

*Document for ambassadors
responsible for welcoming new producers*

REFERENCE DOCUMENT: Q&A

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE UPA?

Farm producers have chosen to create a strong organization to represent them.

The UPA's mission is to:

- Represent producers and defend their interests
- Cooperate with others organizations working to achieve similar aims
- Conduct studies and analyses on the production and marketing of farm products, and on any other topics that might affect the economic and social conditions of farmers
- Promote and advance the farming profession
- Ensure the long-term survival of Quebec agriculture

The UPA is:

- A voice that represents farmers within various bodies and committees
- Nearly 2,000 directors on the ground to listen to your concerns
- An organization "by farmers, for farmers" that offers:
 - ✓ Access to specialized agricultural services
 - ✓ Opportunities to network with other producers
 - ✓ Help and referrals for farm businesses (local syndicates, regional federations) and agricultural production (specialized syndicates and federations, as applicable)
 - ✓ A place to defend farmers' interests and rights

WHY SHOULD I BECOME A MEMBER OF THE UPA? IS MEMBERSHIP A REQUIREMENT?

Note: See also the welcome brochure for new producers.

- Membership is voluntary and does not cost anything extra. And there are many benefits!
 - ✓ Staying up to date on farming issues and activities
 - ✓ Being actively involved in setting the UPA's strategic directions and voting at meetings
 - ✓ Meeting other farmers and discussing your situations

- ✓ Being involved in the organization and having the opportunity to represent other farmers within your territory or production sector
- ✓ Taking advantage of numerous other benefits, including a free subscription to *La Terre de chez nous* for three months (or six months for new UPA members), disability insurance, and accidental death insurance (\$2,000)

DOES THE UPA MAINLY REPRESENT LARGE FARM BUSINESSES?

- The UPA has a mandate to represent all Quebec farmers, regardless of how big or small their business is, what they produce, or where they are located. It represents Quebec's 28,000 farms, a third of which have gross incomes of \$50,000 or less.
- These businesses are highly diverse, operating both in traditional sectors (beef, grains, maple, poultry, etc.) and in emerging ones (organic, goats, honey, etc.). On their own, these farms would not be able to provide services comparable to those developed by the UPA.

HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE WITHIN THE UPA? WHY DOES THE UPA TAKE POSITIONS ON DIFFERENT ISSUES?

- Decisions are made and strategic directions are set democratically within the UPA, based on the requests and needs expressed by members.
- Producers put forth their requests at syndicate-level annual general meetings and in consultations. Farmers elected to boards of directors follow up on these requests.
- The UPA takes a position if it receives a mandate from producers to do so, or in order to fulfil its mission of defending farm and forestry producers, whether by improving their conditions or criticizing proposals that stand in the way of them exercising their profession.

THE UPA IS A MONOPOLY. SHOULDN'T I BE ABLE TO CHOOSE FROM MORE THAN ONE ASSOCIATION?

Note: See also the fact sheet entitled *The UPA as a Certified Union*.

- There are no farm union monopolies in Quebec or in Canada as a whole. Under both the federal and provincial charters of rights and freedoms, any group of individuals may gather and associate; this is known as freedom of association.
- Freedom of association is reflected in the existence of other producers' associations (e.g., the Union paysanne, Céréaliers du Québec Inc.). The UPA is simply the association that is officially certified and recognized to represent all farm producers in Quebec.
- The reasons for this type of certification have to do with the nature of the farming sector itself. The number of producers is large, while the number of entities they deal with—whether this be government, buyers, or suppliers—is very small. Having a single certified association helps keep these forces in balance. It also fosters cohesion, making it easier for people to work or do business with farmers.

DOES THE UPA STILL SERVE A PURPOSE TODAY?

- All around the world, farmers struggle to get a fair price for their products because they lack the proper defence. Buyers today go abroad in search of profits. The approximately 29,000 farms in Quebec are not exempt from this trend; they need to be represented by a single voice.

- Open markets and economic concentration, both nationally and globally, point to the need for a single association that is strong enough to keep the different forces in balance and protect the agricultural model Quebecers prefer. It's a matter of food sovereignty.

IS THE UPA INDEPENDENT FROM GOVERNMENT?

- The UPA is fully autonomous and independent because its financing comes from producers. It makes regular appearances before parliamentary committees and submits about ten briefs per year. These actions help improve bills to benefit farmers, helps farmers gain (or avoid losing) ground, and limit the losses absorbed by the agricultural sector.

WHAT IS THE UPA DOING TO HELP PREVENT LAND GRABBING AND SECURE MORE ACCESS TO FARMLAND FOR THE NEXT GENERATION?

- The UPA forms alliances with partners and frequently makes representations to the Quebec government in order to strengthen protections for the agricultural zone, help young farmers get started, and limit and/or prohibit the purchasing of farmland by investment companies and stakeholders in the real estate sector.
- In 2019, the UPA and Fondation established a not-for-profit social trust called the Fiducie UPA-Fondation, in an effort to protect farmland from speculation and increase access to it for the next generation of farmers. This independent trust buys land at fair market value for use in agricultural projects led by new farmers and existing consolidating businesses. To find out more, visit the website at www.fiducieagricole.com.

UPA FINANCING

Why am I required to pay mandatory dues to the UPA?

While there is no requirement to become a member of the UPA, farmers are required to pay annual dues in the form of an assessment. The *Professional Syndicates Act* gives all certified associations the right to collect a financial contribution from all persons represented by the organization (under the Rand Formula). All farm producers benefit from the actions of the organization that officially represents them. Therefore, for the sake of fairness, all farmers must help finance it. The assessment amount is set annually at the UPA General Congress following an extensive consultation process.

What does the UPA do with producers' money?

See the fact sheet entitled *How UPA Financing Works and What the Money Is Used For* and the brochure entitled *Welcome to Agriculture*.

How does paying my dues benefit me financially?

The money you pay in dues is easily offset:

- Farm producers are exempt from transfer taxes (except within the white zone).
- Farm producers get a 70% reimbursement on their property taxes (municipal and school taxes) when they register with the MAPAQ. (In most cases, the reimbursement amount is several times the cost of the mandatory assessment, except within the white zone.) Farmers who rent their land may also indirectly benefit from the property tax credit, which lowers rental costs.
- In farm sales or transfers, farm producers are exempt from capital gains tax on the first \$750,000. This is one of the benefits the UPA pushed for and succeeded in obtaining.

COLLECTIVE MARKETING AND JOINT PLANS

Note: See also the fact sheet entitled *Collective Marketing*.

What are joint plans?

- Joint plans are part of a system governed by the *Act respecting the marketing of agricultural, food and fish products*, which enables farm producers to organize their production and marketing collectively. Joint plans may set out rules for selling their products and securing fairer prices, ensuring that buyers have a regular supply of quality products, etc. This model ensures a more equitable power balance between producers and buyers, as seen in the fair trade model.

Why am I subject to certain rules and regulations when I produce and sell my products?

- Some regulations come from laws set by the government.
 - Rules set out in joint plans come from decisions made democratically by producers. Once approved, marketing conditions apply across the board to all producers within a given production type, as well as to buyers (prices, payment timelines, units of measurement, quality standards, etc.). This ensures superior production, more orderly marketing, and a more growth-friendly business environment. It also makes it possible to pool resources to foster sector development (through expertise, promotion, research, new markets, etc.).
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