

Agriculture in Brome-Missisquoi!

Follow each of our seven weekly columns for a better understanding of the realities of agriculture in your MRC

The Brome-Missisquoi MRC is committed to a consultation and cooperation process so that everyone can be a part of the plan de développement de la zone agricole (agricultural zone development plan, or PDZA). It is important to promote and protect agriculture, as much for preserving and conserving

resources and the landscapes as for economic, social and environmental considerations.

Yesterday - The gathering of all types of data has allowed us to create a portrait of the evolution of activities in this zone, which covers 79.5% of the territory. From 1941 to 2006, agriculture has undergone a significant decline. The number of farms declined by 71%, and area under cultivation by 45%. However, the value and income of farms has exploded, the total value of agricultural assets has gone from \$16,145,775 to \$846,114,026 and incomes have practically quadrupled, increasing from \$60,789,602 to \$214,064,066. There have also been significant changes in the type of agriculture. Oats, hay and potatoes have undergone a drastic decrease while grain corn, soya, alfalfa and wheat have seen their cultivated areas increase significantly.

Today - The MRC has 760 agricultural businesses, including 154 maple sugar operations, for a total of 1,232 operators. The main sectors are milk, poultry and horticulture, followed by pork, grain and beef. 3,420 direct jobs are generated, including some 1,836 family farms. This represents 6.3% of the total labor market, not counting indirect jobs. The diversity of territory and agricultural activities represents a strength for Brome-Missisquoi and creates significant development opportunities.

Tomorrow - Agricultural activities involve a wide array of products and services that go beyond food. Also, on top of their main mission of feeding the population, the farmer contributes directly and indirectly to the region's economic, social and landscape development. It is important to note that tourism and recreotourism activities, mainly in the eastern and central areas of the MRC, are renowned for their landscapes, putting pressure on agriculture to contribute to maintaining this landscape. It is therefore important to reflect on its future. The forest cover is also characteristic of our region. Note that 44.1% of the territory zoned for agriculture in the MRC is covered in forest. Considering its importance, it has to be considered in the PDZA. Next week, we will discuss the role of this forest...

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To conclude this first column, it is important to remember that agricultural activities shape the social and cultural environments of the communities and contributes to economic growth at the local level.

This campaign will wrap up with a public consultation on the plan and the actions that must be implemented, on September 1 in Cowansville.

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