops to produce energy. Mrs. Martel mentioned that the targeted lands are generally wasteland and that the maintenance of herbaceous crops contributes to an open landscape.