

BACKGROUND

Representativeness. The *Farm Producers Act* specifies that only association at a time may be certified to represent Quebec farm producers. To obtain this status, the association must demonstrate to the Régie des marchés agricoles et alimentaires du Québec (RMAAQ) that it is representative of all producers. As the certified association, the UPA is required to defend and represent the interests of all farm producers in Quebec.

Satisfaction. The Act also stipulates that any farmers' union or association that is able to demonstrate to the RMAAQ that it is now the organization that is representative of farm producers may become certified instead. This rule guarantees to the legislator that the certified association must act in the interest of all producers at all times and maintain a high level of satisfaction among producers, thereby ensuring its representativeness.

Fairness. While they are under no obligation to become members of the UPA, farm producers are required to pay assessments. This is an issue of fairness. Since all farm producers benefit from the actions and demands of the certified association (e.g., with respect to farm income stabilization insurance, municipal taxes and the farmland tax credit program, electronic billing in the agriculture sector, the assistance program), it makes sense that all should help pay for it. Producers are not required to be UPA members to receive negotiated benefits.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

Needed now more than ever. Certain organizations, particularly at the margins of the farming world, question the idea of a certified association. But in the context of globalization and concentration within the agricultural sector, farm producers need to be able to come together in a single organization to make their concerns and expectations heard—now more than ever before. This is borne out by the wide consensus among farmers: over 95% of Quebec producers voluntarily belong to the UPA.

Debunking myths. In the face of myths and appeals to the public, the concept of sole certification—and, by extension, the UPA itself—have come under criticism and attack. It is important to set the record straight, to talk about the system's advantages, and to eliminate the falsehoods that still persist.

- **There is no monopoly.** The claim that Quebec has a “farm union monopoly” is false. There are several other farm unions (e.g., the Union paysanne, the Céréaliers du Québec, the Conseil des entrepreneurs agricoles, the Union des acériculteurs libres) that can all unite their members and express their points of view.

- **Membership is not mandatory.** Farmers are not legally obligated to have UPA membership to keep their status as producers. The payment of assessments is mandatory, which is completely normal because all producers benefit from the conditions negotiated.

The UPA represents and defends the interests of all producers. The UPA is legally required to represent all Quebec farmers—members and non-members—regardless of the size of their business, their type of production, or their region. A number of producers’ groups (12 regional federations and 26 production types) are affiliated with the UPA, and over 90% of Quebec farmers are members.

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