

CFA & FCC Survey: Engaging and Supporting Young Farmers

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CFA & FCC Survey: Engaging and Supporting Young Farmers

FCC’s Vision Panel and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture collaborated on this survey to gain insight into young producers’ sentiment towards associations and groups in the agriculture and food sector, in particular, their capacity to provide support that reflects the needs of young farmers. The survey covered topics such as membership benefits, events, effectiveness, and representation. The aim was to provide industry associations with a deeper understanding of the types of challenges young producers face and to investigate how to best support this emerging generation whose needs and challenges do not always match those of the established producer.

The survey was conducted from December 5th to 10th, 2024, achieving a response rate of 68%. Allowing for further depth to the final analysis and informing survey creation, we first conducted 11 in-person interviews from November 15th to 19th, 2024.

Valuable information

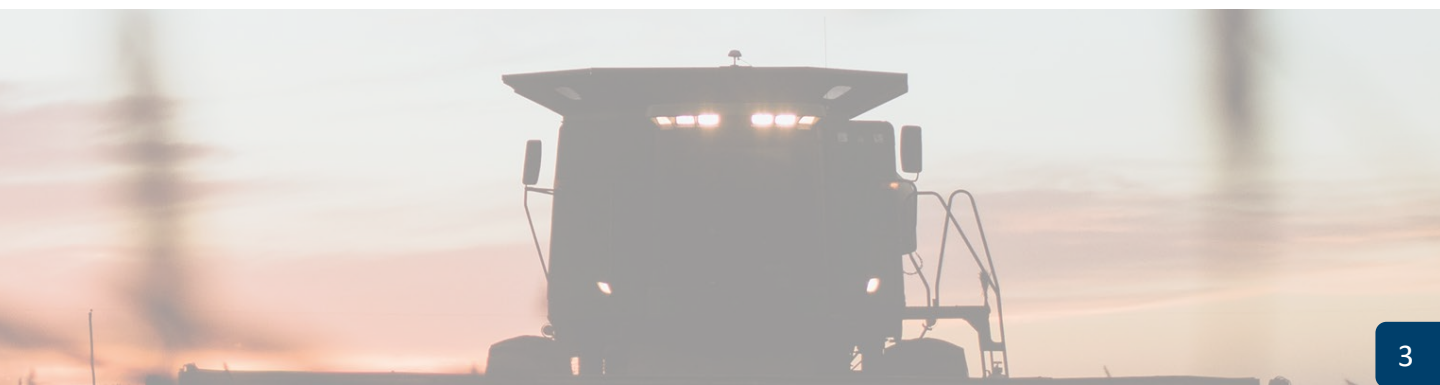
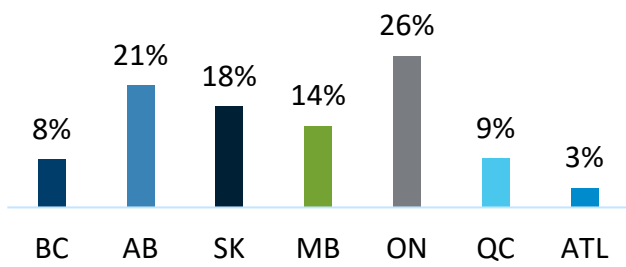
Our respondents include 442 young producers, with most in Ontario (26%), Alberta (21%) and Saskatchewan (18%). The gender distribution was balanced, with 50% men and 48% women. Additionally, 10% of respondents identified as Indigenous, which is a significant representation. According to Statistics Canada, the number of individuals in the farm population who self-identified as Indigenous has been increasing. This high percentage in our survey underscores the growing involvement and importance of Indigenous communities in Canadian agriculture.

The largest group of respondents (44%) were from the Grain and Oilseed sector, followed by Beef (17%) and Dairy (11%). A large portion of the panelists (71%) were business owners or co-

owners, with management roles comprising 14% of the panelists.

Additionally, during the same survey period, we surveyed 345 agriculture and food producers over the age of 39 to gain their perspectives on some of the same questions posed to producers under 39. This simultaneous data collection allowed us to gauge generational differences in perspectives and investigate how these differences might impact the support provided by agriculture and food associations to young producers.

Analysis was conducted with a 95% confidence level and a 4.61% margin of error, ensuring that the survey was representative of the broader Canadian agriculture and food sector.



Key Highlights:

1. Moderate Engagement Levels:

Current engagement levels are moderate, indicating room for improvement in participant interaction and involvement. Over half of the young producers reported neutral to low engagement levels.

2. Time Constraints as a Major Barrier:

The primary challenge identified is the lack of time, which hampers participation and engagement. Work-life balance emerged as the second most significant barrier. Young producers are turning to new digital forms of networking and learning, that allow them to manage their time more effectively as a way to mitigate these challenges.

3. Securing Financial Support is Prioritized Over Networking:

While networking is recognized as a valuable benefit, both young and older producers agree that financial support is a foundational need for young producers. Networking is seen as a benefit, but not the priority. Offering opportunities to secure financial support and practical advice on farm management more effectively supports this demographic.

4. Potential Areas for Enhancement Identified:

Key areas for improvement were highlighted:

- Risk Management
- Policy and Regulations
- Advocacy for Young Producers
- Land Access and Ownership

Young producers clearly identified the challenges they face in establishing themselves in today's agriculture and food sector. By focusing on meeting their unique needs and supporting them in challenging areas, we can help young producers thrive.

Key Insights:

46%

of respondents have **never** been a member of an association related to agriculture and food

54%

of young producers who are current association members have low or neutral engagement

59%

of young producers say time constraints would/has stopped them from being a member

46%

of respondents say that financial support is the best way to support young producers

61%

of young producers stated networking was their top benefit from joining an association

Membership

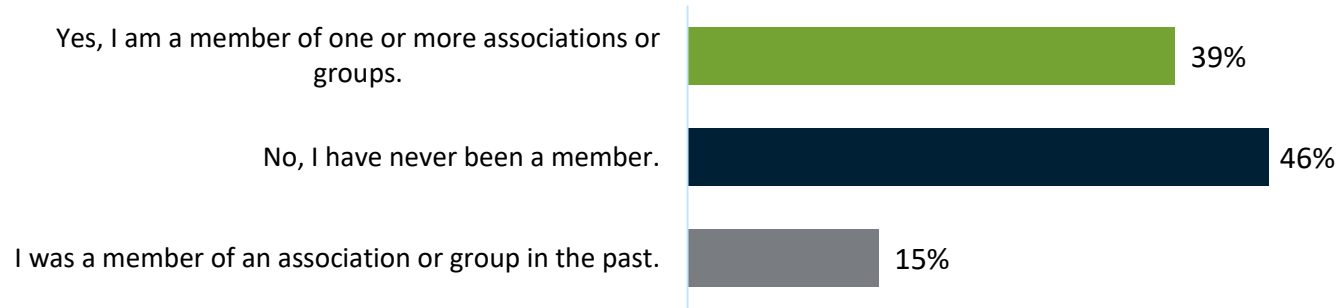
We asked participants if they are currently or have ever been members of any association or group focused on agriculture and food. **The key finding here is that 46% of young producers have never been members of any agricultural association or group.** This indicates a relatively low level of engagement with these organizations among younger producers.

Interestingly, this trend is not significantly different from the older generation, where 48% have never been members of an association. This suggests that membership levels in agricultural associations are consistently low across age groups, identifying a potential challenge for these organizations in attracting and retaining members.

While 39% of young producers are currently members, which is slightly higher than the 31% of older producers, the overall participation rates highlight an opportunity for agricultural associations to enhance their outreach and engagement strategies to better connect with both younger and older producers.

This difference in membership rates may also indicate a higher need for associations among younger producers who are finding their feet in the agriculture sector.

Are you currently or have you ever been a member of any association or group focused on agriculture and food? n= 442



Barriers to Membership in Agricultural Associations

The survey results highlighted several key barriers that prevented young producers from joining or remaining members of agricultural associations. The most significant barrier was **time constraints**, with 59% of respondents indicating that their schedules made it challenging to attend meetings, events, or participate in activities. This was particularly relevant for young producers, many of whom have off-farm jobs and spouses who also work. Additionally, the demands of children's activities, such as sports and other extracurriculars, require significant time and commitment.

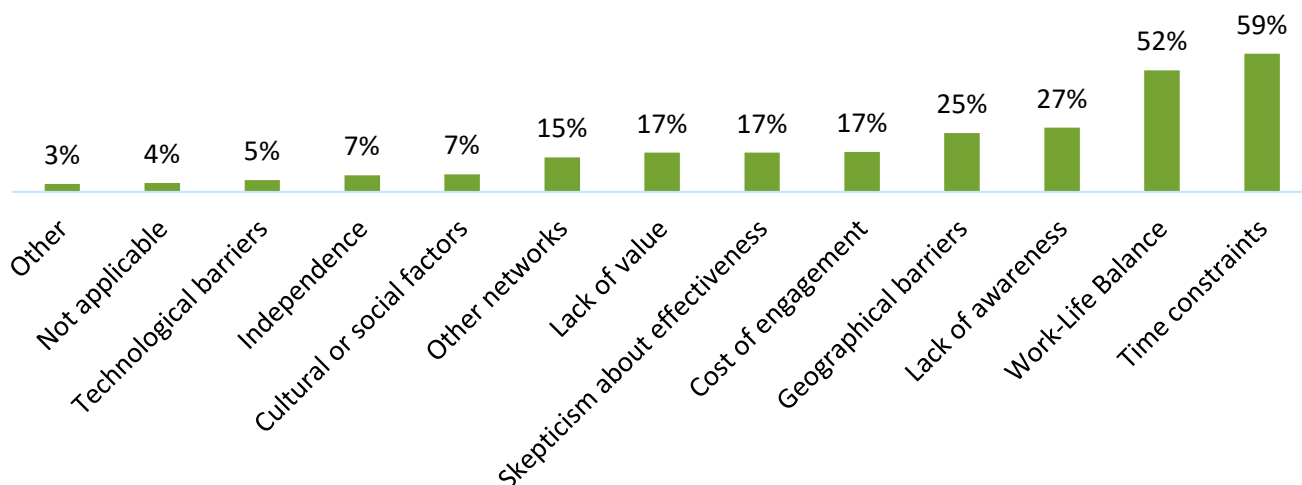
Time constraints as a barrier runs parallel to a broader trend where younger producers express a strong desire to create a sustainable balance between their agricultural responsibilities and personal lives. Not surprisingly then, 52% of respondents cited **work-life balance** as a major challenge and an inherent characteristic of the demanding nature of agriculture and food production.

Lack of awareness was also a notable barrier, with 27% of respondents not being aware of the benefits or existence of these associations or groups. This suggests a need for better communication and outreach from these organizations to highlight the value they could provide.

Geographical barriers impact 25% of respondents, making it difficult to attend events or meetings in person due to travel distances. This is particularly challenging in rural areas where travel could be time-consuming and costly.

These barriers are often compounded, making it even more challenging for young producers to participate in agricultural associations. Time and financial constraints, coupled with the difficulty of travel, create significant obstacles. By acknowledging and addressing these compounded barriers, associations can better support young producers and enhance their engagement.

What reasons would prevent you from being a member or caused you to stop being a member of an association or group? Select all that apply. n = 442



Future Involvement in Associations

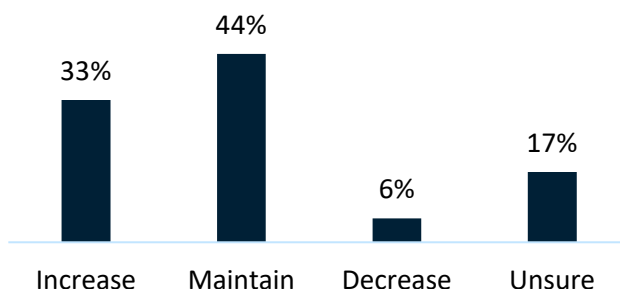
Participants were asked about their plans to increase, decrease, or maintain their current level of involvement in associations over the next five years.

The results are encouraging, as 33% of young producers are looking to **increase** their engagement with associations. This presents an opportunity for associations to address the barriers identified, such as time constraints, work-life balance, and lack of awareness, to better support and attract these young producers.

The fact that 44% plan to **maintain** their current level of involvement suggests a stable base of members who see value in their current engagement. However, the 17% who are **unsure** and the 6% who plan to **decrease** their involvement highlight areas where associations can improve their outreach and demonstrate their value more effectively.

These findings suggest that a lack of engagement does not necessarily stem from a lack of perceived benefit, but rather from barriers such as lack of awareness, ability to participate, and knowing which of the many associations to choose from. Addressing these barriers through improved communication, outreach, and support can help associations better connect with young producers and enhance their engagement.

Do you plan to increase, decrease, or maintain your current level of involvement in associations over the next five years? n= 442



“I think agriculture has to accept that the next generation wants a better work-life balance. We’re not lazy for wanting a 40-hour work week and organizing our farms to be run by one person part-time.”

Current Member | Quebec | 30 to 39



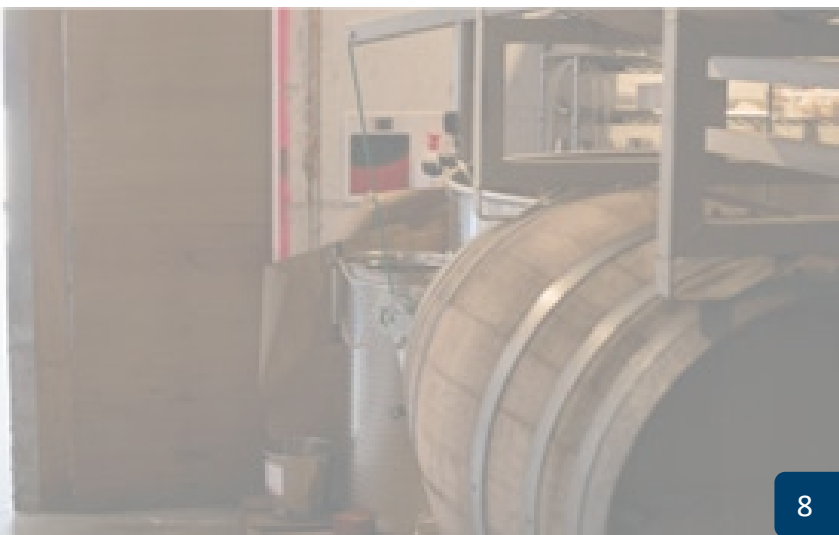
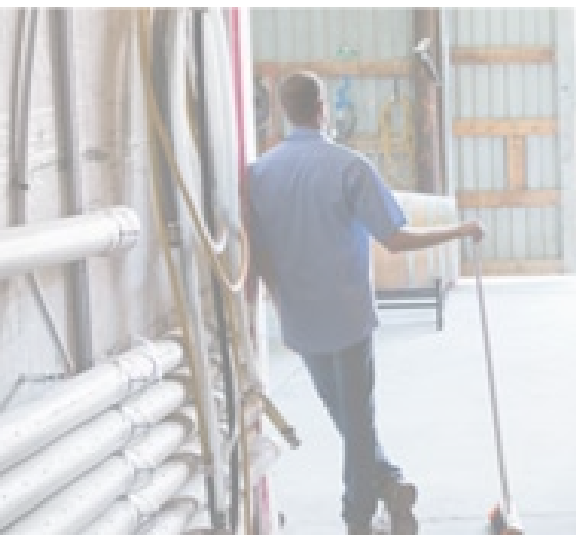
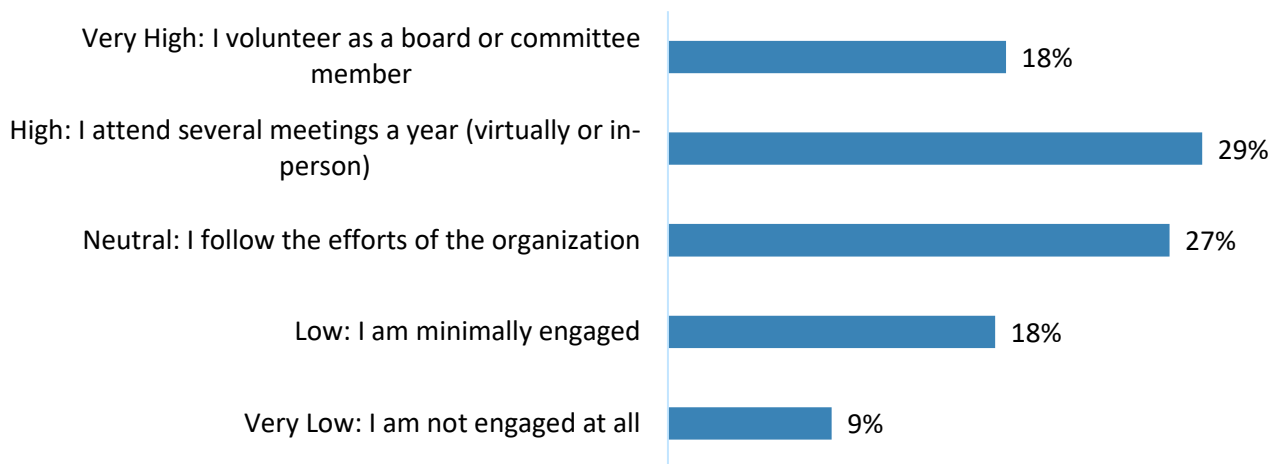
Current Level of Engagement

Participants were asked about their current level of engagement with agricultural associations or groups. 54% of young producers indicate low to neutral engagement, highlighting that **over half of the respondents are not actively interacting with associations** in a meaningful way.

This ties back to barriers identified earlier – time constraints, work-life balance and distance – all of which likely contribute to these lower levels of

engagement. Meanwhile, the remaining 47% of young producers surveyed *are* highly or very highly engaged, showing a strong potential for active participation if the barriers can be addressed.

How would you describe your overall level of engagement in activities or events organized by the associations or groups you are a member of? n= 171



Support from Industry Associations

Participants, both under 39 and over 39, were asked how existing industry associations or groups are doing overall in supporting young producers. The responses show some interesting differences between younger and older producers.

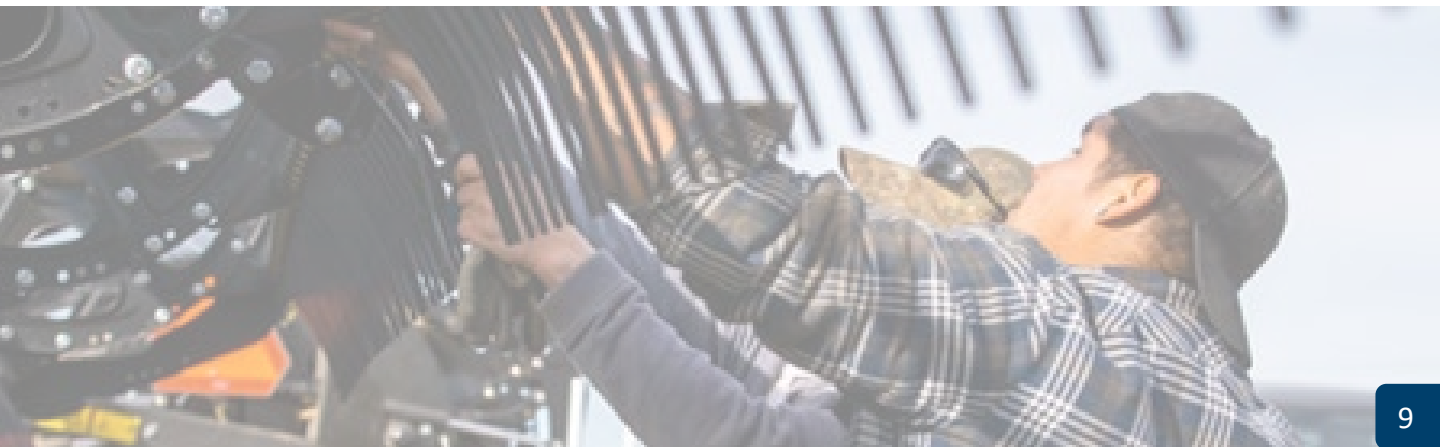
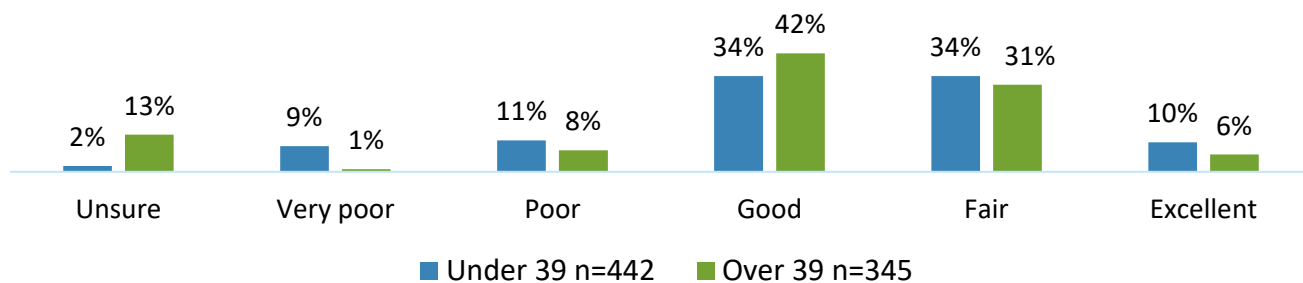
It is important to highlight that **only 10% of young producers feel that industry associations are doing an excellent job**, which is slightly higher than the 6% of older producers. This could indicate that younger producers have slightly more optimism or higher expectations for the support they receive from these associations.

One possible reason for this difference could be that younger producers are more engaged with

newer initiatives or programs specifically targeted at them, which might not be as visible or impactful to older producers. Additionally, younger producers may have a greater willingness to learn, seek out information, and be open to new things, which could contribute to their higher engagement levels.

However, the fact that a large portion of both younger and older producers rate the support as only fair or good suggests that there is still considerable room for improvement. Industry associations need to continue to evolve and address the specific needs and challenges faced by young producers to enhance their support and engagement.

When thinking of industry associations or groups, how do you feel they are doing as a whole in supporting young producers?



Representation in Industry Associations

Current and past members were asked whether they feel that the leadership and values of existing associations or groups represent the interests and needs of younger members. **While most young producers feel that their interests are represented (62%), a portion remains unsure or feels unrepresented (38%).** This sentiment is even more pronounced among older producers, with 49% feeling represented and 51% feeling unsure or feeling young producers are unrepresented by associations. From our in-person interviews and comment analysis, several key themes emerged that help to understand these perceptions:

Lack of Diversity:

Many industry associations are perceived as lacking diversity, which impacts their relevance to younger members. With the changing demographics of agriculture, diversity will be key in remaining relevant to young producers. According to Statistics Canada, there is a growing ethnocultural diversity among farm operators,

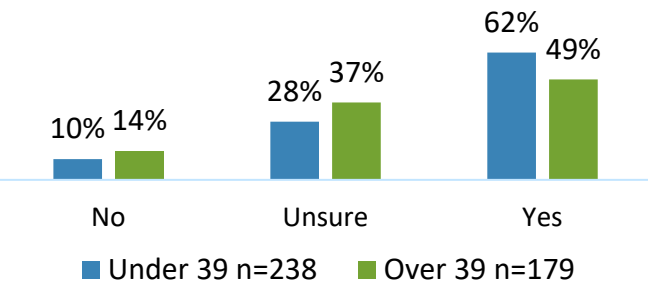
with more representation from various racialized groups and Indigenous communities.

Older Generation Leadership:

The management of many industry associations is often thought to be dominated by the older generation, leading to a potential disconnect between focus of leadership and needs of younger members. Additionally, younger producers feel that their innovative ideas and modern approaches are sometimes dismissed by the older leadership.

These insights highlight a potential misalignment between the needs and preferences of younger producers and the current structure and leadership of industry associations. Addressing these issues by promoting diversity, embracing innovation, and adapting to the changing demographics in agriculture and food can help associations better support and engage this vital demographic.

Do you feel that the leadership and values of associations or groups represent the interests and needs of younger members?



“Honestly, a lot of industry associations I’ve seen seem to be an “old man’s club”. While gleaning wisdom from experienced farmers is important, there doesn’t seem to be a big push to teach and condition the up-and-coming young farmers. Being a young farmer is hard enough to squeeze into those associations, let alone being a female.”

Current Member | Quebec | 30 to 39



Trust in Industry Associations

Trust is abundantly important: it can be seen as a reason to join, stay or leave an association. Participants were asked about trust in industry associations or groups as it pertained to data collection and in providing accurate information to members. Combining the top tiers, we see that **49% of young producers indicate trust or strong trust in associations** in this way. While this is a positive sign, it's important to note that of those, only 12% chose 'strongly trust', highlighting an opportunity for improvement.

At 37%, just as many participants felt 'neutral' about their trust in associations as 'trusting'. Our in-person interviews and comment analysis also found that there is less inherent trust in organizations, and more doubt in their value. This can stem from several factors:

Transparency Issues:

There are concerns about how data is collected, used and shared, all of which contributes to distrust. Data is a key part of modern agriculture, helping producers make informed decisions about crop management, resource use and sustainability. Clear guidelines for data use are essential to ensure transparency and build trust among producers.

Perceived Relevance:

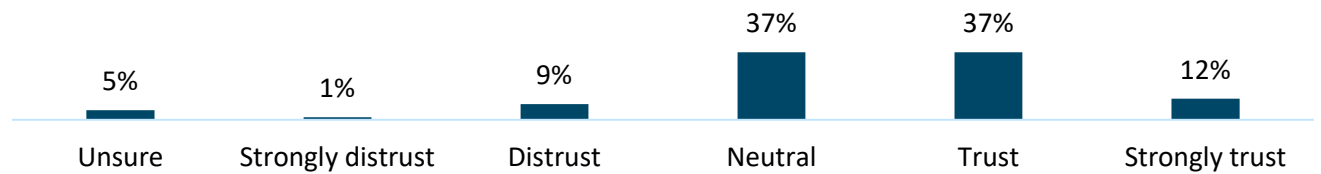
Younger producers might question the relevance and accuracy of the information provided by these associations, especially if it does not align

with their experiences or needs. For example, they may find that the information on traditional farming practices provided by associations is outdated compared to the innovative techniques and technologies they can access online. Many young producers have noted that they can find more current and practical agricultural resources through online platforms, which offer up-to-date research, precision agriculture tools, and e-agriculture systems. This makes it crucial for associations to provide timely, accurate, and innovative information to stay relevant and meet the evolving needs of younger producers.

We examined whether there was a difference in trust levels based on membership status in industry associations. This data indicates that higher levels of interaction with associations lead to higher trust levels. Current members, who are more engaged and have ongoing interactions with these associations, exhibit significantly higher trust compared to past members and those who have never been members.

These trust issues highlight the need for industry associations to build stronger relationships with young producers by promoting transparency and demonstrating the value of their data and information. By doing so, they can increase the level of strong trust and better support the younger generation of producers.

How much do you trust industry associations or groups with data collection and providing accurate information? n= 442



Event Attendance

To understand engagement, we asked panelists (n= 442) if they attended any events hosted by an association or group in the past two years. Combining the data, we see that **71% of young producers have participated** in an association event, whether in-person, virtual, or both. This high level of participation indicates that the majority of young producers are engaging with associations through events.

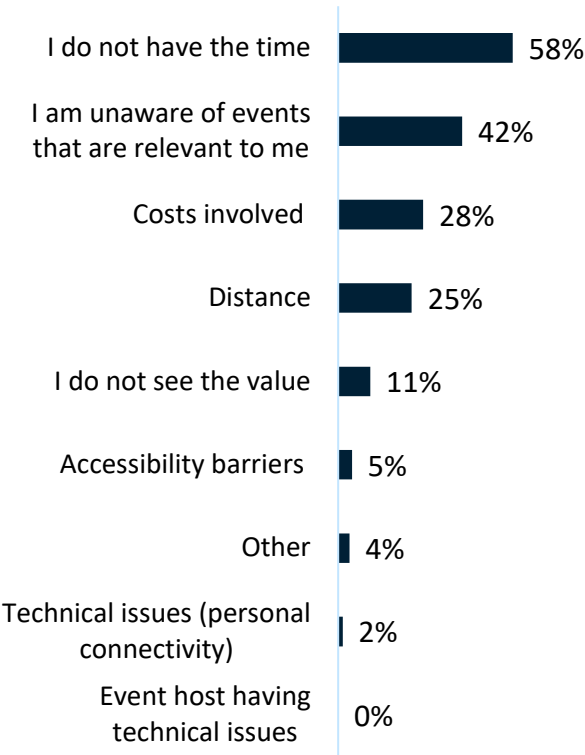
The flexibility of offering both in-person and virtual events likely contributes to this high participation rate, accommodating the diverse schedules and preferences of young producers. It also highlights that there is a demand for such events.

To delve deeper, we explored the reasons why the young producers (n=130) have not participated in any virtual or in-person events hosted by associations or groups. **Time and awareness are the biggest reasons young producers do not attend events.** The high percentage of respondents who do not have the time reflects the considerable time constraints faced by young producers, as discussed in previous sections. Balancing work, family, and personal commitments leaves little room for additional activities.

The lack of awareness about relevant events indicates an opportunity for better communication and outreach from associations. Ensuring that young producers are informed

about upcoming events and their potential benefits could help increase participation. Other notable barriers include the costs involved and the distance to events, which can be particularly challenging for those in rural areas. Addressing these barriers by offering more affordable and accessible event options can help improve engagement.

Why you have not participated in any events. Select all that apply. n= 130



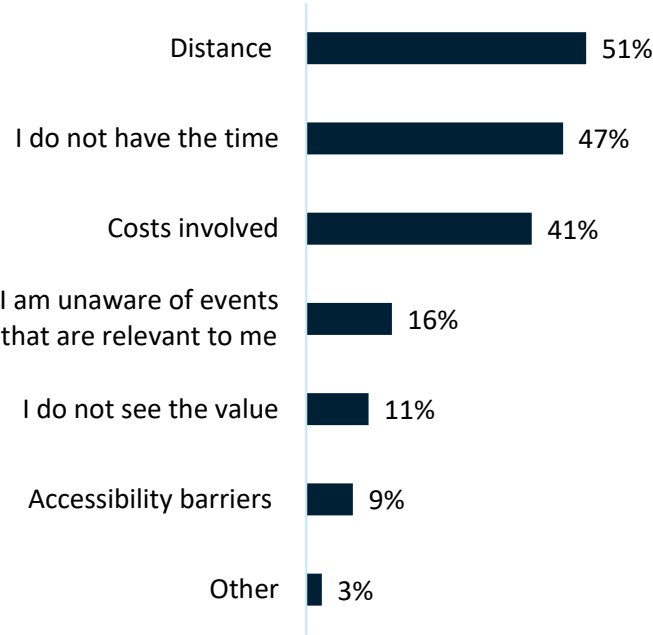
In-Person Event Attendance

To gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to attending in-person events, we asked panelists who indicated they do not go to in person events (n=70) why they have not participated in any in-person events hosted by associations or groups.

Young producers tell us that that **distance and time required to travel are the most significant barriers to attending in-person events.** Additionally, the costs associated, such as those incurred through travel and accommodation, can further limit participation.

During our in-person interviews, many young producers also mentioned family needs, such as ensuring their children are taken care of, and existing commitments including getting time off work. These factors add to the complexity of attending in-person events and reinforce the emphasis participants are placing on work-life balance.

Why you have not participated in any in person events. Select all that apply.
n= 70



Virtual Meetings

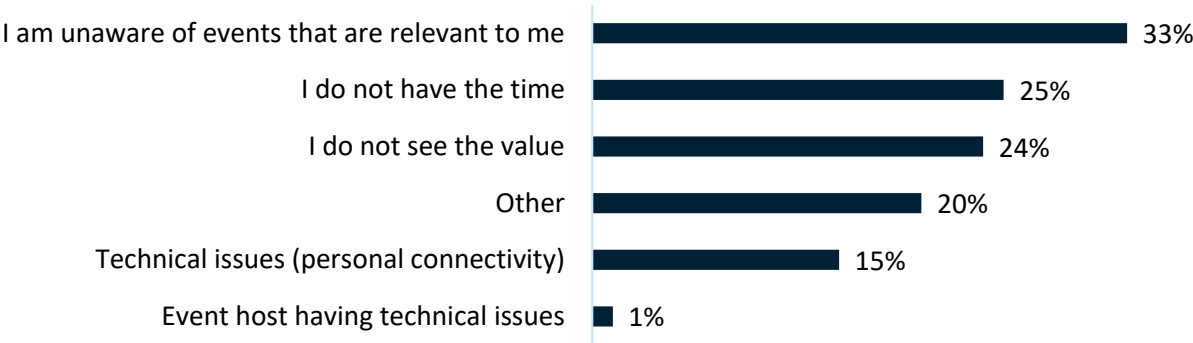
We also sought to understand why some young producers (n= 79) have not participated in any virtual events hosted by associations or groups. Primarily, survey results found that **young producers are often unaware of virtual events relevant to them.** This finding was also supported by our in-person interviews.

With so many young producers uninformed about current industry initiatives designed to support them, this lack of awareness is a significant barrier. There is an opportunity here to review how and where events are marketed, given the lack of awareness could be due to differences in how and where the younger generation looks for information compared to

how and where associations traditionally share it. Additionally, during our in-person interviews, young producers stated that they appreciate meetings that are structured, relevant, and to the point. They value efficient use of their time and prefer meetings that provide essential insights quickly. This preference suggests a need for more flexible and creative approaches to participation in these organizations.

These insights highlight the importance of improving communication and outreach to ensure young producers are aware of relevant virtual events.

Why you have not participated in any virtual events.
Select all that apply. n= 79



Effectiveness of Technology Use in Virtual Meetings

We sought to assess the effectiveness of modern technology in virtual meetings and information sharing sessions, tailoring the question to current association members (n= 171).

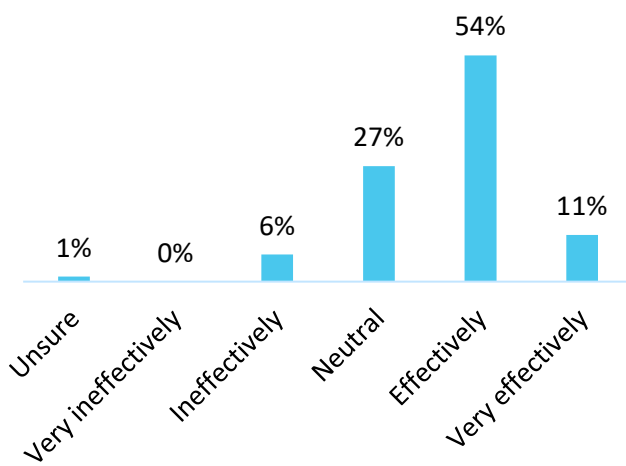
Of that group, **54% feel that associations are using technology 'effectively', and another 11% 'very effectively'**. This demonstrates that while the overall perception is positive, there is still opportunity to enhance the experience for attendees.

This relatively low percentage of very effective ratings suggests that the use of technology in virtual meetings is seen as unremarkable by many young producers. Insights from our in-person interviews and comments reveal that **young producers appreciate when technology is used to streamline communication and provide essential insights quickly.**

The feedback indicates that while associations are generally on the right track with their use of technology, there is a need to enhance the quality and effectiveness of virtual meetings. This could involve improving technical reliability

and ensuring meetings are highly relevant and engaging. To achieve this, it is crucial that hosts are proficient with the software (such as Teams or Zoom) and employ various online engagement techniques. Participants can become frustrated when their time is wasted due to hosts struggling with functions like screen sharing.

How effectively do you think associations or groups use modern technology for virtual meetings and information sharing? n= 171



Beneficial Programs and Initiatives

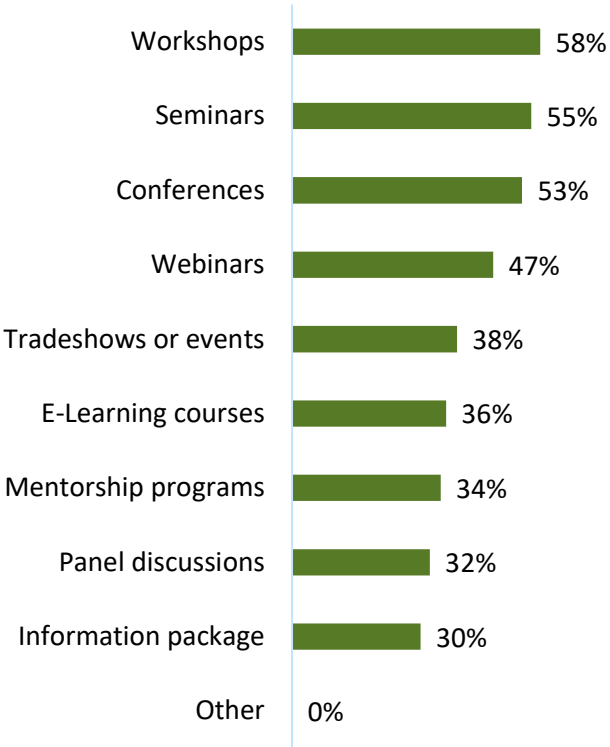
We asked current and past members (n=231) about their experiences engaging with programs and initiatives offered by associations. **Over half agree that the most value was delivered in three formats: hands-on workshops, seminars and conferences.** These types of events provide practical, interactive learning experiences that engage participants actively, making them highly effective.

Insights from our in-person interviews and comments reveal that **young producers see more value in tactical information that can positively impact their bottom line by helping them increase sales or decrease expenses.** In particular, they are looking for personalized advice and peer-to-peer mentoring tailored to their unique situations.

Findings suggest that associations should continue to offer a diverse range of programs while emphasizing hands-on and expert-led events to maximize engagement and benefit for young producers. Additionally, the demand for

practical and tactical information underscores the need for associations to provide resources that directly address the financial and operational challenges faced by young producers.

Which specific types of programs or initiatives offered by associations do you find most beneficial?
Select all that apply. n= 231



Beneficial Programs and Initiatives

Based on the feedback from young producers, there are some program ideas that associations could consider implementing or enhancing to better meet the needs of this group. These include:

Financial Planning and Risk Management Workshops:

Hands-on sessions focused on financial planning, budgeting, and risk management strategies. These workshops could include practical exercises on developing financial plans, understanding market trends, and mitigating risks such as weather and market fluctuations.

Personalized Mentorship Programs:

Pairing young producers with experienced mentors who can provide one-on-one guidance tailored to their unique situations. This program could include regular check-ins, goal-setting sessions, and personalized advice on various aspects of agriculture and food.

Government-Funding Navigation Assistance:

Programs designed to help young producers navigate the complexities of government funding and subsidy programs. This could include workshops, one-on-one consultations, and online resources that explain the application processes and eligibility criteria.

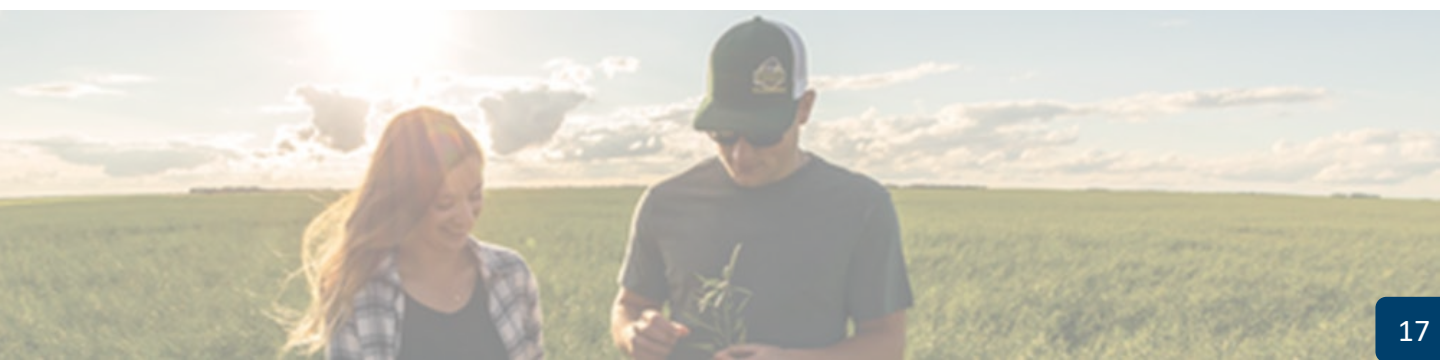
Advocacy and Policy Update Sessions:

Regular sessions that provide updates on policy changes, advocacy efforts, and regulatory developments affecting young producers. These could be delivered through webinars, newsletters, e-learning, and online portals.

By implementing and refining these programs, associations could better support young producers, addressing their specific needs and enhancing their engagement and participation. Additionally, associations can save young producers time and effort by keeping information up-to-date and easily accessible. This ensures that young producers have a trusted source for reliable and accurate information, making it one less thing for them to search for and allowing them to focus on their operations.

“More information on available grants and how to apply. More education on financial options including loans, purchasing with cash, and other ways of acquiring assets.”

Current Member | Ontario | 29 or younger



Preferred Communication Channels

We asked respondents about which channel(s) they prefer when receiving information about programs and services. **At 80% preference, email is the most effective method for reaching this group by far.** Social media is the second most preferred, highlighting its influence among young producers.

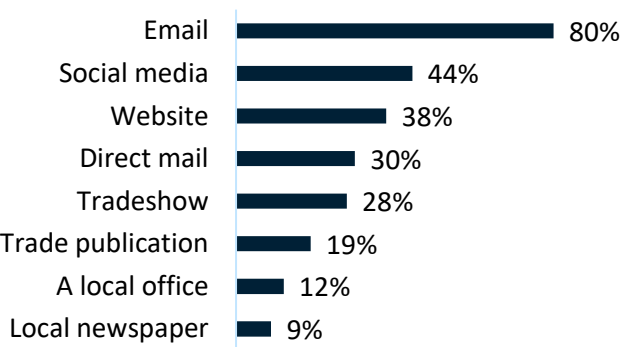
Insights from our in-person interviews and comments reveal that younger producers are accessing information and networking online. A strong social media presence could increase awareness of these events and help promote them to young producers.

Given the vastness of ‘social media’ as a category, we also investigated which specific platform(s) young producers use for farming-

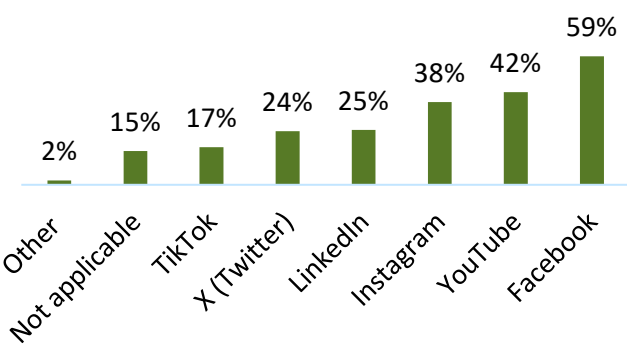
related information or networking. When using social media in this way, Facebook (59%) and YouTube (42%) are the most popular platforms. **Social media allows young producers to watch tutorials, gain insights, and adopt new techniques without needing to travel, saving both time and costs.** This online access helps young producers stay informed and improve their operations more efficiently.

While young producers still appreciate networking opportunities, the ability to connect with peers through social media reduces the need for in-person events strictly for networking purposes. They can now meet and exchange knowledge with anyone, anywhere, enhancing their skills and knowledge base without the constraints of physical events.

How do you prefer to get information about programs and services offered to young producers. Select all that apply. n= 442



Do you use any of the following social media platforms for farming information or networking? Select all that apply. n= 442



“One effective way to engage and reach out to younger generations is through platforms like TikTok and Instagram. By utilizing these platforms, you can encourage young people to join groups, associations, or initiatives that align with their interests and values. Whether through short videos, interactive posts, or collaborations with influencers they admire, social media can be a powerful tool for outreach and connection.”

Effective Support for Future Producers

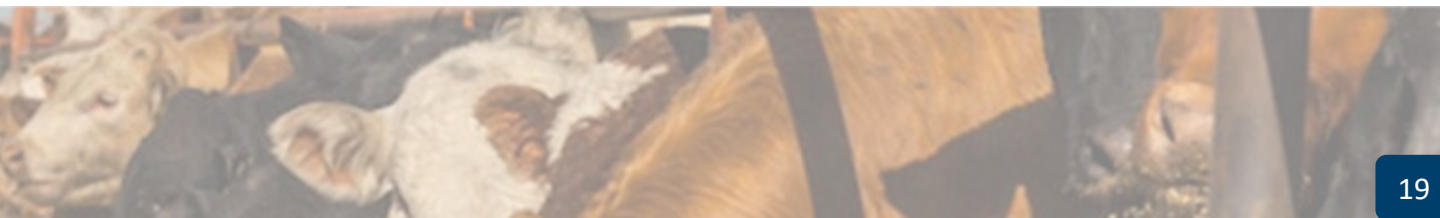
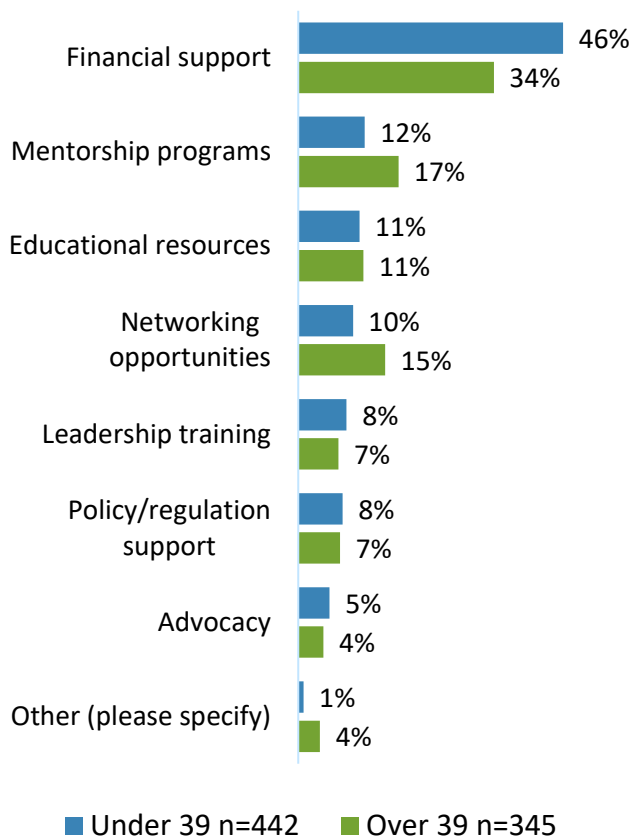
Participants were asked which types of support they believe would most effectively support the future generation of producers. The results show that **financial support is seen as the most effective way to help the future generation of producers**, especially among younger producers. The higher percentage of young producers who prioritise financial support reflects the significant financial barriers they face in entering and sustaining a career in agriculture and food.

In contrast, producers in later stages of their career place more emphasis on mentorship programs and networking opportunities. While young producers still see these as valuable, the immediacy of financial support is prioritised over mentorship and networking, which can be viewed as longer-term support mechanisms.

The need for consistent financial support was also highlighted in our in-person interviews. These young producers often struggle with the high costs of starting and maintaining a farm. They also expressed a need for personalised advice and peer-to-peer mentoring tailored to their unique situations. One young producer emphasised the need for an industry-wide push to adapt to the reality that it is no longer feasible for young producers to buy farms wholesale. Instead, promoting the idea of renting out farmland over selling it, with a well-laid-out incremental selling plan, could help the younger generation accrue the needed equity to enter the agriculture and food industry.

By focusing first on financial support and providing personalised advice and mentoring, associations can best support young producers in the industry as it exists today, ensuring a sustainable future for the agricultural and food sector. Financial support is and will continue to be foundational to success. The industry needs to adapt to the reality that older producers can't exit if they can't sell, and younger ones can't buy under the traditional model.

Which of the following do you believe would most effectively support the future generation of producers?



Benefits of Membership

Panelists were asked what benefits they have received from being a member of associations or groups. The results indicated that while **networking opportunities are the top benefit received by both younger and older producers, this does not align with the primary need identified in the support question.** Young producers have highlighted financial support as the most effective way to help the future generation of producers, yet only 13% report receiving financial support as a benefit from their association membership.

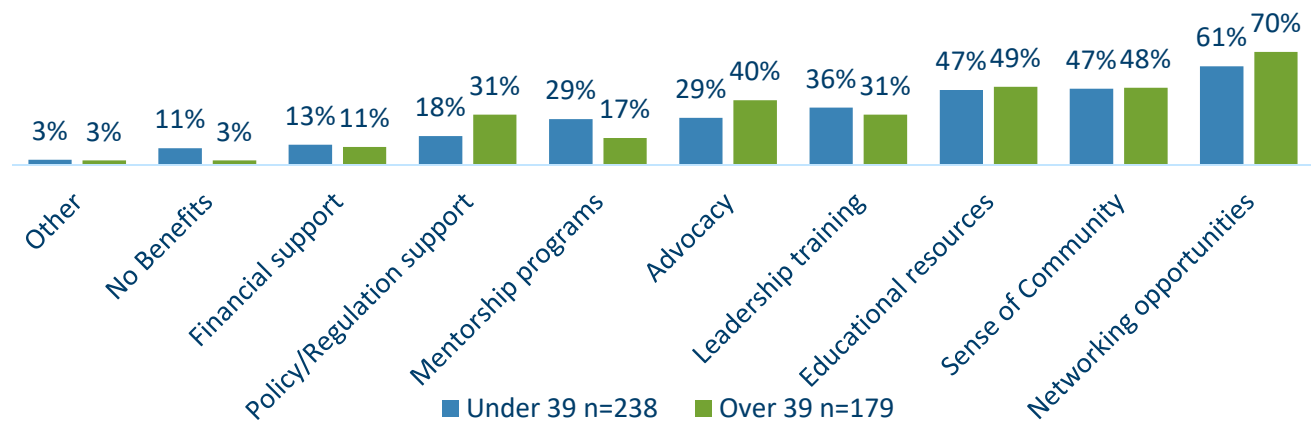
This discrepancy suggests that while **networking is valuable, it is not addressing the most pressing needs of young producers.** They are not necessarily asking for direct financial handouts but rather support in making their businesses financially viable. This includes help with financial assistance such as grants, subsidies, and financial planning. Understanding this gap between the benefits provided and the needs of young producers can help associations tailor their programs to offer more targeted financial support and practical advice, ensuring they are meeting the critical needs of the future generation of producers.

Additionally, there are notable differences between the younger and older producers. 29% of young producers benefit from mentorship programs, compared to 17% of older producers. This indicates a strong desire among younger producers for guidance and support from experienced mentors. 31% of older producers benefit from policy and regulation support, compared to only 18% of younger producers. This raises the question of whether associations are effectively communicating their policy support to younger members.

These differences highlight the need for associations to better communicate the full range of benefits they offer, particularly in areas like policy support and advocacy, which may not be as visible or understood by younger producers.

As the agricultural sector evolves, it is crucial for associations to adapt to the changing needs of producers at various stages of their careers. By reevaluating the current environment and ensuring their programs are up-to-date, associations can better partner with producers to provide the support they need.

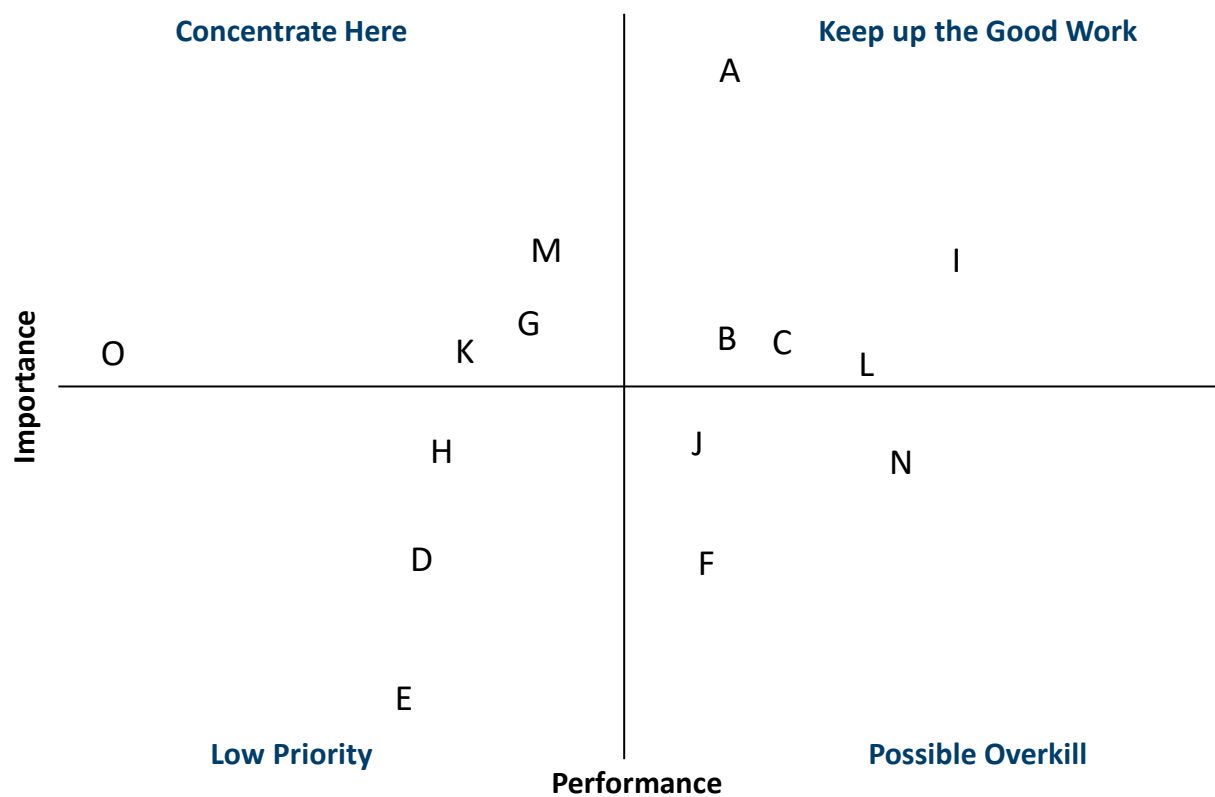
What benefits have you received from being a member of these associations or groups? Select all that apply.



Importance vs. Performance Matrix

To evaluate various aspects of support for young producers, we conducted an importance vs. performance analysis. In this matrix, importance is on the y-axis and performance is on the x-axis. The quadrants are labeled as follows:

- 1. Top left: High importance, low performance (Concentrate Here)
- 2. Top right: High importance, high performance (Keep Up the Good Work)
- 3. Bottom left: Low priority, low performance (Low Priority)
- 4. Bottom right: Low importance, high performance (Possible Overkill)



- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A. Financial Management | G. Risk Management | Opportunities |
| B. Transition/succession | H. Climate and Weather Information | K. Policy and Regulations |
| C. Economics | I. Crop and Livestock Management | L. Mental Health Support |
| D. Managing People | J. Networking and Mentorship | M. Advocacy For Young Farmers |
| E. Marketing and Branding | | N. Sustainable Practices |
| F. Digital Agriculture | | O. Land Access and Ownership |

Quadrant One: Concentrate Here

In this quadrant, we identified several key areas that are highly important to young producers but also an opportunity for improvement on the part of associations:

G. Risk Management:

- Effective risk management in agriculture is vital for young producers to maintain financial stability and sustainability by mitigating the adverse effects of unpredictable weather and market fluctuations.

K. Policy and Regulations:

- Young producers recognize a significant gap in support for navigating the complex and ever-changing laws and regulations affecting agriculture and food, highlighting the need for timely updates and guidance.

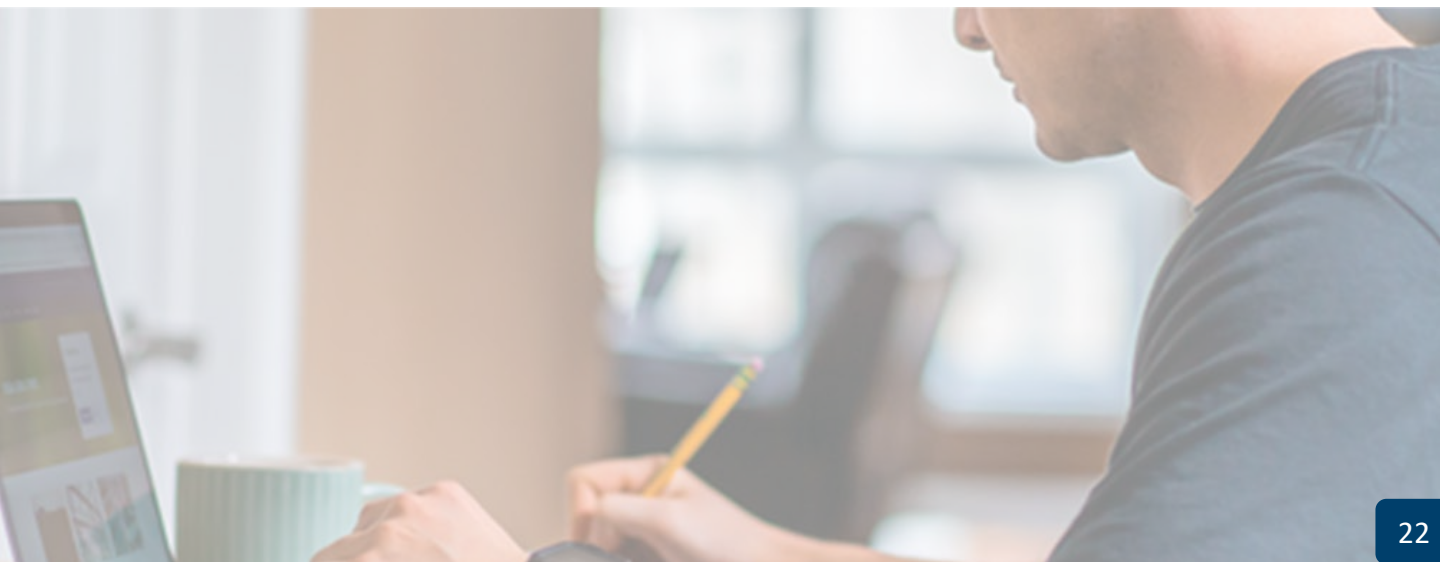
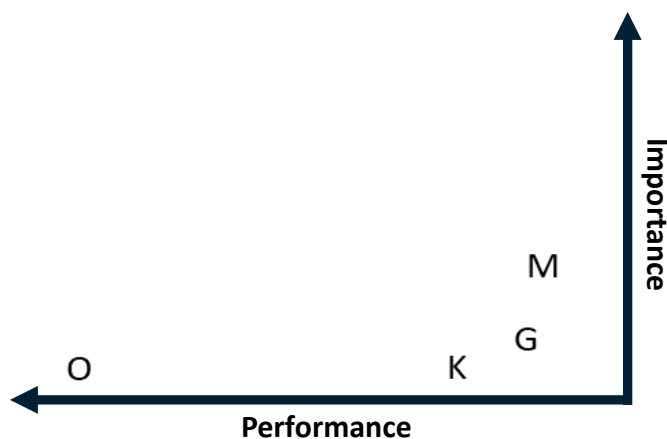
M. Advocacy for Young Farmers:

- From our in-person interviews, we discovered that young producers highly value associations that lobby the government on their behalf and work to enhance the public perception of the agriculture and food industry, emphasizing the importance of accessible support and resources for young producers.

O. Land Access and Ownership:

- Information on acquiring and managing farmland, including leasing options and government programs, had the lowest performance by associations, highlighting a critical need for better support in this area. Additionally, many comments emphasized the unaffordability of land, with young producers expressing that they will never be able to purchase agricultural land without significant support.

By focusing on these high-importance, low-performance areas, associations can more effectively address the critical needs of young producers as the sector naturally shifts with time, technology and world events.



Quadrant Two: Keep Up the Good Work

In the 'Keep Up the Good Work' quadrant, we identified several areas where associations are excelling and effectively meeting the high importance that young producers place on these aspects.

A. Financial Management:

- Information on budgeting, loans, and financial planning ranks highest in importance. This aligns with survey findings that financial support is crucial for young producers. Although performance in this area is good, there is still room for improvement to fully meet their needs.

B. Transition/Succession:

- Insights on succession planning and adopting new technologies are highly valued, reflecting the significant need for transition information in agriculture. Associations are performing well in this area, effectively helping young producers plan for the future.

C. Economics:

- Data on market trends and economic impacts on agriculture and food is another area where associations excel. This information is crucial for young producers to make informed decisions about their operations.

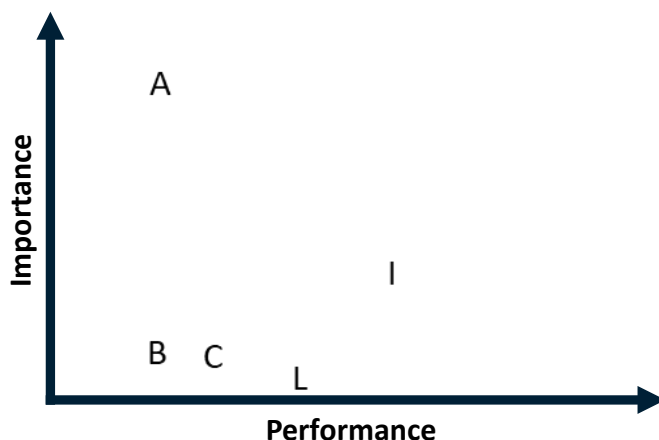
I. Crop and Livestock Management:

- Best practices for crop rotation, pest control, and livestock care are essential for successful farming operations. Associations are offering valuable guidance in these areas, helping young producers enhance their farming practices.

L. Mental Health Support:

- Resources for managing stress and mental well-being are highly valued. Given the pressures of agriculture and food, this support is crucial for maintaining the overall well-being of young producers.

Associations should be commended for their excellent work in these areas. The support provided is positively impacting young producers, helping them navigate the challenges of modern agriculture.



Quadrant Three: Low Priority

In the 'Low Priority' quadrant, we identified areas that are both low in importance and low in performance for young producers, and as such, these items are not the priority for associations to review at this time, or perhaps areas where associations are not expected to offer expertise.

D. Managing People:

- Tips on leadership and human resource management fall into the low priority category, indicating that young producers may not see immediate value in these areas compared to other support needs. However, as young producers grow their operations, these skills will become increasingly important for managing larger teams and more complex business challenges.

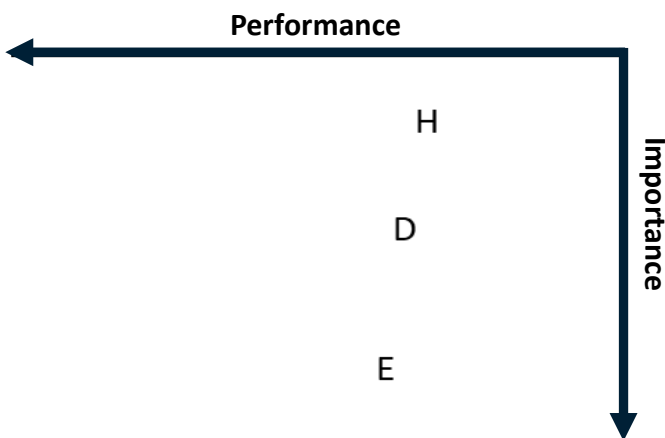
E. Marketing and Branding:

- Strategies for promoting and differentiating agriculture and food products had the lowest importance for young producers, suggesting that while marketing and branding are valuable, they are not currently seen as critical needs.

H. Climate and Weather Information:

- Access to reliable weather forecasts and climate adaptation strategies, while important, is not seen as a top priority for young producers compared to other pressing needs.

These findings suggest that while these areas are important, they do not require immediate focus compared to higher priority areas identified in the 'Concentrate Here' quadrant. Associations can allocate resources more effectively by prioritizing support in areas that young producers find most critical, such as financial support, risk management, and policy advocacy.



Quadrant Four: Possible Overkill

In the 'Possible Overkill' quadrant, we identified areas in which associations are performing well but are of lower importance to young producers.

F. Digital Agriculture:

- Information on using digital tools and technologies in farming is less critical for young producers, as they are already adept at accessing information online and through social media. This aligns with our findings that young producers prefer to obtain their information through digital channels, reducing the need for additional support from associations in this area.

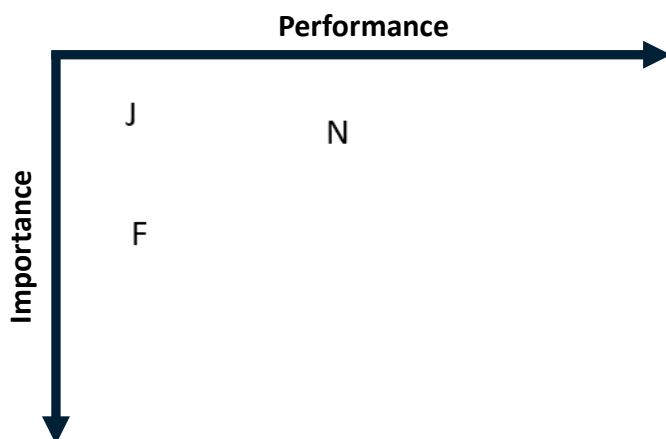
J. Networking and Mentorship Opportunities:

- Connecting with experienced producers and industry experts for guidance and support is an area where associations are performing well. However, it is not top of mind for young producers. This aligns with previous findings that, while networking is valuable, it does not address the most pressing needs of young producers, such as financial support.

N. Sustainable Practices:

- Information on sustainable farming practices is similar to digital agriculture in that young producers can easily find this information online. This reduces the need for associations to focus heavily on this area, as young producers are already accessing these resources independently.

These findings suggest that while associations are excelling in these areas, they may not need to prioritize them as highly. By understanding these dynamics, associations can ensure they are focusing their efforts on the areas that will have the most significant impact on young producers, providing the support they truly need to succeed.



Comment Analysis

Seeking to understand how best to ensure the viability and success of the next generation of producers, we asked: **"What changes or improvements do you believe are necessary in the agricultural industry?"**. The analysis of their responses revealed several key themes shared between groups:

Young producers (Under 39)

Financial Support and Access to Capital (45%):

- Emphasized the need for grants, subsidies, and lower interest loans due to high costs of land and equipment.

Land Access and Ownership (30%):

- Highlighted the need for affordable land and flexible ownership options.

Mentorship and Education (15%):

- Sought guidance from experienced producers and practical training.

Policy and Regulatory Support (10%):

- Called for policy changes to support new entrants and reduce red tape.

Older Producers (Over 39)

Mentorship and Succession Planning (40%):

- Stressed the importance of effective succession planning and mentorship.

Policy and Regulatory Support (25%):

- Highlighted the need for supportive policies and reduced regulatory burdens.

Financial Support and Access to Capital (20%):

- Recognized the importance of financial support.

Land Access and Ownership (15%):

- Noted concerns about land access and the impact of large corporate farms.

Both groups agree on the importance of financial support and policy changes. Young producers prioritize financial support and land access, while older producers focus on mentorship and succession planning. These insights highlight the need for targeted support to address the specific challenges faced by young producers and ensure effective transitions in the agricultural sector.

"Producer groups inviting young farmers to their meetings or conferences. Supporting them (financially) to get there. Showing them why it is important they are part of the industry and producer groups (i.e. lobbying, policy, public education). Also make it easier for families (with little children) to attend."

Past Member | Alberta | 30 to 39



Industry Associations Supporting Young Producers

We asked respondents: "**Are there any industry associations or groups that stand out in their support for young producers?**". We received 157 comments and certain organizations stood out to panelists:

4-H Canada:

- Frequently mentioned for teaching life skills and preparing members to be positive role models in society. Producers appreciate the localized support and engagement these programs offer.

Canadian Cattlemen's Young Leaders:

- Valued for its mentorship opportunities and tailored support for young cattle producers. The program offers highly tailored mentorships, travel opportunities, and a wide variety of learning experiences.

Young Agrarians:

- Noted for its focus on land access, farm succession, and community building. This organization is dedicated to supporting young, sustainable farmers across Canada.

Dairy Farmers of Canada:

- Respondents praised DFC for advocating for the dairy industry, creating stable conditions, and offering inclusive and educational programs. Their **Dairy Farmers of Tomorrow** campaign and community engagement efforts were also highlighted.

Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec:

- FRAQ is highly regarded for its efforts to improve the conditions for young farmers in Quebec. Respondents highlighted FRAQ for providing "*information and concrete help*" and for their dedication to advocating for young farmers and ensuring their voices are heard.

The importance and benefits of youth programs, financial support, and mentorship opportunities is clear, and acknowledged by this generation of young producers accessing these services. By continuing to invest in these areas, industry associations can ensure they are meeting the needs of young producers, fostering a continuation of a sustainable and resilient agricultural and food sector for generations to come.

"As one of the largest national organizations representing farmers and farm families in Canada, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture plays a crucial role in advocating for policies that support young farmers. While the CFA is not exclusively focused on young farmers, it has made significant strides in recent years to address the needs of this demographic."

Current Member | New Brunswick | 30 to 39

Conclusion and Recommendations

The comprehensive survey and in-person interviews with young producers provided valuable insights into their needs and the effectiveness of current support from industry associations.

Key Insights

The survey revealed moderate engagement levels among young producers, with time constraints being a significant barrier to participation. While networking opportunities are recognized as valuable, they are not the top priority for young producers, who place a higher emphasis on financial support and practical advice on farm management. The importance vs. performance matrix identified critical areas for improvement, including risk management, policy support, advocacy, and land access.

Recommendations

To enhance support for young producers and ensure their success in the agricultural sector, we recommend the following actions:

Enhanced Financial Support:

- Provide more targeted financial advice and support, including grants, subsidies, and financial planning resources. This will help young producers manage risk, understand pricing, and navigate financial challenges.

Improve Communication and Outreach:

- Increase efforts to inform young producers about relevant events, programs, and benefits through preferred channels like email and social media. Effective communication is crucial for increasing awareness and engagement.

Address Time Constraints:

- Offer more flexible participation options, such as shorter and more focused meetings, to accommodate the busy schedules of young producers. This will help overcome the considerable time constraints that hinder participation.

By implementing these recommendations, industry associations can better support young producers, ensuring they receive the comprehensive and practical assistance needed to succeed in the agricultural and food sector. This will foster a competitive, resilient, and sustainable agricultural future for Canada.

“Better financial support, or at least more information if there is adequate programs out there. It's expensive to take over a farm and near impossible to start a new one. Opening the doors for young people to take up a practice in today's economy is crucial to support family farms, or any small / family-based business.”

Past Member | Saskatchewan | 29 or younger



Roundtable Background

On February 24th, FCC representatives facilitated a roundtable workshop at the CFA office with 30 young producers from across Canada. The young farmers were in Ottawa to attend the CFA AGM and represented a diverse range of commodities and provinces. The discussion was centered around the Young Producer research report, the result of a partnership between CFA and FCC.

The roundtable conversation was focused on exploring topics identified in two quadrants of the Importance vs Performance matrix featured on page 21-23 of the report; Concentrate Here and Keep up the Good Work. Participants shared individual challenges they experience in their day-to-day operations. Working in groups, they identified the type of supports and resources they felt would be beneficial in each category. The comments have been summarized below, and the top requests from young farmers identified.

Land Access and Ownership

Challenges	Supports requested from young farmers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High land costs make it unaffordable for agricultural purposes (can't cash flow)• Difficulty competing with other sectors and large investors or developers buying land for non-agricultural uses.• Reduced desire to sell by landowners due to increasing land values (holding on to land assets).• Lack of land-use planning in some provinces.• High costs to clear farmable land.• Financing barriers, such as the need to put up generational land as collateral.	<p>Regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government regulations to protect agricultural land from non-farm use• Incentivizing sales to young farmers through tactics like rebates or tax credits for sellers <p>Financing options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interest-only loans and longer amortization periods to improve cash flow• Financial aid or additional monetary support from associations to access land, as well as financial aid for new entrants. <p>Land access information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land database / land bank; a registry of land that is available for lease, rent or potential rent-to-own models.• Resources on land-use regulations.

Succession / transition

Challenges	Supports requested from young farmers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-traditional transfers and family dynamics complicate succession• There seems to be a lack of urgency and knowledge in the older generation about transitioning• Tax and financial implications are hard to navigate• Younger generation feels like the older generation ‘hold the cards’ but aren’t always willing to start the succession conversation.	<p>Highlighting success stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create well-documented successful succession stories or business cases. Have these shareable in multiple formats (written, social media, video, etc) <p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host events designed for attendance by multiple generations to help get the ball rolling. <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide referrals to lawyers and accountants who are well-versed in agriculture and transitions.• Create targeted resources for the ‘seller’: highlight capital gains exemptions, taxes, retirement, wills and corporate shares – the topics that are most important to the exiting generation.



Financial Management

Challenges	Supports requested from young farmers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With the challenges of land costs, inputs, etc. it is more important than ever for a farm to be run like a business.• Young farmers need resources and training in financial management but can be strapped for time to make it a priority.	<p>Online webinars / courses for financial literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business planning• Cost of production• Taxes• Cashflow analysis• Investment information for diversification and risk management <p>Peer Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities to communicate with people from varying situations who can be valuable sources of information



Crop and Livestock Management

Challenges	Supports requested from young farmers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding markets and market opportunities can be difficult.• Sometimes an apparent lack of new research to advance production and productivity.	<p>Research and extension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resources and research to enhance efficiency and productivity.• Information to understand the ROI of new technologies and aid in their adoption. <p>Business resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commodity marketing guides.• Financial support to aid in adopting new technology and sustainable practices.



Mental Health

Challenges	Supports requested from young farmers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">There’s still a need to break down mental health stigmas and get people talking.	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mental health awareness and training for producers, their families, etc. (available both online and in person)Ag-trained counsellors that can understand the situations producers are going through.



Advocacy for young farmers (participation in industry associations)

Challenges	Supports requested from young farmers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young farmers can feel intimidated to join associations• Time constraints to attend meetings and participate in association activities	<p>Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentorship programs pairing young farmers with experienced farmers.• Associations to connect with youth programs (e.g. 4-H) so they’re already connected and familiar with the association by the time they are adults• A tool to connect young farmers with appropriate organizations or associations.



Overall feedback from young farmers

Increase awareness of association value; improve resource accessibility

- Many young producers are unaware of the support associations can provide unless they're members. Consider creating more awareness around available grants and resources and make it easier for young producers to find and access these tools.
- Discussion during the roundtable was consistent with Vision Panel survey findings; many young farmers are working off-farm jobs in addition to running their operations and don't have additional capacity. If they understand the value associations provide around key topics and challenges, they're more likely to get engaged.

Support for land access and ownership

- Help address the challenges young farmers face in accessing and owning land. This includes government support, catalyzing the creation of regulations to prevent non-ag land purchases and investor farms from paying over value, and providing financial aid or grants for young farmers.

Improving financial management training

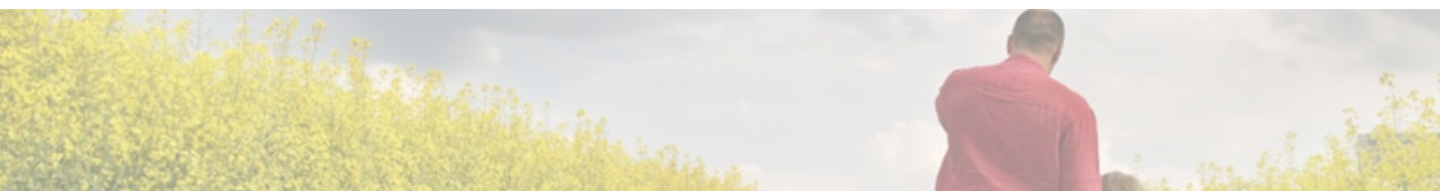
- Enhance financial management education
- Provide more online resources, learning tools and workshops focused on financial management. Topics could include cash flow analysis, cost of production, taxes, and renting vs buying. Improve awareness of these resources with young farmers.

Support succession planning

- Offer educational materials and events focused on succession planning. Highlight success stories, provide access to lawyers and accountants well-versed in agriculture.
- Young producers are taking advantage of the supports offered to them, but don't feel their parents/older generation are. Many participants suggested creating content that is targeted at the exiting generations key concerns (tax benefits, retirement income streams, etc.) and that helps them better understand considerations in the transition process.

Partner with other leaders in the industry to provide resources

- There's an opportunity for industry associations and organizations to continue (and enhance) collaboration efforts on resources for young farmers.
- Instead of developing new resources for each challenge, a concerted effort to cross-promote and increase awareness and accessibility of existing tools would be beneficial. This maximizes the impact of available resources and fosters a more cohesive support network for young producers





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