

Springboard for Agricultural Youth: launch of program sowing the seeds of a brighter future



Montréal, August 17, 2022 – Sollio Cooperative Group, *Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec*, and Desjardins Group are joining forces on the program **Springboard for Agricultural Youth**. This training and networking program offers tools and financial support to farmers aged 40 and under who want to start a new farm or take over an existing farm.

In addition to targeted support and training, this Desjardins Group-funded program will offer 20 young farmers a \$15,000 start-up grant. The program lasts just over a year, and also receives support from the *Fonds coopératif d'aide à la relève agricole*, a fund administered by the project's three key partners. It helps give young farmers a leg up in the industry and guides them toward future success.

It also addresses the challenge of ensuring successful business transitions, currently particular concern in the agricultural industry. "This is quite an important issue for Sollio Cooperative Group right now. Very few farms can count on being handed off, and young farmers are struggling to get land. Springboard for Agricultural Youth will help equip and inspire them to establish new farms or take over the farms they already work for," said Muriel Dubois, president of the *Fonds coopératif d'aide à la relève agricole* and First Vice President of the Board of Directors at Sollio Cooperative Group.

The program presenter, Desjardins Group, is proud to get involved with the next generation and contribute to successful business transitions. "At Desjardins, we are committed to supporting young people in their projects and ambitions. We consider it a priority, which is why we distributed almost \$80 million last year through the Together For Our Youth program," said Sylvain Morel, Desjardins Group Vice President, Agriculture and Agri-Food Markets. "We need to support and sustain young people who hope to take over or start up an agriculture business, and make sure the next generation has a foothold in this high-priority industry."

The *Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec* echoes the sentiment. The program is very much aligned with its mission of helping people establish themselves in the agriculture industry and promoting the profession. "Establishing a business is an important step for the next generation of farmers. FRAQ is proud to partner with the cooperative in providing access to high-quality training," said Pier-Luc Hervieux, First Vice President of FRAQ.

As part of Springboard for Agricultural Youth, the Desjardins Group is also promoting the L'ARTERRE service offered by CRAAQ. L'ARTERRE is a matching service for aspiring farmers, farm owners and landowners. L'ARTERRE helps create succession plans for farms that have no one lined up to take over, which helps support and sustain the future of Quebec agriculture. CRAAQ will receive \$50,000 to support its mission of knowledge sharing and helping farmers. "CRAAQ is proud to collaborate on Springboard for Young Farmers. The grant from Desjardins Group and its partners will help provide aspiring L'ARTERRE farmers with access to the tools and contacts they need to launch a business," said Louis Dionne, General Director of CRAAQ.

United in their enthusiasm for supporting young entrepreneurs, the project's partners are delighted to create a program that helps ensure a prosperous future. To learn more about Springboard for Agricultural Youth and to register for the program: sollio.coop/tremplin.

-30-

About Sollio Cooperative Group

Sollio Cooperative Group is the largest Quebec-based agricultural cooperative in Canada. Founded in 1922, we cultivate, grow, produce, process and build the economy of tomorrow. We are 15,850 employees and 7,000 affiliated cooperative workers. With 48 agricultural and consumer cooperatives and over 123,000 members, producers, and consumers, Sollio Cooperative Group helps feed people by helping farm families prosper, ensuring a sustainable future for everyone. Sollio Cooperative Group's three divisions, Sollio Agriculture, Olymel L.P. and BMR Group Inc., contribute to regional economic and social development, generating sales of \$8.3 billion (over \$11 billion, including affiliated cooperatives). Sollio Cooperative Group is ranked among Canada's best-managed companies. For more information, visit sollio.coop.

About Desjardins Group

[Desjardins Group](https://desjardins.com) is the largest financial cooperative in North America and the fifth largest in the world, with assets of \$397 billion. Mediacorp named it one of Canada's Top 100 Employers in 2021. Desjardins Group offers a full range of products and services through an extensive network of service points, virtual platforms and Canadian affiliates, to a broad range of members and clients, individuals and businesses. Ranked as one of the world's highest-performing banking institutions by *The Banker* magazine, Desjardins has industry-leading capital ratios and [credit ratings](https://www.creditratings.com).

About the *Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec (FRAQ)*

Founded in 1982, *Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec (FRAQ)* helps young Quebec farmers startup businesses and facilitates business transitions. The FRAQ aims to guide young agricultural entrepreneurs through decision making venues, defend their interests when called for, and promote the agricultural profession.

SOURCE – Sollio Cooperative Group

Media Contact:

Shanie Parent, Communications Advisor for Sollio Cooperative Group

450-821-3073

shanie.parent@sollio.coop