

# Let's support agriculture !



We are neighbors, we share the same values, we work hard to cultivate our land, raise our animals, produce what feeds our fellow citizens with ardor, passion and commitment. We are also very thankful to everyone who came to the open house on October 27.

Can we imagine a life without agriculture? Agriculture was born with the planting of the first seeds and the domestication of animals by man over ten thousand years ago.

Despite the importance it represents, agriculture and the agricultural zones that delimit it only represent approximately 5% of the Quebec territory<sup>1</sup>, which is why we need to continue to stand for our lands. These lands that feed the livestock, that feed the population. Not only do our agricultural plots feed the world, but they also protect the biodiversity and the planet by capturing a big part of the CO2.



## Farmers

As a farmer, you know how hard at work and passionate one needs to be to successfully operate a farm. It's a way of being, a way of living.

Amongst all that, one needs to make it profitable to survive, and unfortunately we know too many who have had, or will have, to quit. There is also the next generation that wants to take over the reins, but that struggles due to the value these lands represent nowadays. The pressure is heavy on the farmers and landowners as cities expand and available land gets rarer.

That may be one of the reasons why the percentage of agricultural land is so minimal, but even more so the percentage of farm workers at 1.3% in Quebec<sup>2</sup>.

## Agricultural biomethanization

Over a thousand farmers in France have been using agricultural biomethanization for more than 10 years now. In Germany, more than 11,000 sites are currently in operation. In these cases, farms can even sell biogas in their facilities to fill cars, tractors and BBQ tanks. We are far from Énergir's single distributor model.

More so, many farms have made it a significant activity in the states of Vermont and Wisconsin for nearly 20 years. If it's good for them, it should be good for us too.

## A durable solution

In agriculture and energy, Quebec is at a milestone. The circular and local economy must come to the rescue of agriculture and sustainable land development.

As farmers, it is our responsibility to mobilize to :

1. Ensure economically responsible and sustainable development in agriculture
2. Reduce the pressure to build over agricultural land
3. Focus collectively on the richness of soils and their preservation
4. Help innovate in agricultural technologies
5. Facilitate stakeholder support and social acceptability of agricultural projects

The biomethanization process consists of valorizing organic materials and agricultural biomass to produce renewable natural gas (RNG) and digestate, a high-quality green fertilizer which enriches the soil and increases production.

Excellent in terms of soil regeneration and improvement, digestate has proven itself in France by propelling harvests to new heights while allowing substantial savings on the cost of chemical fertilizers. A green solution coming from the circular economy which makes it possible to avoid major and recurring investments in chemical fertilizers. Also a solution offering a fertilizer that is more absorbant by plants due to a better balance of the ingredients which compose it : a real revolution in terms of security of supply at a local level.

## Better cohabitation

As digestate is much less odorous at the time of spreading, it allows for better cohabitation with the neighborhood.

The agricultural biomethanization process involves improved management of manure on a farm by treating it in a closed building, using a sealed process, and then spreading the practically odorless digestate.

In addition, by using animal waste which is usually stored outdoors and which produces GHGs during its organic degradation, polluting fumes are captured and reused with biomethanization.

## The GNR Shefford project

In development for two years now, the GNR Shefford project has called on the most competent resources in agronomy, engineering and architecture, has developed promising partnerships with farms and operations in the region, and is supported by the governments of Quebec and Canada.

Biomethanization can become a powerful economic tool allowing farmers to become producers of clean energy and thus depend less on the risks of the market. It's a great way to reuse organic materials generated by agricultural activities and to derive several benefits from it for everyone while respecting the planet.

European farmers are preserving their agricultural activity while being part of their country's transition and energy security. It is our turn to follow in their footsteps, in Quebec and for Quebec.

Our project is also that of the entire community. We are the first to develop a private agricultural project whose model can inspire those who in turn decide to embark on this great adventure that is favorable for the environment, agriculture and economy. And if you're in the area, come see us at 36 chemin Bell in Shefford. Our door is always open!

We feel it's really important that farmers stick together to support innovative efforts from which the entire society can benefit from.

**To support agriculture and the first private agricultural biomethanization project, GNR Shefford, go to <https://gnrshefford.ca/en/agriculture/>**

1. Portraits régionaux de l'agriculture, Gouvernement du Québec, Février  
2. Guichet-Emplois, Gouvernement du Canada, Février 2023.