

*For immediate release*

**Saskatchewan and Ontario farm couples named**

**Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers for 2010**

**Ancaster, ON [November 30, 2010]** – Marketing makes the difference for winners of the 2010 Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers (OYF) program – Lauren and Ryan Maurer of Saskatchewan, and Steve and Lisa Cooper of Ontario. The Maurer’s operate an 11,000 acre grain farm at Grenfell, Saskatchewan, and the Cooper’s run a 250-acre market garden north of Toronto, Ontario.

The Saskatchewan and Ontario farm couples were recently named Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers (OYF) for 2010 at the organization’s annual event in Victoria, BC on November 26. The two winning couples were chosen from the seven 2010 regional finalists – who along with the winners included – Josh Oulton & Patricia Bishop, market garden (Atlantic region); Jean-Francois Lemieux & Mylene Gagnon, dairy (Quebec region); Jan & Tracy Bassa, dairy (Manitoba region); Ryan & Annette Mercer, pedigreed seed (Alberta Northwest region); and Gene & Shelly Covert, fruit and vegetables (British Columbia, Yukon region). Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and Steven L. Pointe, Lieutenant Governor of B.C. were both on hand for the awards banquet announcing the 2010 winners.

“In the increasingly competitive agricultural marketplace, this year’s OYF winners have used marketing to their business advantage,” says Brian Newcombe, OYF president. “Whether for selling prairie grains or Ontario fresh produce, the Maurers and Coopers demonstrate the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit that OYF is so proud to recognize in Canadian agriculture.”

Lauren and Ryan Maurer began their farming career together in 1992 on a farm founded by Lauren’s grandfather. They began farming with Lauren’s parents to work 720 acres in a land/work agreement. Within a few years, they purchased Lauren’s parents’ share and with an expanded lineup of crops – including spices – they had become niche marketers. Through purchased and leased land, the Maurer’s operate more than 11,000 acres of grain, pulses, oilseeds and spices as Land and Sky Grains Inc., near the Qu’Appelle Valley at Grenfell, Saskatchewan, with six full-time and numerous part-time staff.

Value-added markets account for about 75% of the Maurer’s acres. They are the largest Canadian producer of Identity Preserved (IP) wheat for Warburton’s Bakery in the U.K. Barley, flax, pulse and spice crops are all grown to meet specific requirements for their world-wide customers. As their operation expanded, the Maurer’s focused on efficient growth, enhanced marketing, financial growth and intensified management. Expansion plans were well thought-out and involved increasing the number of straight cut crops, blocking land into larger fields, purchasing a grain cart to improve harvest efficiency and improving resident management to reduce spring frost risk in early-seeded crops.

Continuing education plays a key role in Lauren and Ryan’s successful operation, and they point to valuable courses at the George Morris Centre, Ivey School of Business and Sask Agrivision, as well at networking through AgMpower Executive Producer Group.

Volunteer time is spent with the local conservation authority and Saskatchewan Watershed Authority for Ryan, and with their local church, Tae Kwon Do, music and dance organizations for Lauren. The Maurers have four children, aged 6 through 13.

Steve and Lisa Cooper have a clear vision to “excite the senses” for visitors to their 250-acre market garden operation near Zephry, Ontario, north of Toronto. Cooper’s CSA Farm & Maze grows more than 30 different market garden crops, raises goats, chickens and turkeys, marketing directly to the public through “u-pick” and community shared agriculture (CSA).

Unlike many farm couples, Steve and Lisa met outside the agricultural world, while they both worked for IBM. Steve – who was from a farm background – and Lisa, soon headed to Ridgetown College to study agriculture and become his own boss. In 1993, they purchased a farm with the help of Steve’s father and ran a cow/calf herd and small sweet corn business. A few years later they added a market garden and began selling at farmers markets. In 2000, they replaced the cattle with meat goats, and the cash crops with an on-farm store and agri-tainment.

To help bridge the gap between field and plate, the Coopers added community shared agriculture to their operation in 2007 with 50 families paying to receive a weekly basket of vegetables for 20 weeks. In 2009, there were 460 families on the program that had expanded to include summer meat and winter deliveries. The Coopers continue to listen and stay close to their customers, using many tools to market to them – including Google ads, customer loyalty cards, email updates and customer referral rewards.

Continuing education and networking are important to Steve and Lisa, and the success of their operation. They are both graduates of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) and CTEAM. They also serve on the boards of many area farmers markets and minor sports teams. Their two teenage children are actively involved in the farm – serving customers and looking after the corn maze maintenance.

Completing its 30th year, Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers’ program is an annual competition to recognize farmers that exemplify excellence in their profession and promote the tremendous contribution of agriculture. Open to participants 18 to 39 years of age, making the majority of income from on-farm sources, participants are selected from seven regions across Canada, with two national winners chosen each year. The program is sponsored nationally by CIBC, John Deere, Bayer CropScience and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and supported nationally by AdFarm and the Canadian Farm Business Management Council.

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**For more information or a photo of the Maurers or Coopers, contact**:

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