**“OUR COUNTRYSIDE: A LIVING SPACE TO SHARE”**

**Cultivating good relationships to live together in harmony**

**PESTICIDES**

Pesticides are used to protect crops from pest insects, invasive plants, and plant diseases. Without them, entire crops could be destroyed, resulting in heavy production losses, a decrease in raw ingredients available, and therefore, increased costs for food.

Pesticide-use is heavily regulated in Québec. Farmers only use pesticides if the situation warrants it and if there are no other effective measures to remedy the problem. Different preventive and curative methods exist, other than chemicals. These include biological, mechanical, cultural, and genetic approaches. These ensure a more sustainable and effective reduction of crop pests.

To ensure the quality and quantity of fruits, vegetables, and grains, products used in agriculture must be authorized by government agencies. Health Canada sets precise limits for the amounts of trace pesticides that can be present on food products. At minimum, this limit is 100 times lower than the safety limit, and up to 3,000 times lower, depending on the pesticide. Pesticide residues sometimes found in certain foods are well below danger thresholds. Indeed, regulatory compliance rates for locally farmed fruits and vegetables are higher than among imported produce.

With some of the lowest pesticide use in the world, Québec is a leader in reducing the average amount of pesticides used. Since 2014, we’ve seen a decline in the overall sale of pesticides. According to the Ministry of Environment and Fight Against Climate Change, over a period of 10 years (2006-2017), there has been a 14% reduction. Farmers are reducing their use of pesticides by employing screening techniques in the field, crop rotation, and integrated management, meaning that they know their crops, crop enemies, and the allies they can find in the ecosystem. Through these alternative techniques for prevention, monitoring, and intervention, farmers have had success in significantly reducing the application of agrochemical products.

In addition to restrictions on authorized pesticide products, farmers must also respect limiting distances between pesticide application areas and buildings, waterways, water collection sites, bicycle paths… The watchword of Québec’s phytosanitary strategy is to reduce agricultural pesticide use and replace these with techniques and products that are safer for health, biodiversity, surface and groundwater quality… In addition to ensuring their business’s viability, farmers must preserve the environment, food safety, and the health of the population.