



## Farmers in southeast Sask. say dry conditions are affecting crop quality

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Farmers in southeast Saskatchewan have noticed their crops being impacted by the recent drought across the Prairies.

Kyran Foy who farms outside of Red Jacket and Fairlight spoke about how the dry weather conditions within his farming area.

"It's been pretty dry. We haven't had a significant rain since early June," said Foy.

"I don't even know what our total rainfall is in a lot of those areas, but some of them would be less than three inches for growing since we seeded."

"It's pretty dry, but it looks like the crops are hanging in not too bad for most part in a lot of our areas. It's going to be tough to say how it will be come harvest time."

Foy was asked if more rain was to come within the next week or two if it would help the crops.

"Not for a lot of crops, for a lot of crops it's too late like

most of the wheat, or any earlier crops," he said.

"A bit of rain right away might help some of the later seeded canola crops, or anyone who has wheat. It just looks like we're going to be in a heat wave here with the forecast showing no rain in sight."

Based on how the quality of crops look, Foy said he thinks a lot of farmers will be applying for crop insurance.

"I think harvest will be slightly below average. I think there will be a lot of crop insurance claims," he said.

"Because numbers have been pretty good over the last few years and now we're going to be below that, people will be making claims."

### Dry conditons north of Moosomin

Within the Moosomin area, soil conditions have been more dry north of the RM of Moosomin compared to the south, said Trevor Green, farmer in the Moosomin area.

"Mainly because the southern part did get a few of the

rains when that two inch rain came through the Town of Moosomin, it kind of stretched out, but if you get into the northern part closer to Welwyn, I think they're in a tougher situation down there than we are."

Green said farmers in some areas were able to get enough rain for their crops, while others are still in need of a good rainfall.

"Basically right now it's who caught the rain and who missed them because it's so sporadic this year," said Green.

"The field looks good here, then you drive over two miles and it's terrible. It all depends on who caught the rain and who missed them, for some people it's one part of their field and the other is going to be the difference. It's going to be very variable this year."

"I don't think it's going to be an outstanding crop, it's just too dry and not enough timely rain."

*Continued on page B10 ↗*

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## USask wheat breeder earns province's highest honour

BY USASK CROP DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Dr. Pierre Hucl (PhD) has been named a 2023 Saskatchewan Order of Merit recipient in recognition of his remarkable contributions to crop development and research.

A professor and plant breeder in the Department of Plant Sciences and Crop Development Centre (CDC) in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources (AgBio) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask), Hucl's expertise in bread wheat, specialty wheats, and canaryseed breeding and genetics has revolutionized farming practices and enhanced food security across Western Canada.

Hucl's exceptional career as a world-recognized plant breeder and researcher, combined with his unwavering commitment to mentorship and volunteer service, embodies the essence of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Established in 1985, the Saskatchewan Order of Merit—the province's highest honour—celebrates excellence and achievement by Saskatchewan citizens. Hucl, along with five other recipients, will be invested with the order at a ceremony in Saskatoon on September 27, 2023.

Throughout his distinguished career, Hucl's dedication to science and breeding of bread wheat, canaryseed and other crop lines for short-season regions of Western Canada has resulted in the release of more than 40 new crop varieties. These varieties have not only reinforced western Canadian agriculture but also played a pivotal role in the region's value-added industry, contributing to billions of dollars in farm-gate receipts.

A notable achievement for Hucl—who held the Strategic Research Program Chair in Canada's Western Red Spring (CWRSS) Wheat, Specialty Wheats, and Canaryseed Breeding and Genetics for 33 years—is the development and release of the first hairless canaryseed variety. This groundbreaking innovation not only established Saskatchewan as a global leader in producing and exporting canaryseed, but also opened doors to a growing market due to the seed's health benefits. The hairless canaryseed varieties developed by Hucl made harvesting and processing easier by eliminating the tiny, sharp spikes from the hull, which are a major skin and lung irritant.

Hucl's impact on food security has been profound, with his wheat varieties demonstrating improved yields, disease resistance, and qualities specifically tailored for the baking industry. His research focuses on breeding wheat varieties that are highly resistant to the wheat disease



Dr. Pierre Hucl (PhD) is a professor and plant breeder in the Department of Plant Sciences and Crop Development Centre.

Christina Weese photo

Fusarium Head Blight (FHB), which poses a threat to the worldwide wheat market due to the harmful mycotoxin found in infected wheat kernels. By developing FHB-resistant varieties, Hucl played a role in ensuring the safety and quality of wheat products for both domestic and international consumers.

Saskatchewan, accounting for nearly 44 per cent of Canada's total spring wheat area, has embraced Hucl's wheat varieties, with his strains being planted on approximately 2.4 million acres of farmland annually. One such variety, CDC Teal, earned the prestigious Seed of the Year award in 2016, further highlighting the substantial impact of Hucl's work on the agri-food industry.

Hucl's passion for innovative breeding approaches extends beyond wheat. He has ventured into ancient and heritage grains, popular among Saskatchewan's organic and urban agricultural sectors. As Canada's sole spelt wheat breeder, he has recently developed and released

three new spelt wheat varieties. Spelt wheat, particularly when consumed as a whole grain, boasts numerous essential amino acids, vitamins, and minerals that support a healthy gut microflora and human health.

Moreover, his forward-thinking approach and adoption of cutting-edge technologies have streamlined wheat breeding processes, significantly reducing the time it takes to release new wheat varieties. By leveraging DNA testing technologies, Hucl "pyramids" multiple disease and insect resistance genes into his latest strains, resulting in durable resistance and reducing the need for synthetic fungicides and insecticides in farmers' fields.

For nearly 25 years, Hucl served as an advisor for the Saskatchewan Seed Growers Association, earning him honorary life memberships in both the Saskatchewan Seed Growers Association and the Canadian Seed Growers Association. He also actively participated in several management boards, including the Crop Production Show Executive Committee, the Prairie Grain Development Committee, and the Canaryseed Association of Canada.

Hucl has also been a teacher and mentor. As a renowned and highly published scientist, Hucl's influence extends to the next generation of plant breeders. Throughout his career, he has mentored and trained numerous undergraduate and post-graduate students, cultivating future leaders in the agricultural industry.

For his contributions, Hucl has been decorated with numerous prestigious awards. In 2019, Hucl was awarded the CSTA Plant Breeding & Genetics Award, a testament to his exceptional contributions to the field. In 2014, he was honoured with a SABEX award for his innovation in the agricultural industry, recognizing his pioneering work that elevated the agricultural landscape. In 2017, he was named a Fellow of the Canadian Society of Agronomy, and in June of 2023, received the Distinguished Agronomist Award from the same society in recognition of his outstanding contributions to agronomy. He also received the College of AgBio's Research Excellence Award for his leading research in wheat and canaryseed breeding.



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Vermillion Growers officially announced the opening of their tomato greenhouse in Dauphin on July 27. Photo by: Kevin Weedmark.



Manitoba Minister of Agriculture Derek Johnson at the grand opening event.



**Left:** Inside of the Vermillion Growers greenhouse.



Tomatoes growing in the greenhouse.



Moosomin Economic Development Officer Casey McCormac and board member Kevin Weedmark representing Moosomin Economic Development Committee at the grand opening event

## **Vermillion Growers of Dauphin opens greenhouse**

Vermillion Growers held a grand opening for their tomato greenhouse in Dauphin, Manitoba on July 27. The greenhouse will produce 10 million pounds of tomatoes over the next year, while creating 35 new full-time jobs in the community, and will eventually employ over 200 members of the community. Phase 1 of the greenhouse covers 10 acres, and Phase 2 should be announced soon.



**Above:** Around 200 people came out on July 25.



**Above:** Maria Deschauer Managing Director of Vermillions Growers.  
**Right:** Founder of Vermillions Growers Lucky Deschauer.

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## FCC offers assistance to farmers potentially impacted by drought

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) has opened its doors to farmers in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba who are facing, or potentially may face, financial hardship due to dry conditions impacting crop quality and grazing lands.

"Some producers would know that their production is going to be challenged this year. There's been some significant drought in Saskatchewan and much of Western Canada," said Shannon Weatherall, Vice-President of Operations at FCC.

"We're encouraging people to come in whether they're sure they are going to need some assistance, or whether they're not sure, to come talk to our team, to come into the office or speak with their relationship manager."

"Even call our customer service centre and talk about their individual situation and options, and then we can come up with solutions to reduce the financial pressure that they might be feeling."

Although harvesting is still a month away, Weatherall said they decided to announce their assistance to help reduce the stress of a lot of farmers.

"Part of it too is for those who are unsure, they can come in and have a conversation about what might be possible, and then they can also see how it plays out and know they've had that conversation before," she said.

"There's a bit of stress with the uncertainty, and we're big proponents in terms of mental health in agriculture."

"Some of it too is knowing that there is that support and that willingness to work with them to make sure they

have that cash flow to get into the next production cycle. That's where we want to be, is to support our customers."

Weatherall spoke about the areas in Saskatchewan and Manitoba where farmers have been impacted the most because of the drought.

"There's various drought all across Western Canada. I'm senior vice-president of operations for Saskatchewan and Manitoba, there's certainly droughts in Saskatchewan, southwestern Saskatchewan in particular is very dry," she said.

"But other areas in Saskatchewan and Manitoba would have below average precipitation this year in a state of drought as well. For some producers it's multiple years in a row with below average precipitation which is a challenge."

### What type of assistance will Farm Credit Canada offer?

Weatherall spoke about the different ways Farm Credit Canada would help support producers.

"We'll work with customers based on their individual situations, but some of those solutions we have will be considering deferral of their principal payments, or other loan schedule amendments, just to reduce that financial pressure and ensure producers have cash flow to move forward," she said.

FCC's main focus is to help provide financial assistance and resources to farmers ahead of harvesting time, so that they know the support is there if needed, said Weatherall.

"The weather has been a challenge for some areas, more eastern Saskatchewan than Manitoba. They actually, for

three years, were faced with flooding and now they are experiencing a drought," she said.

"It might be different the reasons for the challenges, but either way we want to make sure we're able to support them."

### How can farmers reach out?

FCC encourages farmers to reach out to discuss their options that would help reduce the financial pressures that come with agriculture.

"It's really important for peace of mind and for planning going forward to know what actions are available," said Weatherall.

"Even if they are not sure what they want to do, we're happy to sit down with them and talk about their individual situation, and go through all the options that might be helpful for them and support them."

Farmers can arrange a time to speak with a consultant from FCC through their customer service centre at 1-888-332-3301, or online through their website: [fcc.ca](http://fcc.ca)

"We work with customers and their financial concerns for sure, but we're also big proponents of mental health services and support in the Ag industry," Weatherall said.

"We do have a list of mental health resources in a publication that we released this year on our website: [fcc.ca/wellness](http://fcc.ca/wellness)

"If someone is struggling with their mental health or just wants to look at what resources are available, I would encourage producers, anyone in the industry really, to take a look at that. There's lots of good information on that website."

## New USask funding to advance Canada's beef sector

Dr. Antonio Faccioli (PhD) from the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) has new support to develop a vaccine against Johne's disease—a chronic intestinal disease of cattle that is significant to both the beef and dairy industry.

Faccioli is one of five scientists at USask awarded funding from the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) under the newly announced Canada's Beef and Forage AgriScience Cluster.

The USask-led projects, totalling \$3,107,317, will help bolster the beef sector's environmental and economic sustainability. The research will focus on improving cow-calf health and productivity, breeding climate-resistant forages, studying the Canadian feedlot industry, managing cattle diseases, and advancing gut health research.

"Agriculture is a signature area of research at USask and we are committed to advancing research that will create sustainable growth in this area," said USask Vice-President Research Baljit Singh. "The funding announced by BCRC will allow us to drive innovation and make meaningful contributions that will bring great value to the beef industry."

Johne's disease, caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium paratuberculosis (MAP), is a contagious and lifelong infection that eventually progresses to severe inflammation of

the small intestine in cattle. It is estimated the disease causes annual industry-wide losses of \$17-28 million USD. Vaccines are not currently available in Canada.

Faccioli, who has collaborators at the University of Calgary and Simon Fraser University, will receive \$264,960 from BCRC to advance the development of a vaccine against MAP.

"I'm excited to build on our previous work which established an infection and vaccine screening model for Johne's disease," said Faccioli, one of VIDO's newest scientists who is also affiliated with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at USask. "This funding will support the next steps in vaccine research and ultimately towards the development of a vaccine that can protect against this chronic and economically important disease."

The team will test oral and injectable vaccine formulations using antigens identified in a previous project. Based on their findings, they will select the combination that provides the best overall protection to help control this disease.

The following USask projects were also recipients of support under Canada's Beef and Forage AgriScience Cluster:

- Bill Biligetu (PhD) — \$201,680 Breeding climate-resilient forage germplasm for the Canadian beef industry: a national collaboration.
- Greg Penner (PhD) — \$961,859. Re-considering

treatment strategies: can we accelerate recovery from disease by considering gut health?

- Gabriel Ribeiro (PhD) — \$300,468. A benchmark study of the Canadian feedlot industry and an evaluation of best man-

agement practices (BMPs) to improve the sustainability of feedlots.

- Cheryl Waldner (PhD) — \$1,378,350. The Canadian Cow-Calf Health and Productivity Enhancement Network (C3H/PEN).

**Right:** Dr. Antonio Faccioli (PhD) will receive \$264,960 from BCRC to advance the development of a vaccine against MAP.

Dave Stobbe photo



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# 2023 Grains, oilseeds and pulses outlook update: Sector facing uncertain weather and global conflict as crops mature

BY MARTHA ROBERTS  
FCC ECONOMICS EDITOR

Prices for the 2022-23 crop have continued to drop from our last outlook in some commodities (canola, yellow peas and spring wheat), prolonging a general downward trend witnessed since January (Table 1).

However, some crops appear to have benefited from strengthening prices thus far in 2023 (corn, soybeans and red lentils) although these are expected to drop or flatten throughout the remainder of the marketing year (MY). The good news is that while prices are trending down, they should remain elevated well above their respective five-year averages.

Profitability is a complicated story right now. Crop margins (for a winter wheat/corn/soybean rotation) in eastern Canada are expected to fall year-over-year (YoY) but remain positive throughout the outlook period. Also facing a YoY decline, western profitability will be in the black for most crops (barley, canola, spring wheat, durum and red lentils) but will be pressured for yellow peas. That's the bird's eye view. Digging deeper, however, we'll likely see wide variation in margins, given the noted volatility in both crop and farm input prices this year. Margins will be subject to more pressures if producers bought inputs last fall for this crop year (a common practice) or happened to contract large portions of their crops when prices were trending down. At the same time, more timely purchases or contracting will likely result in excellent margins.

Table 1: Crop prices fall again while remaining well above their five-year averages

CASH CROP	2022/23 MY ACTUAL	2022/23 MY DEAR-TO-DATE FORECAST	2022/23 MY FORECAST	2023/24 MY FORECAST	FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE
Corn (bushels)	300	300	300	290	330
Soybeans (bushels)	600	715	715	600	530
Canola (bushels)	890	870	850	800	580
Pean (yellow - 100)	605	420	425	360	340
Lentils (red - \$K)	310	735	725	620	500
Spring wheat (\$K)	415	420	415	405	290
Feed barley (\$K)	305	370	375	355	220
Durum (\$K)	400	470	450	365	340

Sources: Statistics Canada, AACF, USDA, PDQ, CanFax, CME, MGEK and ICE Futures, and FCC calculations.

Marketing Year for corn and soybeans: September 1 – August 31

Marketing Year for wheat, canola, barley, pea and lentils: August 1 – July 31

**Input prices continue to fall throughout 2023 while some global supplies start to loosen**

Our January Outlook identified low global supplies and high input costs as two influential factors to monitor in 2023. We're happy to report input prices have continued to fall since our May Outlook update. Their declines in the past three months have sped up the 2023 reversal of the upward trend of YoY input prices for last year's crop (2022-23) for purple fuel, diesel and urea. At the same time, fertilizer costs have either reversed (phosphate) or their growth rate has slowed (ammonia and potash) for the 2023-24 crops (Table 2).

The other major trend impacting grain and oilseed



Table 2: Farm input prices to ease in 2023 as supply-demand balance regains stability

	PURPLE GASOLINE	DIESEL	UREA	AMMONIUM PHOSPHATE	AMMONIUM AMMONIA	POTASH
2021/22	+3.0%	-1.4%	+3.0%	+10.6%	-0.6%	-23.9%
2022/23	+43.0%	+13.2%	+150.0%	+65.0%	+88.0%	+84.3%
2023/24	-8.8%	-0.1%	+16.4%	+2.2%	+8.8%	+33.2%

Sources: Alberta Farm Inputs, World Bank, FCC calculations (\* rolling average)

markets is the tightness of global supplies. With the way they're trending, North American growing conditions in 2023 aren't going to be the ticket to bolster them. The latest USDA grain stocks report showed continuing tightness in U.S. corn, wheat and soybean stocks as of June 1. All three are down YoY.

According to the June WASDE report, global stocks forecasts for 2023-24 are up YoY for all three crops, but tightness remains in wheat ending stocks, with a forecast of 6% less than the prior five-year average (2018-19 – 2022-23). On the other hand, world corn ending stocks are expected to reach levels not seen since 2018-19 this year thanks to corn acreage in the U.S. that is the third highest since 1944. Soybean stocks will be the highest in five years based on Brazil's record production. Total global demand (domestic use plus exports) for wheat is expected to remain steady YoY in the 2023-24 MY. Utilization of both corn and soybeans is expected to increase but global production of each is expected to grow more.

Two other factors of note weighing on the crop sectors as we settle into summer: developments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict have again inserted uncertainty into markets while North American producers wait for moisture levels to even out.

#### The Russia-Ukraine conflict, an aborted coup and the likely suspension of the UN-brokered export deal

The Russia-Ukraine export treaty is, as of Monday, July 17, suspended after Moscow walked away from the deal that allowed for safe passage of Ukrainian exports of grains and oilseeds through their Black Sea ports. This comes on the heels of a short-lived mercenary ef-

fort to destabilize Russia's top military brass the weekend of June 23-24. The offensive had set in motion serious speculation about the likelihood of disruptions to the global supply of grains, which appeared to be realized in early Monday morning trading. However, the price rally quickly dissipated, suggesting markets had already factored in President Vladimir Putin's decision to forego re-signing the treaty.

Given the deal's disappearance is arguably counterproductive—because it serves to uphold Ukrainian and Russian interests—the pull-back may be short-lived. In the interim, concerns for global food security are mounting as buyers, particularly those in developing countries, look to source ag commodities away from Ukraine.

#### Weather, weather, weather

While it's always an issue, challenging weather to this point in many parts of North America dominates discussions of production and marketing risk. The Canadian prairies have turned dry – June was extremely dry and hot, producing a crop that's one to two weeks ahead of normal in most areas. Alberta conditions were worse than their five-year and 10-year averages (as of June 30), with 45% rated good/excellent, down from 75% in 2022. Four Alberta counties have declared agricultural emergencies to date.

Elsewhere, there's been very good vegetative growth in Saskatchewan to this point, and mixed growth in Manitoba. In the U.S., half of soybean and corn acres were rated good/excellent as of July 2, also down significantly from trending averages, with declining crop conditions in some regions despite scattered rains.

But there's a possible bright spot amidst the challenging news. A comparison of early U.S. growing conditions and eventual yield outcomes suggests there may still be some hope for this year's crop. Yields weren't always below trend in an analysis of 10 years' worth of data showing less than a rating of 60% good/excellent at roughly the same time of the crop year. While yields will almost certainly fall in many areas without significant improvement in moisture levels, the fate of the overall 2023 crop has not yet been sealed.

#### Bottom line

With global stocks of key ag commodities expected to grow in the 2023-24 MY, prices may continue to decline, pressuring margins over the outlook period. But there's bullish news too. Geopolitical tensions and an unfavourable weather outlook could support prices as farm input prices continue their decline. And we may be in for another break too. Interest rates are now close to peaking after the latest Bank of Canada increase to 5.00%. Amid the tightening financial conditions and darkening economic outlook, FCC Economics expects rates to start falling by next year. With these factors combined and given the wild swings in 2023 pricing, effective risk management is key to managing profitability.



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## Saskatchewan Crop Report

# Heat and drought continue to take toll

### For Southeast Saskatchewan

Extreme heat and drought continue to take their toll on crops in the region. Many crops are showing signs of severe stress and reduced yield potential. Crops will be drying down rapidly due to the heat, meaning producers will start harvest in the next week or two and desiccation of lentil and pea crops is already underway across portions of the region. Producers with later seeded crops are hoping for some rain to ensure maximum seed fill. Some areas of the region did receive rain, but for many it will be too little and too late.

The Indian Head and Glenavon areas received the largest amounts of rain with 37 and 34 mm respectively but overall, most of the region received insignificant amounts ranging from two to six mm. Cropland topsoil moisture is rated as 15 per cent adequate, 51 per cent short and 34 per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as eight per cent adequate, 34 per cent short and 58 per cent very short.

Haying is almost complete in the region with five per cent of the hay crop still standing and 77 per cent of it baled or put up for silage. Livestock producers will be working quickly to wrap up their haying operations since grain harvesting is right around the corner. In some areas of the region, hay yields are lower than last year, but their quality is still high, with 81 per cent being rated as good and 19 per cent as fair. Those who are experiencing lower



yields will be looking for other sources of feed.

Crop conditions vary within the region, with a majority in poor-to-good condition. Crops on heavier soil that have been retaining moisture look far better than any crop on lighter sandy soil.

Most of the crop damage this past week was due to drought stress, heat and damage caused by grasshoppers and gophers. Producers are busy finishing up haying, conducting yield assessments and getting their harvest plans sorted out.

### For all of Saskatchewan

Crop yield potential has decreased in many parts of the province due to the dry heat, and producers are hoping for more rain before harvest to finish up seed filling. Harvest has begun in the driest areas of the province.

Desiccating of pulses has begun in the southwest and west central regions and combining of these fields will commence quickly. Cereal crops that cannot be harvested due to dry conditions and grasshopper damage are being salvaged for livestock feed to support neighbouring livestock producers.

There were several storms throughout the province this past week. Some resulted in rainfall amounts up to 37 to 40 mm, which will give crops some reprieve from the heat stress and encourage seed fill. Many of the driest areas of the province received trace amounts of rain throughout the week. Producers are hoping for substantial moisture following harvest as some areas in the province have now gone more than 30 days without precipitation.

Topsoil moisture continues to decrease and is rated as 15 per cent adequate, 48 per cent short and 37 per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as eight per cent adequate, 43 per cent short and 49 per cent very short.

Crop conditions have also decreased

due to extreme heat, rating from very poor to good. The areas of the province where timely rain has fallen are showing higher crop conditions.

Haying operations are almost complete with five per cent standing, 13 per cent cut and 82 per cent baled or silage. Hay quality is rated as four per cent excellent, 66 per cent good, 29 per cent fair and one per cent poor. Livestock producers who have not received adequate rainfall this season are reporting water and feed concerns.

Strong winds, drought stress, hail, extreme heat, grasshoppers and gophers took their toll on some crops this past week. Many producers stopped applying pest control products. Producers are reminded to be safe during their harvest operations such as taking frequent breaks and to remember to use every precaution available for fire prevention as the extremely dry conditions increase the risk of combine and grass fires.

Dry conditions can be stressful for producers and they are reminded to take safety precautions in all the work they do. The Farm Stress Line is available to provide support to producers toll free at 1-800-667-4442. For producers dealing with dry conditions, additional resources are available through the ministry website: Sask Ag Now or by contacting their regional office.



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# Farmers in southeast Sask. say dry conditions are affecting crop quality

*Continued from front*

He was asked if he thinks farmers will have to rely on crop insurance after harvest this year.

"We have had some good crops in this area, people's average yields were fairly decent and now if they're going to be down there's definitely going to be some crop insurance claims," said Green.

"Anyone who had rainfall insurance on their corn is probably going to claim this year because corn definitely needed more rain than what we've had."

"Best case scenario I would say average to below average for crop yield this year."

"It's going to be the quality that's going to be tough too. When you get drier conditions the barley is generally lighter, the wheat is lighter, and with the grain commission change for the rules on test weights—APAS has actually lobbied the government to get those rules changed by August 1—is just another attack on the grain farmers that we don't really need right now in a tougher year."

## Lack of moisture for crops in Moosomin area

Mark McCroriston, grain farmer from the Moosomin and Rocanville area, said crops have suffered because of the dry weather conditions.

"I would say they have been desperate-ly dry," said McCroriston.

"Rocanville did get a lighter rain, but they were drier earlier on. The Moosomin and Rocanville area, I would say, is extremely dry."

If it were to rain in the next week or two then some crops would still come out well, said McCroriston.

"I feel like the fate is sealed for the wheat crop and the barley crop, but if the canola can get rain in the next few days then that would be good," he said.

"I've been keeping my fingers crossed that we are going to get rain in the next few days for a couple weeks now, and its just never happened."

"It's just super disappointing. It seems like the forecast shows we'll get rain in two or three days then it just never happens."

With a great start to the season, McCroriston said it is unfortunate to see the crops not flourish as well as he had hoped.

"I'm definitely concerned, I don't think it's going to be a bumper crop," said McCroriston.

"Honestly it's super disappointing because the potential for an awesome crop was there at the beginning of the year."

"We had excellent germination, we had good moisture starting out this season, and the canola came on really good. We didn't have bug pressures or other problems that

we experienced in the past, but then we just had a lack of moisture."

"I honestly can't recall when we had a good rain, I would say it's been near a couple of months ago. Then all season long we've never had a real good generalized rain, it was always spotty showers so one field might have got a good bit of rain, but the next one misses it."

"I just can't remember the last time when the farm trucks were dirty because the roads were muddy. It just seems like it's been forever since we've had a rain."

"I think you can see it when you look at people's lawns in town who don't water their grass, they've all browned up."

"Unfortunately it's not good, and it's also starting to push the pastures where the livestock are to the maximum to the grass. It's just browning off, it's not growing anymore."

"The pastures are really starting to experience a drought stress as well. Some of the grasslands have grasshoppers on them now. It's unfortunate. It's been a disappointing summer."

Although crops are not in the best condition, McCroriston said he does

not think a lot of farmers in the Moosomin area will have to make insurance claims at the end of the season.

"I would say it's going to be border line. Crop insurance is there to keep you afloat," he said. "The crops have to be pretty poor before you can get into a crop insurance claim position."

"In the Moosomin and surrounding area, we're definitely better than other places in the province. Saskatchewan definitely has other areas that are experiencing it far worse."

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# Enjoying summer fun before harvest begins

July is the month of the year for farmers like us (in our line of work and at our age) when we get a break from the work and get to enjoy the weather all at once, providing the weather is half decent that is.

When we pulled the RV out to the lake a month ago, I am not sure we anticipated such an extended period of time that we could push the boat out each morning and get in a few hours of fishing every day. But oh the fish cleaning that needed to be done! Not that I actually do that, just to be clear. It looked to me to be a bit of a chore, however the fried fish and the fish tacos were, I hope, worth hubby's efforts in his eyes because it was Oh! So! Tasty!!

The break from the farm hasn't excluded the concern we have for our crops, not that we can change a darn thing about the moisture levels of course. But every grain farmer who sees the crop stress appearing across their fields, if they are in a similar state of heat distress as we are in the Whitewood area, can only sigh with disappointment. As for 'maybe next year'—let's not even go there. I have heard some farmers express a desire though to see the big 'white combine' come in. And as someone so aptly said when I mentioned the 'H' word (hail)... "we can't even get a cloud in the sky, nor a spit of rain; hoping for hail seems like a long stretch."

From the little I have traveled through parts of Saskatchewan this summer, some places are worse off than what we are, and in fact in Saskatchewan, many areas have had multiple stretches of 10 days or more with no significant rainfall and as of a week or so ago, our province has about 20 rural municipalities which have declared states of emergency due to drought. It's definitely reminding me of the dry season we had just two years ago. Oh, except for harvest time that is when it finally began to rain. Ahhh yes, the weather challenges we experience from year to year. After 46 years of this, nothing surprises me anymore.

Nevertheless, as we approach the end of our time at the lake, my mind is starting to plan harvest meals. Oh how I do not like to cook and oh how I never know what I ought to make. As if doing this for the past 46 years hasn't given me a few clues. I know getting back home means a harsh switch to reality—get those frozen meals made! The notebook I have on my table at the lake is laying open for one reason—get shopping list made and meal ideas listed. Not surprisingly, my notebook is still blank.

Lake time has also meant visits with family and friends and lots of 'round the campfire' moments. And lots of laughs. One evening as we sat around the fire with the twins and our two youngest grands, I told them funny little stories about when their dad and their mom were little back in the day, living on our farm, the farm the twins and their family now live on. They laughed and laughed but the next night around the fire I told them it was their turn to tell me some funny stories about their parents or their family.

**The Lighter Side of Life...**

**DOWN ON THE FARM**

by donna beutler  
FREELANCE PHOTO/JOURNALIST  
dl\_beutler@yahoo.ca

The kids had hardly even started speaking when one of the twins' little blue yard exercise balls (think squishy) exploded all over his face and his hair and cap and down his sweatshirt and all over the lawn chair, and that was the end of storytelling that night. Exactly how can one small, fist-sized ball hold so much slimy gooey stuff? Gramps had an interesting time washing out the shirt in the little sink and Wyatt headed straight for the shower to see if the goop would wash out of his hair.

From mini golf games to fishing to kayaking and paddle boarding to scavenger hunts at dark to the Beachside Treats truck to chalk drawing contests sponsored by our campground (and which the grands won I must add), we were busy literally every minute of every day, and from six o'clock on I might add as the twins could **never** wait to get out on the boat and start their day with a fishing rod in their hands. "Okay, Gramps, it's time for you to get moving." I would say every morning, knowing the twins were up and already getting their gear in the boat on the beach across from our tiny summer home. And then, once I had pushed the boat out with my three guys on, my motion had come!

I sat on the beach reading my book and enjoying the sun as it began to make its way a little higher in the skies, right up until the younger ones woke up and poked their head out the camper door. What a beautiful world was created for us to enjoy. Wow! Truly there is beauty everywhere and what sweet bliss it was to sit on a beach in the morning before anyone was up and about at our campground and enjoy the solitude and the gentle lapping of waves at my feet.

As a kid, before I moved to Saskatchewan, I thought beauty was only in trees and rock and lakes like my northwest Ontario home, but it's truly everywhere!

I took our two youngest grands to Government House in Regina the other day and there was a quote written (from the late 1800's I believe) by someone whose name eludes me as I write this, saying something like this: except for Sodom and Gomorrah, there is no worse place

than Regina—there's not a tree anywhere! Apparently we have a few more trees in Saskatchewan now (fortunately).

In fact, the gardener at Government House back in the late 1800's/early 1900's is responsible for bringing trees to Saskatchewan (from Banff no less) and particularly the caragana tree—you know, the ones that surrounded every homestead across these prairies I am sure. The ones my twin grandsons refer to as the trees old people used to plant, you know, those trees all over the old yardsites. Yup, I know what you mean. I now also know some history behind them! My little history buff grandson (9) was totally intrigued with Government House and his sister (7) had eyes as big as saucers when we walked into the dining room. That is one massive table!

But now, harvest (such as it may be this year) is just around the corner and combines and swathers are being readied. 'My' combine, or at least the one I am most likely to run this year, is being brought up to snuff by none other than the mechanic who surely dreads when our phone numbers show up on his cell.

Now that I walk quite well, thanks to two new hips, I am wondering if I should be looking at getting my semi license. That little talk I had with myself didn't go on for very long however as I think about how much I don't even like pulling the boat or the teeny tiny little flatdeck. Nope, definitely passing on that thought. And if my son happens to read this, I know he's thinking, "Oh, thank goodness, Mother! You are **not** going to be driving my semi trucks."

As lake time passes us by, so has July's annual 4-H local and regional shows and sales at the Whitewood Auction Barn. I have three 'farm' grandchildren who are very involved in 4-H and whose steers (to me) looked amazing. The temps were absolutely freezing on local 4-H day and the wind was much like a winter blizzard type wind but my heart was warm as I watched Reid, Sierra and Wyatt show their animals.

I know how much work goes into preparing them for show and to all the kids in the 4-H clubs in this area, I see the time and the skill it takes to get ready for the big day. I also see the values that these 4-Hers are learning and though I was never a 4-Her (because my parents knew I didn't have the heart to raise a steer and sell it, much less anything else it), I am so proud of all the 4-H kids here who have pledged not only their head to clearer thinking and their heart to greater loyalty, but their hands to larger service—for their club, their community, their country and their world. Hats off too to their leaders, for without you and your knowledge, these kids would never have the opportunity to learn what they are learning.

And that's my tribute for this time around—to 4-Hers and leaders everywhere. **Way to go!!** Keep on being of service to others, keep on learning new things every day, and keep on enjoying every new experience you have—from in the barns to wherever your passions take you across this world!

## Hay and ditch mowing gets into full swing

Saskatchewan producers can gather hay along provincial highways. After July 8, anyone may cut and bale hay without permission from the nearby landowner, if no mowing or hay recovery is underway by the adjacent landowner/lessee.

"Our annual hay and ditch mowing program not only benefits the people of our province but also exemplifies our commitment to addressing the needs of area landowners, producers and motorists," Highways Minister Jeremy Cockrill said. "By striking a perfect balance, we have successfully created a cost-effective program that caters to the diverse needs of everyone in Saskatchewan."

Cutting along provincial highways improves sight lines, helps control brush and noxious weeds, and provides a neat appearance. Cutting also optimizes snow storage in ditches reducing drifting on the road surface in the winter.

The ministry will deliver the mowing program with the assistance of contractors. Approximately 43,500 hectares will be cut in 2023. The ministry also works with local RM's to deliver additional mowing across the province.

If you're planning to travel, check the Highway Hotline at saskatchewan.ca/highwayhotline, which provides up-to-date information on construction, emergency road closures, the status of ferries, barges and other road activities. Information is also available by calling 5-1-1.

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## Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan provide additional support for producers; low yield appraisal change encourages poor crops be used as feed

The federal and provincial governments have announced Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) is implementing extraordinary measures to offer support to Saskatchewan livestock producers facing challenges resulting from dry conditions this year, allowing additional acres of low yielding cereal and pulse crops to be diverted to feed. This incentive allows crop producers to make timely decisions to make additional feed available to graze, bale or silage.

"This change to the low yield threshold aims to help producers make critical decisions about how to move forward with their crop and feed requirements," said the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. "Many producers have been in this unfortunate situation before, due to the risks associated with climate change, which is why we are so committed to finding agricultural innovations that will increase resiliency going forward."

"We are seeing dry pockets and grass-

hopper damage throughout the province, particularly in the southwest," Minister of Agriculture David Marit said. "We are committed to supporting our farmers and ranchers to lessen the impact of these challenging conditions, and I want to encourage crop producers to again work with neighbouring livestock producers to make feed available. This same initiative was implemented in 2021, resulting in over 345,000 acres of additional crop redirected to feed."

When crops are severely damaged and the appraised yield falls below an established threshold level, the yield is reduced to zero for the Crop Insurance claim. In response to the feed shortage this year, SCIC is doubling the low yield appraisal threshold values allowing customers to salvage their cereal or pulse crops as feed, without negatively impacting future individual coverage. For example, the 2023 threshold level for oats is 10 bushels per acre. With a doubled low yield appraisal, the threshold increases to 20 bushels per

acre for a producer intending to utilize the oats for feed. The claim is determined using a zero-bushel yield and the original 20 bushels appraised yield is used to update future Crop Insurance coverage.

Before customers begin to graze, bale or silage their damaged crop, producers should contact their local SCIC office.

Through the 2023 Crown Grazing Lease Rental Reduction Program, lessees may be eligible for a rent reduction in situations where individual lessees or pasture associations must reduce stocking rates on leases by 20 per cent or more below the rated carrying capacity their leased grazing land. Eligible lessees will have the 2023 grazing rent reduced by 20 to 50 per cent.

To help manage the challenges associated with dry conditions, AgriStability participants may apply for the interim benefit option to access a portion of their 2023 benefit early. Producers enrolled in AgriStability for the 2023 year can access 50 per cent of their estimated final benefit.

Also, in most cases, the additional expenses a producer incurs to procure additional feed is an eligible expense through the AgriStability Program.

Producers are encouraged to contact the Farm Stress Line for support. The Farm Stress Line is a confidential service, available 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, toll-free at 1-800-667-4442. Calls are answered by Mobile Crisis Services Regina, a non-profit, community-based agency and there is no call display.

Crop Insurance is a federal-provincial producer cost-shared program that helps producers manage production and quality losses. Support for the program is provided by the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP).

*Producers concerned about dry conditions should contact their local SCIC office. For more information, call 1-888-935-0000 or visit scic.ca*

## Saskatchewan requests Agri-Recovery Assessment due to drought

Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit has requested the federal government conduct an AgriRecovery assessment to determine what assistance could be provided to livestock producers faced with prolonged dry conditions.

"Many producers across Saskatchewan are facing extraordinary costs to ensure their animals are taken care of. We need to move quickly to consider all relief options, including an AgriRecovery assessment to help producers deal with the challenges brought about by drought," Marit said.

In a letter sent to Ottawa July 17, Sas-

katchewan also requested an early designation of the federal Livestock Tax Deferral Program, to provide producers facing potential feed shortages with more options as they consider if they need to liquidate part of their breeding herd due to drought.

As of June 30, western and southeastern regions of Saskatchewan received well below-normal precipitation while temperatures have also been significantly warmer than normal. In the hardest hit regions of Saskatchewan, heatwaves, limited rain, minimal spring runoff and successive years of dry conditions are all contributing to significant challeng-

es. Concerns include water quantity, access to feed and large grasshopper infestations.

AgriRecovery is a federal-provincial disaster relief framework focused on extraordinary costs producers face to recover from disasters.

Last week, the federal and provincial governments also announced that Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) is implementing measures to offer support to Saskatchewan livestock producers by allowing additional acres of low yielding cereal, pulse crops, canola and flax to be diverted to feed.

Saskatchewan has also frozen the

2023 rate charged to producers who lease Crown grazing land. Additionally, through the 2023 Crown Grazing Lease Rental Reduction Program, lessees may be eligible for a rent reduction in situations where they reduce stocking rates on leases by 20 per cent or more below the rated carrying capacity.

The Ministry of Agriculture has a team of extension specialists located in 10 regional offices across Saskatchewan to support producers with agronomic advice and program information. Producers can contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377 to connect with a specialist.

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