



Holland Marsh – Saving the land sometimes just ain’t enough

Welcome to the fifth of seven video clips that are being brought to you by the Holland Marsh Growers’ Association (HMGA) – with our thanks. This is an area that has been around for nearly 100 years; is recognized around the world for productivity and economies of scale; has a diversity found nowhere in Ontario; and yet, it exists on no map of Ontario. It is renowned for its organic-like soil, its black soil responsible for the creation of both a unique micro-climate and the ability to produce safe, quality products, and its farmers working side-by-side, without fences, in a community-like setting.

We live in interesting times. It is an old saying, very much cliché and very much true. Take, for example, the land use within the province of Ontario – although we need not limit ourselves to just this one jurisdiction. There are many organizations (and individuals) that promote smart land use – the HMGA being one of them. The reason behind the HMGA support is two-fold: Canada (and Ontario) has a limited supply of land that is used for growing edible crops; and two – saving the land doesn’t work as well without the concept of saving the farmer. Save the farmer; Save the Land – it is something that many of the farmers tend to believe because they understand the limited and precious resource our land truly is while acknowledging that their profound profession edges closer to being placed upon the endangered species list. Less than 1.4 per cent of the population of Canada (and well less than 50,000 farmers in Ontario) are all that remains of these pillars of our society.

And then, there are our soils. Classes 1-4 (including the class 0 lands considered to be the Holland Marsh and area) are ideal for growing the fruits and vegetables that today’s consumers have grown accustomed to. And yet, like the thousands of years of civilization that has preceded our North American society, most of those highly productive lands are rapidly disappearing – for too many reasons. The bottom line is that soil erosion and degradation (whether it is through climatic conditions for top soil blowing away at a rate of three tons per acre per year – virtually guaranteeing another 1930s dust bowl within a short time frame) is taking place in the here and now. In fact, there are many scientists who have begun to determine top soil remains in terms of decades, estimating that there is only enough of that precious top two to eight inches of life-giving, plant-growing soils around for 60 years of existence, given current conditions. Even in the Holland Marsh, its organic-based soils are measured in less than centennial terms, limiting generational use – if more is not done to curb the greatest threat facing farming in Ontario (and other areas); urbanized pressure that is unsustainable and recognized as such by the farming community throughout the province and Canada.

That urbanized pressure, by the way, is the way that the cycles of civilization have unfolded from time immortal – because cities naturally grow up around the locations

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where an agricultural presence is found. Access to markets has, after all, been the reason why cities and city-states have developed the way they have. Toronto was the location to some of the largest areas of class 1 soils in North America – hence the reason why it built up the way that it did. It had no choice – there was access to a safe and healthy food source, including pigs, and the real reason why Toronto is known as “Hogtown”.

This week’s video is about just that – entitled: “The Land, Our Precious Resource”. From a farmer’s perspective, it details their opinions on something that holds their hopes, dreams, and ambitions. The land is their home, their business, and where they “play” – and it is as much in their blood as is the actual business of farming. It really is something to behold. Canada is the second largest nation in the world, and yet less than four per cent of its land is arable – and being reduced every year. Every farmer, ever the eternal optimist, wants only for the best – now and into the future.

Save the farmer, Save the Land. At its core, they are words to live by. Enjoy at your leisure – and we’ll be bringing you another clip next week. This clip will also be put up on the Holland Marsh Growers’ Association website (www.hollandmarshgold.com) and its YouTube channel. Feel free to pass it on – all of them. Until next week . . .

The Land Our Precious Resource

<https://vimeo.com/channels/561387>

And for those who missed our previous clips, far be it for us to forget about it:

1. Feeding the Golden Horseshoe & Beyond

<https://vimeo.com/channels/561042>

2. Safe Food, Sound Practices

<https://vimeo.com/channels/561375>

3. Moving Farming Forward

<https://vimeo.com/channels/561377>

4. Adapting for the Future

<https://vimeo.com/channels/561381>

There have also been two bonus clips:

Welcome to the Holland Marsh Soupfest 2013 (<http://vimeo.com/channels/558900>)

and a joint project under the Growing Good Foods Ideas

<http://www.king.ca/Business/Pages/GoldinKingTownship.aspx>

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