

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## Alberta Forest Farmers Win Pollinator Conservation Award

September 30, 2014

The Canadian Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Award recognizes individuals who have contributed significantly to pollinator protection, conservation, and issue outreach resulting in increased awareness of the importance of pollinators and pollination within the agricultural community. This special award sheds light on the contributions of Canadian farmers to natural and cultural resource preservation.

Micheal, Laura, and Takota Coen have been practicing true sustainable farming since the late 1980's. Recently, son Takota began practicing agroforestry on their 250 acre farm near Ferintosh, Alberta. Their "forest farm" mimics the local Aspen Parkland Biome, allowing them to work with nature rather than against it. Just as their native northern prairie was once interspersed with groves of poplars and roamed by herds of bison, the Coens' pastures, full of cattle, are being planted to groves of fruit, nut and timber trees. These diversified landscapes are ideal areas where local wildlife, most notably the vastly important pollinator community, thrive. Not only do pollinators gain from the increased habitat and forage but the Coens' pastures, livestock, and edible tree crops function symbiotically to benefit all the individual elements.

Taking the leap into fully sustainable perennial based agriculture can be risky, and transforming a landscape is costly. This is where the Coens have taken the initiative to develop a community supported agricultural (CSA) approach whereby members of the community pay forward into the sustainable model of farming that in turn will provide them with pollinated foods in the years to come. In effect, the Coens have created a microcosm of agricultural support driven directly by the community. In a landscape where government support for sustainable agriculture and pollinator conservation is limited, Grass Roots Family Farm has lived up to its name, taking local initiative in developing a model where producer and consumers work together protect our food production resources. By working with organizations like the Slow Food's Edmonton the Coens hope to help their community cultivate a meaningful connection to the land. Helping urbanites understand the farm-to-table connection is vital if sustainable agriculture is to take hold. The Coens' outreach to the community and their work using permaculture design and agroforestry techniques that accommodated pollinators stood out among a field of applicants that are working to help keep pollinator services resilient across Canada.

The Coens' achievements will be celebrated at a VIP reception launch the 14<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) held at the USDA Whitten Patio in Washington D.C. on October 21, 2014. They will share the evening spotlight with the 2014 US Farmer-Rancher award winner Sam and Heidi Heikes of the Heikes Family Farm (Vermillion, South Dakota), who have also made use of community support agriculture to educate the public about the importance of pollinators in agriculture and with Tri-National Pollinator Advocate Award Winners Sustainable.TO (Canada), The American Bee Project (USA) Dr. Pablo F. Jaramillo (Mexico).

Without pollinators we would lose one third of our diet, nearly all of our high-nutrient food, most terrestrial ecosystems would collapse, important plant species that provide the raw materials for medicines would die out, and the biosphere would stop filtering air and freshwater for us and other wildlife. Factors such as uncontrolled development, agricultural intensification, chemical misuse, and pathogen introduction are decimating their populations. The Canadian Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Award is supported and sponsored by Pollinator Partnership, The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and The Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association.

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**NAPPC** is a collaborative effort of over 120 organizations in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico whose common goal is to promote awareness of the essential role that pollinators play in food systems and ecosystems, and to provide the public with simple, effective ways to engage in environmental stewardship.

The **Pollinator Partnership**, the largest organization in the world dedicated to the protection and promotion of pollinators and their ecosystems, is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization headquartered in San Francisco. Pollinator Partnership has offices and activities in Washington D.C., Louisiana, Nebraska, Iowa, Montana, Ohio, Arizona, Washington, and Canada.

The **Canadian Federation of Agriculture** (CFA) is the nonprofit organization that was formed in 1935 to act as the national voice of Canadian farmers. CFA Canada's largest farmers' organization, representing provincial general farm organizations as well as national and interprovincial commodity organizations from every province - over 200,000 Canadian farmers and farm families.

To learn more about the NAPPC and the Pollinator Partnership visit [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org) or contact [info@pollinator.org](mailto:info@pollinator.org) for more information or call 415-362-1137.

The **Canadian Forage and Grassland Association** / Canadienne pour les Plantes Fourragères has been providing a national voice for all Canadians who produce hay and forage products and for those whose production is dependent upon forage/grassland production.. CFGA/CPF seeks to promote the growth of the forage and grassland sector by advocating a sustainable and environmentally friendly industry. This includes research and development, market development and innovation to enhance the industry's ability to profitably produce and offer superior products to our producers, and domestic and international consumers.



The Pollinator Advocate Award designed by acclaimed artist James Randolf.