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

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

**WATER**

Water is essential for life and indispensable for agriculture. The protection and sound management of water are major issues, not only for the environment, but also for the sustainability of agri-businesses. As key players, farmers are implementing techniques to better regulate water-use and to ensure the health of rivers and groundwater, with particular attention to reducing risks of creating agricultural pollution. As water users, they also aim to better manage this resource, by using efficient irrigation systems, or by watering at the base of plants to avoid evaporation and waste, for example.

Sediments from agricultural origins can be found in waterways due to runoff and wind. Therefore, farmers adopt agricultural practices that promote absorption of water into the soil. They can, for instance, develop riparian strips of waterfront plantings between their crops and waterways. These plantings along streams and rivers can include trees, shrubs, or herbaceous plants.

Waterfront planting plays an important role in reducing erosion, as the roots hold in place the soil of the banks and embankments, while stems create obstacles that slow the flow of water runoff. Moreover, these plants protect the riparian habitat from wind, slow soil particles, and can assimilate fertilizers and absorb pesticides. Regulated by Québec’s provincial policies and protected by municipal regulations, riparian strips are important buffer zones between the fields and waterways.

In agricultural zones, the health of waterways depends not only on measures taken to limit pollution sources, but also on efforts to preserve and restore waterways. This means preventing damage, degradation, and erosion, and protecting the quality of the area’s biological diversity. More and more farmers are turning to ecological alternatives. For their part, livestock farmers are establishing installations and infrastructure to prevent animal waste from reaching rivers and groundwater.

All these techniques are used by farmers to limit the impact of agricultural activities on water quality. What is at stake is the protection of aquatic environments, the preservation of water supplies, and the future of agriculture and our food.