



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Eastern Ontario Dairy Farmers Named as 2014 Ontario's Outstanding Young Farmers.

(Guelph, ON – March 27, 2014) “We want to always be changing and growing. We embrace new ideas and technology and we want to have a farm we are proud of, that we helped make with both our brains and our backs. Those words, from Jason and Amanda O’Connell, of Sunol Farms in Carleton Place, are a big part of why they are the winners of the 2014 Ontario’s Outstanding Young Farmers’ Program.

The O’Connells received the top honour at the provincial awards ceremony held in Guelph on March 25. Winners of the award are chosen based on career progress; environmental and safety practices; crop and livestock production history; financial and management practices; and contributions to society.

Jason, raised on a small hobby beef farm, and Amanda, on a nearby dairy farmer, met while attending the University of Guelph’s Kemptville College. In 2006 they bought out Amanda’s family dairy farm and started on their own. After two years of “working to convince others to incorporate new technologies, and science,” they were given free rein to make management decisions and since taking over, they have moved from milking 127 cows filling 70 kgs of quota to now milking 90-95 cows while filling 120+kg daily.

The judges, Eadie Steele (Shepherd’s Choice Breeding Stock, and OYF alumnus), Ken Rounds (Ethos Solar and OYF Alumnus) and Dr. Larry Martin (Agri-Food Management Excellence) chose the O’Connells in part due to their willingness to adopt change, desire for continuous improvement and growth, and involvement in the industry and their community.

Runners- up were Dave and Amy Arand of Arand Farms in Atwood. Dave and his family raise 40,000 turkeys and crop 1200 acres of corn, wheat and dry beans.

For information on all of the finalists, visit the OYF website at www.oyfontario.ca.

Co-chairs of the event, Steve and Lisa Cooper of Coopers’ Farm and noted that “Spending time with such imaginative and successful young farmers reminds us all that farming is a rewarding occupation and we need to be positive and celebrate our accomplishments.”

To be eligible for the Outstanding Young Farmer award, farmers must be between 19 and 39 years of age, derive at least two thirds of their annual income from farming and demonstrate progress in their agriculture careers. Nominations for the 2015 award will open in September and are due December 1, 2014.

Jason and Amanda will now represent Ontario at the National competition being held in November in Quebec City, where they will meet the winners from the other provinces, one of whom will ultimately be named Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers.

The 2014 event was sponsored by Farm Credit Canada, Dupont-Pioneer, Better Farming, OMAF, GROWMARK/FS Partners and the Grain Farmers of Ontario.

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Photos available upon request.

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