



FarmFood360° VR Experience
***Four new Virtual Reality tours open doors to
mushroom, veal, grain farms and research facilities***

(Guelph) January 10, 2022 – Canadians interested in learning more about how their food is produced have more opportunities available to them now at www.FarmFood360.ca. Four new Virtual Reality Tours, filmed throughout 2021 on mushroom, veal and grain farms – and research facilities operated by the University of Guelph – have been added to the popular website, joining the 18 farm and food processing tours already filmed and available for viewing.

The tours were developed by Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) in partnership with Good in Every Grain, Mushrooms Canada, Ontario Genomics and Veal Farmers of Ontario.

Using 360 cameras and virtual reality technology, the award-winning *FarmFood360°* website gives Canadians the chance to tour real, working farms and food processing plants, all without putting on boots or biosecurity clothing.

The mushroom farm tour visits a family-owned facility growing four million pounds of mushrooms each year. Farm owner Murray Good partnered with FFCO and Mushrooms Canada for the project. Said Good, “For many people, mushrooms are rather mysterious. I’ve always enjoyed hosting tours, as people are incredibly fascinated to learn about how fresh local mushrooms are grown. Growing mushrooms is one part science and one part art! As with many other farms during this time, we haven’t been able to offer in-person tours, which is why I was thrilled by the idea of hosting a virtual farm tour.”

The second tour takes people through the barns of an Ontario veal farm. In the tour, the farm family shows how their veal cattle are fed and cared for. Jennifer Haley, Executive Director of Veal Farmers of Ontario, said, “Veal farming has a long history and plays an important and fundamental role in Canada’s agricultural sector; however, the industry can be the subject of misconceptions and questions by our consumers.” She added, “We’re delighted to partner with FFCO to open the doors to an Ontario veal farm and answer those questions directly. Our farmers are proud of their farms and animal care standards and we’re eager to show that.”

A grain farm tour filmed in southwestern Ontario follows soybeans from planting through to harvest. “Grain farming in Ontario is challenging and rewarding. We are excited to work with FFCO to bring this project to fruition. Engaging video like this will help everyone feel like they are getting their boots on the ground and to see what happens in the fields of a soybean farm during spring planting, spraying and harvest; as well as all of the work that goes into making important crop care decisions,” said Victoria Berry, manager, communications at Grain Farmers of Ontario.

In an interesting shift from the more traditional farm and food processing tours on the site, Ontario Genomics partnered on a tour that highlights the exciting and emerging field of genomic research in agriculture. Through a tour of a world class dairy research facility and interviews with research scientists at both Trent University and the University of Guelph, the project highlights research being done to increase food production, reduce stress on

livestock thus improving animal welfare and improve the heartiness of crops like hazelnuts so that they can be grown in a cold Canadian climate.

Dr. Christine Baes, a dairy cow researcher at the University of Guelph who participated in the project said, "Genomics, which is the study of DNA, plays a key role in scientific discovery and technology innovation. As we've seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, it can also help address some of our most pressing challenges. In this video series we explore how genomics is being used to ensure Ontario and Canada have a secure food system for generations to come, while protecting our environment and constantly improving animal welfare."

The project was also funded, in part, through the AgriCompetitiveness program of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal, provincial, territorial initiative.

In 2021, the website received one million visitors. A new educator resource is in development by Agriculture in the Classroom Canada and will be live in February, 2022, providing curriculum-based classroom activities for each tour.

-30-

For more information:

- Kelly Daynard, Executive Director, Farm & Food Care Ontario; kelly@farmfoodcare.org; 519-837-1326, ext. 224
- Victoria Berry, Manager, Communications, Grain Farmers of Ontario; 226-820-6641; vberry@gfo.ca
- Marianne Muth, Project Coordinator, Mushrooms Canada, marianne@mushrooms.ca; 519-510-8888
- Polina Martins, Director of Communications, Ontario Genomics, pmartins@ontariogenomics.ca
- Jennifer Bullock, Communications Manager, Veal Farmers of Ontario; jbullock@vealfarmers.ca; 519-824-2942

Farm & Food Care Ontario is a coalition of farmers, agriculture and food partners proactively working together to earn public trust and confidence in food and farming. Find out more at www.FarmFood360.ca or www.FarmFoodCareON.org.

Good in Every Grain is Grain Farmers of Ontario's public outreach campaign devoted to gaining awareness for Ontario grains. The goal of the campaign is to gain exposure for Ontario farmers, the grains they grow, and the role that grains play in the everyday lives of Ontarians. Good in Every Grain was developed to tell the story of Ontario's grain farmers to consumers across the province. Visit www.goodineverygrain.ca

Mushrooms Canada is a voluntary, non-profit organization whose members are dedicated to the production and marketing of fresh mushrooms in Canada. Canadian mushrooms are available 24/7/365 fresh from Canadian farms. Visit www.mushrooms.ca

Ontario Genomics is a not-for-profit organization funded by the Ontario government and Genome Canada. Established in 2000, Ontario Genomics is the only entity focused solely on stimulating, enabling and nurturing genomics innovation in the province of Ontario. Visit www.OntarioGenomics.ca

Veal Farmers of Ontario is a farmer-run organization that represents the interests of Ontario's veal farmers, providing leadership to promote industry growth and viability through collaboration, innovation, marketing, and education. Visit www.vealfarmers.ca