



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Announcing AALP Class 19**

**GUELPH, ON, October 12, 2021** – The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is excited to announce the nineteen current and emerging leaders from across the province selected for Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) Class 19. The program for Class 19 will begin November, 2021.

“The ag-sector is a powerhouse for Ontario economic development. This will be supported by leaders with foresight and the skills to manage change,” says Gabe Ferguson, Leadership Programs Director. “Congratulations to the participants of Class 19 who have committed to professional development that will help strengthen the ag-sector and rural communities provincially and internationally.”

Nine Class members are primary producers or involved in family-run farming operations. The remaining ten come from agri-business and agri-food, financial sectors, non-government and commodity associations and government. The Class ranges in age from 24 to 54.

Each AALP Class is chosen with attention to creating a team that can provide peer-to-peer mentorship, diverse viewpoints and a broad network. “It’s exciting and affirming to see the high caliber of talent in Class 19,” says Ferguson. “With their experience of a world pandemic this past year, I’m anticipating a keen group of leaders ready to share new ideas about the future of the agri-food industry.”

During the 18-month program, AALP participants will come together in both in-person seminars and online webinars. Class members will learn about leadership and organizational excellence practices, government and political processes, economics, social and environmental issues, trade policy, global affairs, sector and industry-related issues. The context will include Ontario, North American and international study travel components.

AALP is delivered by the Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) a non-profit organization committed to developing leaders and facilitating collaboration on issues and opportunities facing rural and northern Ontario communities. Established in 1984, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) has graduated almost 480 leaders who are making a positive difference across Ontario and beyond.

**Participants in AALP Class 19:**

- **Matthew Aarts**, Perth/Tavistock, Agricultural Specialist, Libro Credit Union
- **Raphael Adegboye**, Peel/Brampton, Senior Manager, National Agricultural Credit Unit, Scotiabank

- **Tracey Arts**, Oxford/Thamesford, Dairy Producer, Vet Technician, Ontario Federation of Agriculture Director Zone 4 Oxford and Elgin
- **Allison Brown**, Durham/Kawartha Lakes, Agricultural Economic Development Specialist, Durham Region
- **Michael Buttenham**, Wellington/Rockwood, Environmental and Sustainability Lead, Grain Farmers of Ontario
- **Evan Chaffe**, Perth/Mitchell, Policy Advisor, Beef Farmers of Ontario
- **Anneke Donkers-Stickney**, Wellington/Elora, Layer and Broiler Producer, Owner, Stickney Poultry
- **Don Gordon**, Durham Region/Cannington, Dairy Producer, Gordhill Farms Ltd.; Dairy Farmers of Ontario Region 5 Director
- **Jeff Harrison**, Quinte West, Grain Farmer, Vice Chair, Grain Farmers of Ontario
- **Hayley Mackay**, Oxford/Woodstock, Livestock Transporter, Luckhart Transport Ltd.; Dairy farmer, Wilmarlea Farms
- **Vicky Morrison**, Essex/South Woodslee, Dairy Producer, Bally Bright Farms; Dairy Farmers of Ontario Region 9 Director
- **Olivia Noorenberghe**, Chatham-Kent/Thamesville, Master of Science Candidate in Plant Agriculture, Grain Farmer
- **Ann Samuels**, Durham/Port Perry, Co-owner, Wealth's Riches Incorporated
- **Owen Smelski**, Perth/Shakespeare, Exhibitor Manager, Canada's Outdoor Farm Show division of Glacier FarmMedia
- **Christopher Sopuch**, Simcoe/Bradford, Vegetable Producer, Marshland Gardens Ltd.
- **David Stanfield**, Haldimand/Hagersville, Manager of Farm Operations, The Clark Companies
- **Mari Veliz**, Oxford/Lakeside, Healthy Watersheds Manager, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority; Dairy farmer
- **Kevin Weaver**, Middlesex/Belmont, Dairy Goat Industry Advisor, Gay Lea Foods
- **Qamar Zaman**, Mississauga, Tax Consultant, Chief Executive Officer, EXTAX.CA INC.

#### ASSOCIATED LINKS

- [Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program](#)

#### CONTACTS

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