



Ferme Aube aux champs

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1. Introduction

La Ferme Aube aux champs is a small family farm, purchased in early 2014 with the intention of growing our existing farm business, Grazing Days, and of setting up a collective farm with other compatible farm businesses. We are now actively seeking other experienced farming units to join us.

2. Ferme Aube aux champs background

2.1. The land and the farm

Ferme Aube aux champs is a farm in St.-André-Avellin, Québec, that is owned and operated by Josée Cyr-Charlebois and Paul Slomp and their 2 year old child. The farm is currently 270 acres which is made up of approximately 30 acres of rock and bush, 20 acres of permanent pasture with shallow and exposed bed rock, and 220 arable acres.

The home farm, which is owned by Josée and Paul consists of 100 acres, most of which is tile drained. Ferme Aube aux champs has an accepted offer on the neighbouring 170 acres of land (not tile drained), pending provincial government approval. Until the sale of the 170 acres is finalized, Ferme Aube aux champs has a registered lease on the land which expires in December 2018.

The farm is about 2 km long and about 0.75 km wide with heavy clay soils on the Southern tip and in the middle, loam soils in the South and sandy soils in the North. Most of the farm has deep clay sub-soils.

Josée and Paul acquired the farm in May of 2014. Prior to their acquisition, 50 acres had been used to make hay and 180 acres had been used for cash crops (GM soybeans in 2013). All of the arable land has been seeded to a legume and grass mixture and is currently used on a hay / grazing rotation.

Soil samples have been taken on most of the farm, and soil amendments have started. The aim is to be certified organic by the fall of 2017.

Buildings:

1 house, 1 old garage, 1 heated shop, 3 hay sheds, 1 barn, 1 machinery shed.

Machinery:

65hp tractor 4wd, loader, cab (JD 2007), disc bine, rake, tedder, round baler, 2 hay wagons, swather, combine, generator, post pounder, plow, S-tine, grading blade, forklift forks, quad, wide variety of tools.

Infrastructure:

7000ft buried waterline (pressure system), corral, electric fences, 2 walk-in freezers (8ft x 11ft), 1 walk-in cooler (8ft x 10ft).

2.2. The market

Saint-André-Avellin is an hour outside of Ottawa and an hour and a half outside of Montréal. It is near Mont-Tremblant and has a vibrant organic farming community, which includes a local Marché de solidarité 15 kilometres from the farm.

2.3. Grazing Days

Currently the only enterprise on the farm is Grazing Days. Grazing Days intensive-rotationally-grazes 45 cow calf pairs on the farm and each year delivers the meat from 40 grass-fed cattle to approximately 250 households in the Ottawa / Gatineau area. For more information visit www.grazingdays.ca and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75nwwIK2AMs>

2.4. Josée Cyr-Charlebois

Josée grew up in the city of Ottawa. She has a Masters in political sociology, and has worked doing social justice advocacy for research institutes and community based organizations. Her first summer on the farm involved setting up a quarter acre family garden, tending to laying hens and growing a small plot of wheat. In the years ahead, Josée will focus her energies on building the wheat plots to launch a processing business and find ways to incorporate her background in community development here on the farm (community spaces, day programs, farm camps/retreats).

2.5. Paul Slomp

Paul was raised on a dairy farm in central Alberta. He studied civil engineering and after university, spent four years working with smallholder farmers in Ghana, Zambia, Malawi and Rwanda. He realized that smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are facing the same issues as farmers in Canada (getting goods to market, getting paid a fair price for these goods, rising input costs, access to capital and control over input and market prices). Paul started farming in 2010 to demonstrate alternative ways of growing food than the prescribed industrial style of agriculture and to advocate for policies that acknowledge existing differences in power and the undeniable bonds between farmers, eaters and the planet— in Canada and the rest of the world.

3. Ferme Aube aux champs in the long term (the vision – collective farm/ land management co-op)

Success in sustainable ecological agriculture depends on biodiversity. Traditionally this biodiversity was reached by having mixed farms with many different farming enterprises existing on the same farm property and working in symbiosis with one another. The manure from a livestock enterprise was used to fertilize the soil of a vegetable enterprise. In return some of the unsellable or damaged goods from the vegetable enterprise were fed to the livestock. Having many farming enterprises on the same farm makes sense biologically. Unfortunately, to be successful economically a mixed farm requires a tremendous amount of knowledge and skill in vastly different subject matters, a huge amount of work, and large investments in land, marketing, and tools. These requirements make mixed farming very difficult to be economically viable with single farm operators.

We would like to run a mixed farm on Ferme Aube aux champs to maximize the biodiversity and the ecological sustainability of the farm. In order to accomplish this while making it economically viable, we would like to set up a co-operative of two or three different farm units farming collectively on the farm property. Each farm unit would be an economically independent business responsible for one or two of its

own farming enterprises and responsible for its own financial viability. At the same time each farm unit would share in the long-term vision of the farm, contribute to the biodiversity on the farm, and lend knowledge, skill, time and investment into the long term success of the farm. Each farm unit would have its own housing.

We are farmers who care about the long term sustainability of what we do. We think about how the food we produce influences those around us and contributes to shaping a food system that respects people, the societies they live in and the planet. We are looking to build a co-operative of farm families to share a land base, tools and infrastructure, as well as marketing efforts.

4. Ferme Aube aux champs : Next steps – selection of a new farm enterprise(s) / farm unit(s)

We are looking to select farm units to join us on the property. We are looking for compatible farm enterprises such as market gardens, beekeeping, mushroom growing, nuts and fruits. The process we have set up to achieve this goal is as follows:

- 4.1. Release of the Call for proposals. Proposals should include a detailed business plan, relevant farming experience, a short bio of the members of the farming unit, the reason why you're interested in the opportunity and where you see yourselves in ten years.
- 4.2. Information Day at Ferme Aube aux champs. To be held on January 18th 2015.
- 4.3. Proposal submission deadline. February 1st 2015.
- 4.4. Second round conversations. We will get back to applicants by February 8th 2015.
- 4.5. Final selection of farm enterprise(s) / farm unit(s). By February 15th 2015.
- 4.6. Trial growing /harvesting/ processing season. Spring , summer, fall 2015.
- 4.7. Launching of Ferme Aube aux champs co-op . If the trial is successful, we start the conversation about setting up of the co-op in the fall of 2015.

5. Conclusion

The season has confirmed that we want to build community and farm collectively. The land and its farmers are craving it. If you are a farmer looking for land and interested in farming collectively, we invite you to submit a proposal. We look forward to hearing from you.

RECAP. Join Ferme Aube aux champs Co-op.

If you have an existing farm business and are looking for land, we invite you to submit a proposal to join Ferme Aube aux champs land management co-op.

Who : farm businesses looking for land and who have a desire to farm collectively

What: Move farm operation to Ferme Aube aux champs and join a co-op that manages infrastructure and land resource base.

When: Spring 2015.

Where: Saint-André-Avellin, Québec.

Why: To facilitate young farmer land access, to increase biodiversity, to grow quality food.

How: Please submit your proposal to josee@aubeauxchamps.ca or paul@grazingdays.ca by February 1st 2015.