

# 40 years

In the last forty years, Quebec dairy producers have succeeded in making the most of the advantages of collective action by developing tools that are now considered essential in the dairy sector, both on farms and for all producers.

The sector's general structures, such as the milk marketing agreement and the transportation agreement, provide a normative framework for interactions between industry partners. These agreements have been continuously improved since they were signed, not only based on the needs of the parties, but also in keeping with the changing realities of the sector and markets.



# Collective Tools

There are more collective tools available to producers than what these agreements provide. When the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec was founded, its members chose to develop the tools that it would need to fulfill its responsibilities. For instance, unique expertise was created in studying and making predictions about markets. To administer the joint plans and agreements, a dedicated team had to be formed to ensure that the sector was organized and operating effectively. In addition, producers chose to create a robust promotional program for their products, which has left a positive impression on generations of Quebecers thanks to its very memorable campaigns.

The same can be said for the external organizations that producers have chosen to acquire or have helped found. By becoming the main shareholder of the Quebec Dairy Herd Analysis Service (DHAS) (1995), the predecessor of Valacta, Les Producteurs de lait du Québec became involved in developing expertise specifically to help dairy enterprises succeed. By founding Novalait (1995) with its processing partners, Les Producteurs de lait du Québec took a real step toward developing knowledge and expertise in production and processing. The solutions uncovered by researchers continue to provide answers to current and future problems. The acquisition of the CIAQ (1999) consolidated the proactive role taken by Les Producteurs de lait du Québec in providing expertise aimed at making dairy herds and farms increasingly more productive.

Finally, producers showed their solidarity by creating the young farmers assistance (1987) and startup assistance (2006) programs. In founding these programs, Quebec producers chose to provide support to those who want to become producers, whether they are continuing a family tradition of dairy production or want to start up a new enterprise. These programs help enterprises remain sustainable across Quebec.

The advantages of these collective tools cannot be overlooked. They are an incredible asset when addressing future problems because they have solid foundations, offer consolidated expertise, and boast a potential that makes many other economic sectors jealous. The challenges ahead will be different than those of the last 40 years, but to overcome them, producers will be able to rely on even more tools, as others are now ready to use or in the works. When looking toward the future, the past efforts and vision of the last four decades of producer cohorts give us an undeniable edge.

