

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## DAIRY FARMERS OF PEI CONTRIBUTIONS FOR A PEI WATER ACT

PREPARED FOR: THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

PRESENTED ON: SEPTEMBER 24, 2015

---

Farmers are concerned with a public perception that agriculture is damaging water quality in PEI and farmers are not good stewards of the land. PEI dairy farmers understand their livelihoods depend on preserving the quality of their land and their water sources. The fact that dairy farmers have initiated the proAction® program, which includes environmental sustainability as one of the key elements, and that almost 70% of PEI dairy farmers have implemented an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) proves they are conscious of their impact on the environment.

PEI dairy farmers' land is primarily used for pasture and growing perennial forages, which contribute bio-mass to the soil. Pasture and forage soil gain higher levels of organic matter and a more stable structure that reduces the potential for wind and water erosion. The common water conservation and quality protection practices outlined in the full report demonstrate that the majority of PEI dairy producers manage their farms efficiently and conscientiously. In short, dairy farmers are committed and progressive people with a unified goal of sustaining their industry. To do this, they must maintain soil and water resources for the long term.

This progressive approach is highlighted in Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) undertaking a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of Canadian Milk. As stated in the LCA Executive Summary, the water footprint of milk production in Canada is calculated as a weighted average of 20L/Kg of butterfat. This places Canadian dairy production in a sustainable position compared to other countries, with the main variable being less use of irrigation. Canada is second to France at 17L/Kg, and compares favourably to the Netherlands at 42L/Kg, China at 132L/Kg, and India at 148L/Kg.

A Water Act is recognized as an important step toward preserving the quantity and quality of water in PEI. Dairy producers need access to secure, good quality water supplies in order for them to maintain a healthy life for their animals and ensure safe, high quality milk production. It is in the industries best interest to protect and preserve this precious resource – water.

---

### **Dairy Farmers of PEI Requirements for a PEI WATER ACT**

#### ***Animal Welfare***

- The PEI Water Act must provide dairy producers continued access to secure, good quality water supplies in order for them to sustain animal life and ensure safe, high quality milk production.

#### ***Buffer Zones***

- The existing buffer zone regulations exceed the requirements for the typical pasture or forage fields in PEI. At the very least, the Water Act cannot cause more land to be lost to buffer zones.
- A “one size fits all” solution is not appropriate for buffer zone regulation. For example, forages and pasture land should not require the same buffer zone restrictions as row crop land.

#### ***Water Act Regulation***

- Any new PEI Water Act ensures that the authority for application of related regulations on land in agricultural use, regardless of zoning, is retained only by the Provincial Government;
- A new water act ensures that any municipality decision cannot supersede the Provincial Government regulations with respect to agriculture; and
- Municipalities, communities, advisory groups, etc. not be delegated authority over water management in PEI as it pertains to agriculture.