



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Beef Producers and Retailers Named as 2012 Ontario's  
Outstanding Young Farmers.**

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(Guelph, ON – April 9, 2012) “Very good beef.” Three simple words can sum up the goals of the 2012 Ontario Outstanding Young Farmers, Cory and Heidi Van Groningen of Hillview Farm and VG Meats ([www.vgmeats.ca](http://www.vgmeats.ca)) in South Western Ontario. Yet, they produce very good beef, all while involving and spending time with their family, conserving the environment, providing the best possible care to their animals, and giving back to their community and industry.

The Van Groningens received the top honour at the provincial awards ceremony held in Niagara Falls on March 27. Winners of the award are chosen based on career progress; environmental and safety practices; crop and livestock production history; financial and management practices; and contributions to society.

The Van Groningens were chosen from a group of farmers including Anthony and Marj Sjaarda (Sjaarda Caprine Farms, Wyoming) and John and Meghan Snyder (Snyder's Family Farm, Bright). For information on all of the finalists, visit the OYF website at [www.oyleftario.ca](http://www.oyleftario.ca).

The judges, Mark Murphy (OYF winner in 1986), Bill Demerling (retired from UCO), and Ann Gordon (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) chose the Van Groningens in part due to their commitment to product quality, customer service and interest in the betterment of the entire Ontario beef industry.

Nominated by Jack McCoubrey, the Van Groningens raise 400 beef cows and replacements on 475 acres in Haldimand and Norfolk Counties. Between themselves, Cory's parents and three of Cory's brothers, the operation consists of two different farm locations, an abattoir and two retail stores.

Through involvement in associations such as the Haldimand Cattlemen's Association, BIO and the Ontario Independent Meat Processors, the Van Groningens are continually on the leading edge of developments in the beef and meat industry. They also make a conscience effort to not only apply, but also to do research on their farms, all with the goal of producing the best quality beef. Cory and his brothers are also actively looking at ways to get locally produced foods into public sector institutions.

Interaction with their consumers is key to their success. Says Heidi, “Our consumer focus leads us to strive for consistency while maximizing quality. Consumers are a great source of encouragement for us and when they keep letting us know that the last steak they bought "was the best one they'd ever had" it lets us know that we are heading in the right direction.”

Co-chairs of the event, Chris and Christy Hiemstra of Clovermead Apiaries in Aylmer noted that “Spending time with such imaginative and successful young farmers reminds us all that farming is a rewarding occupation and we need to be positive and celebrate our accomplishments. The Ontario event also really showcases the diversity of agriculture in Ontario. Finalists represented beef, dairy goat and

agri-tourism operations and while they were obviously different, their commitment to their product, customers, food safety, the environment and their community were all similar.”

To be eligible for the Outstanding Young Farmer award, farmers must be between 19 and 39 years of age, derive at least two thirds of their annual income from farming and demonstrate progress in their agriculture careers. Nominations for the 2013 award will open in September and are due December 1, 2013.

Cory and Heidi will now represent Ontario at the National competition being held in November in Charlottetown, PEI, where they will compete with other farmers from across Canada for the title of Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers.

The 2012 event was sponsored by Farm Credit Canada, Syngenta, Better Farming, OMAFRA, GROWMARK and Pioneer.

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Photos available upon request.

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