



ENTREPRENEURSHIP DRIVES OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Abbotsford – January 12, 2017 – After graduating from high school, Gary Baars hung up a shingle as TNT Agri-Services, offering “relief milking and much more.” “Much more” soon started becoming a reality and Jan. 11th, the now 33-year-old Chilliwack dairyman, hay salesman and cattle dealer and his wife, Marie (26), became the BC & Yukon Outstanding Young Farmers for 2017.

In 2006, TNT Agri Services turned into TNT Hay Sales as Baars started selling hay, first to local horse farms and then to local dairy farms.

“We sell a lot of hay to different dairy farms,” Baars says.

Not long after, the young entrepreneur expanded TNT to include cattle sales. When Farm Credit Canada offered him a large loan with “no strings attached” in early 2011, Baars used it to start his own dairy farm.

“I had enough money to buy quota for 15 cows,” he recalls.

Two years later, Marie’s grandmother asked if they would manage her 160-cow 80-acre dairy farm in east Abbotsford. The Baars agreed on condition they could buy it.

“We amalgamated our small herd with her larger herd and have been steadily improving the facilities over the past few years,” Baars reports.

His entrepreneurship did not stop there. Last year, he purchased additional hay-growing acreage in Greendale and joined up with two partners to buy a 472-acre 100-cow dairy in Manitoba.

“We have already grown that farm by 20%,” Baars says.

He has also served as a director of both the Mainland Young Milk Producers and the BC Young Farmers.

Baars’ entrepreneurial spirit even extends itself to his recreational activities. Gary and his father-in-law have begun holding Cornfield Races twice a year, inviting friends and neighbours to race beat-up cars on the farm.

To earn the 2017 award from judges Rick Thiessen (2004 BC & Canadian Outstanding Young Farmer), Mark Sweeney (retired BC Ministry of Agriculture berry and horticulture specialist) and Kurt Bausenhaus (KPMG), the Baars outpointed Jeremy and Tamara Vaandrager of Vaandrager Farms in west Abbotsford.

After managing several egg farms for other owners, the Vaandrageres obtained a 3,000 bird quota in the 2010 BC Egg Marketing Board new entrant lottery. In the six years since, they have increased their quota holdings to 6,000 birds and are in the process of converting their farm from a free-run operation to an aviary.

“Aviaries have become common in Europe but it is still a relatively new system in North America,” Vaandrager notes.

The BCOYF program is sponsored by the BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission, Clearbrook Grain & Milling, Farm Credit Canada and Insure Wealth. To be eligible for the award, applicants must be under 40 and derive at least two-thirds of their gross revenue from farming. They are judged on the progress in their agricultural careers, the sustainability of their farming operations and involvement in their industry and community.

Gary and Marie Baars will represent BC at the national OYF competition in Penticton, BC, in November. The national competition is supported by AdFarm, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Annex Business Media, Bayer Crop Science, BDO, CIBC, Farm Management Canada and John Deere.

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