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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Forum promises to spark dialogue about the Future of Ontario Farmland

Guelph – The annual Farmland Forum hosted by the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) is coming to Elora Ontario on March 21, 2024. The full-day hybrid event at The GrandWay Events Centre as well as online will feature guest speakers and discussion panels.

The 2024 Farmland Forum, *The Future of Ontario Farmland*, celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Ontario Farmland Trust with a return to the foundational dialogues and round-table discussions that sparked the creation of OFT. This year's forum is a pivotal gathering for exploring innovative solutions to the pressing challenges of farmland preservation in Ontario. As we confront the realities of farmland loss, the forum will delve into necessary policy reforms and strategic approaches to protect our agricultural lands.

“This year’s forum is about recognizing that protecting farmland is only part of the equation,” says Martin Straathof, Executive Director of OFT. “Discussions will not only focus on farmland protection but also on breaking down barriers for new farmers to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for Ontario’s agri-food sector. Anyone who has an interest in engaging more with these intersecting issues should attend.”

The forum takes a holistic view by addressing the importance of policy for farmland preservation alongside the lack of succession planning for Ontario’s food system as a whole, and the role municipalities and organizations can play in supporting land access for new and young farmers.

The day-long event will include keynotes and panels by agricultural and environmental sector leaders, land use planners, and food systems policy experts, as well as special opening remarks by Mayor Shawn Watters, Township of Centre Wellington. With ample time for table discussions alongside concurrent breakout rooms for online participants, the forum is an excellent opportunity to network with future minded agricultural and conservation professionals.

The OFT’s province-wide mission is to protect and preserve farmlands and associated agricultural, natural, and cultural features of the countryside. The charitable organization advances its mission through land securement, stewardship, policy research, and education.

Registration and more information available online: <https://www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/forum>

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