

## **Harry and Leony Koelen Farrowing Operation**

H & L Koelen Farms Ltd near Paisley is a 5200 sow farrowing farm owned and operated by Harry and Leony Koelen. Harry answered an advertisement in a Dutch Farm newspaper and arrived in Canada in 1991 with \$2,000 and a backpack. Fired by a desire to farm, they spent the first few years saving enough to start their own farm. The operation today is very different from their start in a rundown rental barn in Brussels. The operation consists of 2 new barns each housing 2600 sows where Harry was his own general contractor. They have overcome many obstacles that would have stopped most people and they have succeeded and prospered. In 1998 they won the Pig Champ award with 26.2 pigs/sow/year. This award covers Canada, U.S. and Mexico. In 2001 they won the Genex award for 27.9 pigs produced/mated female/year and in 2005 for the highest number of pigs born alive and second place for 27.6 pigs produced/mated female/year. One of the reasons for their success is keeping up to date with developments in the swine industry. Synergy Swine has provided a lot of information over the years. When Harry hears of something new he thinks, "If somebody else can do it, then I can do it too!" When Harry was out of commission for a year in 2001 with a back injury he realized that his 16 employees are an important ingredient in their success. They introduced daily and weekly work schedules. It really helped them be labour efficient. Harry says "We are fortunate to have such a good team of people." The Koelen's are always searching for ways to be more environmentally responsible. Environmental Farm Plans, Nutrient Management Plans, water saving computers, decommissioning old wells and fencing livestock out of waterways are a small part of their commitment to protecting the environment. The 1100 acres of crop land is rented out but they do apply manure on it and additional land from neighbours. They have invested in their own dragline which helps get the manure spread when the weather and soil conditions are right. In 2006 they built themselves a new home. The oldest children help out in the barn and all five children are active in numerous sports and musical activities.