

Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister and Cannington MLA Daryl Harrison at Redvers Ag in August with Premier Scott Moe, and the Dangstorp family, the owners of the new Redvers Ag Kubota dealership in Redvers.



## Year in Review

# Ag Minister Daryl Harrison says Premier's visit a highlight in Cannington

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A year in review with Saskatchewan's new Minister of Agriculture needs to begin with a look at what 2024 was like in agriculture.

"We had an average to slightly above that average crop, so that was good," Cannington MLA and Minister of Agriculture Daryl Harrison reported, adding that cattle winter feed stocks and water supplies are good. "It's been a pretty decent year in the Cannington area. It's better than some areas, so I think everybody's very thankful for what they received, for precipitation, and their crops.

"Of course, like most producers—myself included—I always want a few more bales off that quarter and a few more cents for the calves when I send them to market," he continued, with a laugh. "But overall, I'm very pleased about the prices I received here this fall—better than it has been the past years, and with all these winter precipitation events coming through it shows us that the patterns are there. We'll look forward to a good rainfall in the

spring and get our crops off to a good start in 2025."

In late August, Harrison had the opportunity to tour Premier Scott Moe around Cannington, making for a busy day.

"We stopped and saw the new RM office at Tecumseh in the town of Stoughton, E. Bourassa in Carlyle—they're celebrating 100 years in business, which is a huge milestone," Harrison said.

The duo also visited the Southeast Butcher Block in Alameda, where Harrison later had the chance to attend the business' grand opening.

"It's just a great facility, and a huge congratulations to them and all the work they put into getting that built," he said.

"In Oxbow, we had a quick lunch with the local municipal and town councils there, and then we shot up to Redvers to the new Kubota building," Harrison explained. "The dealership there has been around for a few years, but they constructed a new building so it's a top shelf facility."

"We stopped in Wawota and ended up meeting with some local officials and some administration there, and then did the same at Kipling to round out the day," he continued. "So it was great day. It's great to get the premier down in the southeast and show him what we're all about!"

There are a couple things that Harrison is really looking forward to in his riding.

"In Cannington, there's a few more drilling rig derricks sticking up, so the oil and gas industry is looking pretty strong," he said.

"From what I'm told from workers and contractors, they're really looking forward—and I can't emphasize that enough in light of yesterday's events in Ottawa—really looking forward to a new government in Ottawa. They feel that there's a lot of investment dollars that aren't coming into the oil and gas industry because of the actions of Prime Minister Trudeau and his Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault and of course, supported by the NDP."

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# Sask lentils a hot item in United Arab Emirates

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The United Arab Emirates continues to be a hot market for Saskatchewan lentils, according to numbers released regarding grain exports to that market. From January to October of 2024, the province exported \$322 million worth of agri-food products to the UAE, marking a 19 per cent increase over the year previous.

"Any time we get the opportunity to grow a market, the better off it is for our producers here in the province, because we rely heavily on exports and having an increase like that is just invaluable," said provincial Agriculture Minister Daryl Harrison. "We have to not only appreciate that, but we have to work on maintaining and growing that. The long and the short of it is, we produce the food the world needs. It's a growing population, and we're here to feed them."

More than half of those exports to the UAE were lentils, which saw a 31 per cent increase over the same time as 2023. Over that 10-month span this year, the province exported \$174 million in lentils alone, making them the top agri-food export to the UAE this year. Other top exports included canola (\$56 million) and non-durum wheat (\$33 million).

"I think producers are going to examine their crop rotations, and there's lots of variables," Harrison said when asked if the jump in the pulse crop might have growers considering a change in what they seed come spring. "It's no different this coming growing season than others, they'll factor in the cost of each crop, the potential market and all that. From a provincial government standpoint, our trade offices around the world are just paying off hugely. We have to not only sustain the markets we have and grow them, but we have to find new markets as well."

One target in the province's 2030 Growth Plan was to hit \$20 million in agri-food exports, which has been surpassed. Last year not only marked the fourth year in a row where Saskatchewan hit record agri-food exports, but total shipments came to \$20.2 billion.

"It's quality and quantity of crop, and reliability," Harrison said. "We have to make sure we can get our product to our buyers when they need it."

Producers a few decades ago likely wouldn't even have considered such a market, let alone imagine such export numbers.

"You think back 50 years ago and it was a completely different world," Harrison said. "We were the bread basket and that's kind of what we grew. We grew wheat and



Minister of Agriculture Daryl Harrison

we grew feed for livestock. The transformation when you look back on it, it's hard to believe, but it's growing by leaps and bounds. I can't be more proud of our producers here in the province."

Another local voice couldn't agree more. "Saskatchewan's network of International Trade and Investment offices, including our UAE office, are essential for Saskatchewan producers to expand access into new global markets," Trade and Export Development Minister Warren Kaeding said. "It is more important than

ever to diversify and grow our export markets. Our province's producers provide the food and energy security the world needs. I look forward to continuing to build on our relationship with the UAE and further increase bilateral trade, bringing new investment and creating more jobs for Saskatchewan people."

Combined exports for 2022 and 2023 totalled \$102 billion, up over 52 per cent from the previous two-year timeframe, and the top export numbers in the history of Saskatchewan.

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# Loving all that Christmas has to offer

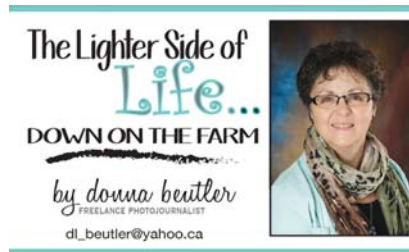
Oh what a wonderful season it is to soak in the story of that very first Christmas and to share love, joy and kindness to all those around us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

I have to admit I get really excited about the Christmas season, the gathering of family and friends, and the sparkle and twinkle of the decorations, packing shoebox gifts that will travel across the globe to children who may have never received a gift, and wrapping gifts for the grands. Oh, what a wonderful time of the year! And what a warm and wonderful feeling when the tree lights are turned on and you wrap your hands around that hot cup of chocolate topped with whipped cream and sit down in front of the fireplace.

Okay, so my fireplace is electric and there is no hearth. Also, the tree is fake and the TV takes up most of the mantle that might otherwise hold the nativity set and some Christmas candles. And I didn't wrap the gifts for the grands; I actually had my oldest granddaughter do it for me while the younger ones decorated the tree for me. So, it's not the perfect picture that I might have at one time envisioned of my Christmas preparations and décor and you know what, it doesn't really matter. The joy of the season is held in my heart and whether I have real logs to burn or a real tree to decorate is not all so important.

If you are thinking I skipped out on some of my Christmas prep in order to do some amazing baking projects or make perogies and cabbage rolls, you don't know me very well. I bought my baking from the United Church Women in Whitewood because they are not only the best bakers, they are the best fundraisers ever! I will be honest and tell you I tackled butter tarts and sugar cookies but when it comes to perogies and cabbage rolls, that really requires time and patience. Instead I thought about the food I would need for the 30 or so who will be gathering at my place this Christmas and went out to my shop and built a blanket ladder and some signs, worked on a toy cabin that won't be ready for Christmas, and searched out projects I could build out of my little pile of scrap wood. Ahhhhh ... procrastination at its best!

You know, at one time, the idea of not having a real tree was a huge let-down for me, especially as a 12-year-old leaving the Ontario forests where going out to get a tree had literally meant taking the axe into the backyard so to speak. Imagine my chagrin when my new life on the barren Saskatchewan prairies meant cutting down a poplar tree (by myself, so determined was I to have a real tree). The whole process resulted in something less than what I considered perfect and I was a bit



petulant about it all at the time, to say the least.

In the end, did the tree or rather the lack thereof, make our family gatherings less enjoyable? Not at all! Did the beautiful handmade decorations my mother had made in our Ontario years look fantastic on the bare poplar tree branches? Not even remotely. Oh, they were lovely but no amount of loveliness on bare, sparse branches can really turn a poplar tree into a 'real' Christmas tree. That we actually could gather with family at Christmas though was pretty significant after many years of living far away from my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. It's often a matter of perspective, isn't it? How we view what we have or don't have? While the kid in me really missed our family tree-cutting tradition, it paled in comparison to gathering with those we hadn't been with at Christmas for many years prior.

I have loved all the gift-buying and seeing the gifts under the tree and preparing for our Christmas trivia and silly games night! We are preparing for both our Christmas family get-together as well as our church Christmas supper. This year's Christmas shopping spree was coupled with a two-day get-away with hubby to the wonderful warm waters of the Moose Jaw Spa. Of course, this meant leaving the little abandoned barn kitten, now half grown and doing so well. It also meant leaving detailed instructions for the twins (13) on what kitty likes to eat every day. "Yes, Grandma, we've got it covered," one said in one of those questioning "you don't trust us" tones, but I was confident they would make sure the little fellow was well taken care of. And he was.

The grands and friends continue to make their way over for lunch each noon hour and gramps keeps busy with menu plans because, let's face it, you can't have crepes and strawberries and whipped cream every day. Well, perhaps you could, but I think even the kids

would start choking on whipped cream at some point. In fact, one of the twins nearly choked on something I had made the other day. Biscuits. Oh, you know those warm, fresh-out-of-the-oven tea biscuits, smothered in butter and jam. I hardly ever make them but oh when I do, I absolutely love them and thought the kids might too. One of the boys took a bite and when I asked how he liked it, he, in his matter-of-fact (and honest) tone, said, "I nearly choked on that!" I guess I better stick to cinnamon buns and sugar cookies.

The twins have been busy with their dad turning deer meat into sausage, a tradition that has been passed down from my parents to their grandson (our son). I sort of think it skipped over me because there is nothing less appealing to me than doing that particular job. I think it all began (perhaps) in the forests of Ontario ... where neighbours ended up in our basement making moose sausage. And from there, it was deer sausage in Saskatchewan. Hubby's mom used to cook deer quite often, so much so that our son, by the age of two and three wouldn't eat beef or ham or chicken. Finally, my brother in law said to him, "That's deer-steak ham," or "deer-steak chicken," and from then on, we had a meat-lover on our hands and every piece of meat was some sort of "deer" meat!

The grands have been enjoying some great times out on the snowmobiles. What a year for snow! And perhaps a bit of frostbite to the cheeks for the young fellows out too long on those minus 40 windchill days. Hubby on the other hand has been busy moving or preparing to move grain, something always a little extra challenging on the coldest of days, especially if the auger is being a bit cantankerous. The good news is it has warmed up from those -35 days right up to the zero degrees mark. The bad news however for today at least (Dec. 15) is - ice! Freezing rain has coated everything in a thick layer of ice, so much so that it is nearly impossible to walk outside today.

Well, it is time to close off this column and close out the year as well. To all our readers, how can we adequately say how much we appreciate your support of our paper? To those who enjoy the light-hearted look at life down on the farm in this column, we appreciate that too. There isn't a column that goes by that someone doesn't say how much they can relate to these columns or how well they've 'gotten to know' the twins or how they have been able to have a laugh over some funny thing that's been said or done "down on the farm." Here's hoping life down on your farm or wherever you call home is full of stories to remember. Have a wonderful Christmas season everyone. See you all next year!!

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# USask weed control research receives funding from Saskatchewan Pulse Growers



USask researcher Dr. Steve Shirtliffe (PhD) is a professor in the Department of Plant Science in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

Matt Braden Photo

University of Saskatchewan (USask) researcher Dr. Steve Shirtliffe (PhD) has received \$2.47 million to develop a weed management program for pulses.

On December 11, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers (SPG) announced funding for five new weed science research projects focused on pulse crops, a total investment of more than \$3.67 million.

"Growers have consistently identified weed control as one of the top issues facing pulse production. SPG's funding keeps weed control at the forefront of re-

search investments and aims to provide growers with more options," said Winston van Staveren, SPG Chair.

Shirtliffe's project titled "Framework for a collaborative kochia management program in pulses" received \$2,470,285 of the announced funding.

"As growers and agronomists know very well, kochia is a major problem for producers in Saskatchewan, particularly in their impact on growing pulse crops," said Shirtliffe, a professor in the Department of Plant Science in the College of

Agriculture and Bioresources at USask. "Because of rapid evolution of herbicide resistance, there are few weed control options. We will be looking at using herbicides in novel ways and combining them with non-chemical control methods to control this weed."

Kochia is a tumbleweed that is both salt and drought-resistant prolific throughout most of the cropped area of Saskatchewan. Working collaboratively with other researchers, Shirtliffe will build off previous research to test and develop weed control systems that utilize both cultural methods such as weed seed management through mowing and chemical methods like herbi-

cide layering to better deal with the weed.

"This project aims to achieve meaningful outcomes for Saskatchewan producers by producing knowledge, information, and recommendations on practical and durable methods for controlling kochia in pulse crops," Shirtliffe said.

The overall program will run for six years, including field seasons from 2025 to 2029, building on the work of previous SPG-funded weed programs, including Weed Science and Herbicide Technology for Pulse Crops (2011-2016) and Enhancing Weed Science in Pulse Crops: Towards a robust strategy for long-term weed management (2016-2022).

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# USask researchers shining a light on soil fertility

BY JOANNE PAULSON

As the University of Saskatchewan (USask) joins the United Nations in observing World Soil Day on Dec. 5, College of Agriculture and Bioresources researchers are investigating the use of spectroscopy for soil testing.

Do you remember the device used by Dr. "Bones" McCoy on Star Trek? He'd point his tricorder at a patient and diagnose the medical problem within seconds.

That future may not be here yet, but if Dr. Derek Peak (PhD) and Gbenga Adejumo have their way, something similar will be coming soon for diagnosing soil fertility.

Peak, a professor of soil science in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at the University of Saskatchewan (USask), and Adejumo, a PhD candidate, are exploring the use of spectroscopy in testing soil for properties such as organic carbon, nitrogen, moisture, and texture.

Spectroscopy peers closely at the chemical forms of things in natural systems.

"The real power of spectroscopy is that you can just directly shine a light on a (soil) sample and understand what's going on in it," Peak said. "Our current research is, how do we leverage what we know about spectroscopy to try to make better, cheaper, faster field-type measurements of soil fertility."

Four years into the project, the two researchers are presently using the intense form of light at the Canadian Light Source (CLS) to view soil samples collected from agricultural lands across Saskatchewan.

"Synchrotrons are really powerful at giving you an advance idea of what's happening in the system, but they're not 100 per cent compatible with landscape scale, or regional scale, or global scale problems you might face as a soil scientist."

And so, they are seeking a portable, on-the-ground solution. The idea is that

their knowledge could be translated into a small, hand-held, farm-friendly device that might also alleviate the burden of sending away soil samples, which can be cumbersome, expensive and time-consuming.

"What everybody wants is, you just take the little gun, press it, it will tell you everything about the soil and what to do," Peak said.

It could also work for big ag equipment manufacturers, who could put sensors on seeders, for example, "and whatever spot you're at on the field, you take the spectrum and make cropping decision in the field based on that."

As with the development of most technology, Peak and Adejumo are finding challenges along the way.

For example, "what might work in some parts of the world or some climates or some kinds of soil or cropping systems just doesn't work as well here," Peak noted. "Some of those challenges and how to alleviate some of the problems to scale that up is what Gbenga's doctoral thesis is all about."

### Starting from scratch

The roots of the project grew from two others performed in the Benin Republic and Nigeria in 2011-12 and 2018. There, soil fertility maps were generated for vegetable production at specific sites in conjunction with the International Development Research Centre, a federal Crown.

"It was my first real exposure to how soil chemistry and having better nutrient data could improve the livelihoods of people," Peak said. "There are no soil testing labs."

"If it turns out that analysis of a soil sample is going to cost \$100, and you have to ship it to Canada, that's just not going to happen (in Africa)."

Continued on page C11



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# Province releases conditions at freeze-up report

## Still below normal, but conditions improved over last year

The Water Security Agency (WSA) is releasing this year's Conditions at Freeze-up Report. This report summarizes conditions during the late fall/early winter period. Current conditions, in combination with the winter snowpack, become the initial conditions for the spring snowmelt runoff. This report gives an early indication of areas that are more vulnerable to potentially above or below normal runoff during the spring period. It is important to note that this report is not a spring runoff report. Conditions can change quickly with timely spring rains or significant amounts of snow throughout the season.

"Even though conditions are somewhat drier than normal, this year is still an improvement from last year when

moderate to extreme drought conditions were being observed across the province in October 2023," Minister Responsible for the Water Security Agency Daryl Harrison said.

Despite the general low snowmelt runoff in spring 2024, May and June rains resulted in most large water supply reservoirs being near or at normal levels throughout the year and they remain this way moving into the winter.

With the dry two months leading up to freeze-up, most of central, northern and southeastern Saskatchewan went into freeze-up with drier than normal soil moisture conditions. Two snowstorms occurred mid-November that brought 10 to 80 cm of snow to Saskatchewan, with east

central regions receiving the most snow.

This snowfall could result in two outcomes:

- Insulating the soil and reducing frost penetration, increasing infiltration in the spring, which may reduce runoff.

- Creating frozen topsoil due to partial melting and re-freezing, reducing infiltration and increasing runoff.

At this time, there are no areas where WSA believes that there is a heightened risk of above normal spring runoff in 2024.

WSA will continue to monitor conditions throughout the 2024-25 winter. Beginning in early February, Spring Runoff Outlooks will be released on [www.wsask.ca](http://www.wsask.ca).

# Applications now open for the 2025 Agriculture Student Scholarship

The Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan are pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for the 2025 Agriculture Student Scholarship. There are four awards available: a grand prize scholarship valued at \$6,000 and three runner up scholarships at \$3,000 each.

"Having spent most of my life in agriculture, I know there are so many different opportunities in the sector," Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lawrence MacAulay said. "I'm so pleased that our government is partnering with the Government of Saskatchewan to deliver the Agriculture Student Scholarship again this year and help even more young people develop the skills and knowledge they'll need to grow their passion for agriculture and set themselves up for success in the future."

"Each year, Saskatchewan students make our province proud," Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Daryl Harrison said. "The Agriculture Student Scholarship is an excellent way to recognize young talent and to encourage students to pursue a career in agriculture."

This year's theme is solutions to challenges in agriculture. Scholarship applicants are encouraged to explore innovative farming practices, new technologies and creative ways industry can communicate with the public.

The scholarship encourages applicants to share their personal perspectives on the future of agriculture in Saskatchewan.

Winner of 2024 Ag Student Scholarship standing near cattle

"Agriculture is a great industry to want to become involved in," 2024 Agriculture Student Scholarship grand prize winner

Marleigh Mann said. "It's a pretty cool scholarship to apply for."

Students are invited to submit a creative three-minute video or 1,000-word essay discussing solutions to challenges in agriculture. Scholarships will be awarded to Saskatchewan students in Grade 12 and/or recent high school/GED grad-

uates entering agriculture-related post-secondary studies in fall 2025.


The deadline for applications is March 1, 2025. For more information on the Agriculture Student Scholarship Program, visit: [saskatchewan.ca/ag-scholarship](http://saskatchewan.ca/ag-scholarship).

This award is funded through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural

Partnership, a five-year, \$3.5 billion investment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments that supports Canada's agri-food and agri-products sectors. This includes \$1 billion in federal

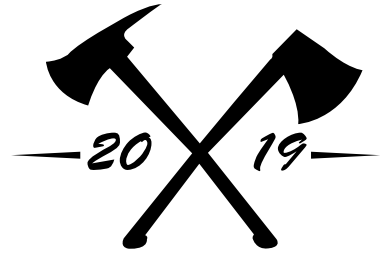
programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

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Participants from 15 startup companies in Cohort 3 take to the stage on the Agtech Accelerator demo day, held during the 2024 Farm Show in Regina.

# Agtech innovators wanted as Cohort 4 opens

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

An ag-tech incubator that has helped 47 Saskatchewan companies reach their entrepreneurial dreams is looking for the next big ideas, recruiting for the fourth edition of Cultivator powered by Conexus' Agtech Accelerator.

"Everyone has this shared vision and shared goals of improving agriculture—it could be for reasons of sustainability or economic vitality—the actual 'why' is different, but there's a shared desire to help grow this ag-tech space, and just so many people that come together collectively to drive this forward," explained Director of Cultivator, Laura Mock. "Cultivator just happens to be the group where we're delivering the program, and being the hub to pull everyone together."

Launching an agtech company is challenging and complex, and the Agtech Accelerator is intended to help founders though linking farmers, industry leaders, and investors.

"By bringing these groups together, we create a unique ecosystem where ideas are refined, solutions are built to meet real-world needs on the farm, and startups are connected with the expertise and funding they need to grow," Mock said.

Applications for the current round are being accepted until Jan. 3, with a focus toward crop-based ventures in Cohort 4.

"If you're looking at the past cohorts, I think it started a little bit broader," Mock said. "You would see companies where some were earlier stage, some were later stage, some had to focus on crops and grains, you'd see sort of a sprinkling of livestock in there. But what we found is that by keeping a fairly close knit cohort that has some similarities, there is a lot of value because we do a lot of founder to founder mentorship."

Not only do the mentors understand the perspective new companies are coming from, but can add value to those fledgling businesses.

"When we say an 'ag-tech company,' what we're looking at is any company that uses technology in agriculture or horticulture with the aim of improving yield, efficiency and profitability," Mock said. "Agriculture technology can be products, services or applications used in agriculture that will improve various inputs or outputs to the process. So it's pretty wide open, and it could be brand new technology used in agriculture, it could be existing technology with new applications in agriculture."

One example Mock noted was the use of drones in agricultural settings.

"How drones are collecting data and how we're using that data to inform decision making, whether it be how to spray, targeted weed management practices, things like that," she said.

The numbers through the past three intakes have been impressive, with the Agtech Accelerator program raising \$119.2 million in private capital, generating \$72.1 million in revenue, receiving \$44.4 million in public funding, and creating 193 new jobs in Saskatchewan.

"The jobs that are created, the way we partner with post secondary institutions, there's a financial impact," Mock said, pointing out that this program is also one way to retain the intelligence and creativity of home-grown talent.

"For the longest time, everyone left Saskatchewan—I left Saskatchewan for about 10 years and came back—but we're supporting people to keep jobs in our province. I want my kids to stay and work in Saskatchewan. I don't want them to feel like they have to leave to have the job of their dreams. I want them to know if the job doesn't exist, they can create it."

## Finale moves north

Since inception, Cultivator's Agtech Accelerator has held its big finale at the annual Farm Show in Regina. This is where agtech startups get to pitch their idea as the last week of Cohort 4 wraps in July. However, with the Farm Show's change of date to March starting in 2025, the finale will now be held at Ag in Motion held north of Saskatoon at the Discovery Farm Langham.

"There were multiple factors at play," Mock said of the venue change for the finale week. "One, definitely was the timeline of the show moving. We plan our co-



Geco CEO and Cohort 3 participant Greg Stewart

hort and the work that we do around the seasonality of farming, because engaging producers and industry in the program is critical, so we need to make sure that the program actually runs in a time when those stakeholders can be involved. We do want a show to anchor it to

show up. So kickoff week will be in Regina, final week will be in Saskatoon."

For more information on how to apply for Cohort 4, innovators can check out the cultivator.ca website.

and Canada's Farm Show, the timeline definitely wouldn't have worked for us."

Another consideration was simply a case of spreading things around a bit to avoid being seen as centred to one particular area.

"The second piece is, I think we are so proud of the fact that our Agtech Accelerator was born in Regina, but we don't want to be seen as just a Regina-based program, simply because Saskatchewan is agriculture; Canada is agriculture," Mock said. "So one of the ways we could provide more access, more exposure was diversifying where we were in Regina, final week will be in Saskatoon."

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# Weaker demand for large farm equipment to pressure sales and prices in 2025: FCC report

After a strong start to the year for large equipment sales, a slowdown is anticipated in the farm equipment market. With falling commodity prices, high operating costs and lower profits, farms are placing a greater emphasis on their price per acre equipment costs according to Farm Credit Canada's (FCC) 2025 outlook for the Canadian farm equipment market.

"Farmers are looking for cost saving measures including delaying purchases and planning to further reduce equipment costs," said Leigh Anderson, FCC senior economist. "But as demand slows and prices adjust, there may be opportunities for producers who are looking to invest in new farm equipment."

The year began with a surge in demand for large farm equipment, particularly combines and 4WD tractors. New combine sales in the first half of 2024 saw a five-year high, and 4WD tractor sales trailed only slightly behind 2021 sales. A slowdown in sales in the United States allowed manufacturers to send more pre-orders to Canada earlier. Usually, the Canadian combine market sees the most sales in the second half of the year.

This burst of activity is not expected to last through the remainder of the year and into 2025. However, the decline in new farm equipment sales is expected to be less severe than in 2024, and sales of 4WD tractors should stay above the five-year average.

The early arrival of new equipment has led to an increase in trade-ins, injecting a considerable volume of used equipment into the market, particularly used combines. It's estimated total used combine sales have dropped by 18 per cent compared to the same period last year. Smaller used horsepower tractor sales are down 40 per cent, and sales of used seeding and planting equipment have declined by 23 per cent year over year. Lower sales of used seeding and planting equipment mark a slowdown compared to the previous year.

In the United States, farm equipment manufacturers have reduced production to align with lower demand. In Canada, manufacturing sales have fallen 8.7 per cent compared to last year, and new orders are down 9.2 per cent, suggesting sales will continue to decrease.

"The trends to monitor as we go into 2025 are equip-



ment prices, farm revenue, interest rates and the Canadian dollar," said Anderson. "Lower interest rates combined with strong revenues in select sectors could

make it a great time to invest in new equipment as it's more affordable per acre. But a lower Canadian dollar could increase imported equipment prices."





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# USask researchers shining a light on soil fertility

Continued from page C5

While the present project is focused on Saskatchewan soils, Adejumo pointed to its global importance.

"This is a great opportunity to showcase how spectral sensing can revolutionize food security through effective soil fertility testing, particularly in developing nations."

In Africa, they took systematic approaches to improving water use and nutrient management and used synchrotron light to see how these measures were working in samples provided by research partners.

They were then able to scale up the research to show what soil fertility was like in the ecozone they were working in.

"That was really useful, because it gave extension agents, professors and also farmers ... better knowledge on how to grow those vegetables," Peak said.

"That's what agronomists and certified crop professionals do in Canada. They take what's already been done in terms of research and knowledge, they take your soil test and make informed suggestions on how to best manage your crops."

## Back in Canada

Peak and Adejumo started the local project with a partner and some seed money to see what infrared light was good at, "and from that we learned that it's very good at looking at soil organic carbon and soil nitrogen."

He then applied for a grant through the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's Agriculture Development Fund to evaluate spectroscopy as a proxy for soil testing here.

Peak said he was fortunate to have guidance from research associate David Balmer and modeller Dr. Preston Sorensen (PhD).

"Gbenga has done the vast majority of the research here on how to build these models, how to take imperfect data and scale it out to the field," Peak said.

Adejumo said one of the goals is ensuring good agricultural intensification and diversification, and for that "you really need a good soil fertility test."

"It has to be cheap, low cost; it has to be rapid; it has to be environmentally friendly; and it should not be destructive," he



USask PhD candidate Gbenga Adejumo is exploring the use of spectroscopy in testing soil for properties such as organic carbon, nitrogen, moisture, and texture.

said.

Unfortunately, he said soil testing costs can be considerable and destructive due to the use of chemicals.

Spectroscopy simply shines a light on the soil.

From that, Peak said "we extract useful information, and then we can use biometrics, modal techniques and statistics to correlate the useful information to the soil properties, especially soil organic carbon and nitrogen levels, which are major factors in soil fertility analysis."

## Work in progress

Adejumo has taken samples from soil zones and agricultural systems all over the province and built a model that can predict with "reasonable accuracy" the content of

soil organic carbon and total nitrogen.

However, the team found that soil in some parts of the province contains a lot of carbonate minerals, but the lab analysis wasn't coming out quite right.

There was a challenge with the way carbon was being measured in the lab, which translated into poor performance of the model in the field.

"We went back and said we have to test these things in the lab in a different way. And that becomes very valuable broadly," Peak said. "We now have methodology in the lab to deal with that so you can construct better models."

Ultimately, the new tool would save

shipping, chemicals, and energy for drying and grinding samples, not to mention an enormous amount of time.

Farmers and growers, instead of sending samples to labs for soil testing, will be able to use a probe get an answer "just like that," Peak said.

"At the end of his project, I think we will have a path for how one would take lab-based spectroscopy and directly use it in the field."

Peak said their work will lead to a spectral sensing tool that can revolutionize food security through effective soil fertility testing, particularly in developing nations.

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