



#### Waiting for Dad

Waiting for Dad Ryley Clements and Grandpa Bryan Clements to fill the seeder so Jase and Hudson can go for a ride! This photo was submitted by Joanne Clements as part of the World-Spectator's 2020 Spring Seeding Photo Contest.

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# Precision agriculture's bright future

Agriculture is big business in Canada, feeding a combined \$300 million dollars a day into the national economy. And with 40 per cent of Canada's agricultural land located in Saskatchewan, the health and viability of that sector are crucial to our economy and our environment.

A team of University of Regina researchers, led by University of Regina assistant professor of engineering Abdul Bais, is currently working on a project that will help farmers reduce their environmental impact while maximizing their economic returns.

"Our project will enhance farmers' ability to selectively apply herbicides to weeds in more efficient ways. That will reduce both crop and environmental damage."

Traditionally, farmers manually scout to determine crop and weed growth. For those engaged in large-scale farming, the process is expensive, time-consuming, and causes extensive damage to both crops and the environment because the approach is to apply chemicals, such as herbicides, all over their fields, regardless of where the weeds are growing.

"Herbicides should only be



The SWAT BOX is a data collection sensor that can be mounted on agricultural equipment. The data is then used for generating the SWAT maps.

applied precisely on the places where there are weeds," says Bais, whose work as an electronics engineer has led him to this work in precision agriculture. "This requires accurately mapping the weeds in the fields."

Using a computer vision-based

automatic process, the researchers acquire high-resolution field imagery that enables them to determine which areas of the field have what types of weed.

"Then we can calculate the percentage of both weeds and crops in a given area and determine the



Cory Willness, president of CropPro Consulting, in Naicam, Sask.

exact quantity of herbicides to apply," explains Bais.

Muhammad Hamza Asad, a PhD candidate in the University of Regina's Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, adds, "after processing the high-resolution ground imagery and Soil, Water and Topography (SWAT) maps of the farmland, we identify the homogeneous weed management zones so we know

where to apply the herbicide." Asad, who has a lead role in this research, began a pilot project using these precision agricultural techniques last year. At that time, he worked on only six fields. The results produced such a high level of accuracy in crop/weed density estimation and weed classification that he decided he could go bigger.

Working with CropPro Consulting, a Saskatchewan leader in the agricultural sector, the team is now advancing the technology to use on more than a million acres of agricultural farmland in the Prairies.

"Within the next couple of years, this technology will be fully ready to expand and apply on a larger scale to our agricultural operations in Canada and internationally," says Cory Willness, president of CropPro Consulting.

"We are proud of this innovation coming out of the University of Regina."

"Canadian tech companies, equipment manufacturers, farmers, environmentalists, and the billion-dollar pesticide industry will benefit from the ability to apply variable-rate inputs that this type of precision agriculture allows."

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# Local farmers say seeding going smoothly, Covid-19 having little impact

By KARA KINNA

Local farmers say that seeding has been progressing fairly smoothly this spring, with little or no delays from weather and other factors, and minimal impact due to Covid-19.

Wet and snowy weather early last fall left some farmers unable to get all of their crops off, while others were unable to finish fall field work, but this spring, most local farmers in Southeast Saskatchewan say seeding is going along at a steady clip.

## Foy says wet fields still a factor

Kyran Foy, who has crops straight west of Moosomin, and south down to the Doomside area, says he was fortunate to get his crop off last fall, and other than some fields that are still wet from last year, his seeding is going well. Foy is planting wheat and canola this year.

"We had all our crop off in the fall which was fortunate as some didn't," he says. "But with it being so wet last fall, it carried into this spring even though we didn't have much snow. It is definitely wet out in the fields, especially when we first started. It is still wet, we get stuck probably close to once a day."

"Now there are areas that have dried up pretty nicely. There are still some areas that we are trying to get to that are a little wet but I think overall it's not too bad now. The wind has sure helped. But at the same time there are always pros and cons to everything. The wind hampers the ability to get some spraying done which we have to do ahead of planting most times to control the weeds, so there is that. But the sun is shining, we've had a good run too, so that's nice."

Foy said last week they were over half done seeding.

"We could finish before the end of the month if we don't get any adverse weather. We're on target," he says. "If the wind would stop blowing and if it would just stay

about 25 degrees, that would be nice, but the weather does what it wants."

Foy says he's hoping there isn't too much rain right now, so that seeding can be finished up.

"If we got two or three inches, it really wouldn't be good because the ground is pretty full, so it just can't take any water, that is the trouble," he says.

Foy says Covid-19 has had minimal impact on his operation.

"We've changed a few of the ways we do things," he says. "We still try and social distance as much as possible. We have our group out here working—my dad, myself, my brother, and two hired men—so five people that are typically the only people we see. Most of our stuff is at the farm, we had it delivered or picked up earlier in the spring, so we curbed interaction a little bit by not picking up stuff in town as much as possible. Overall it hasn't really affected us. It's kind of nice that most places are back up and open. If you need parts and that kind of thing, you don't have to jump through too many hoops to get that done."

While the federal government has announced some funding for the ag industry, mostly in the form of loans through FCC, Foy says there has been little financial impact on his operation.

"Financially Covid-19 hasn't affected us too much yet. I think it still might affect prices, that is what I'm kind of waiting for," he says. "When you have the whole world shut down—I know everyone has got to eat—but there are less people going to restaurants. Depending what they eat and how much they are spending, and with people out of jobs, how much are they spending on food and that kind of thing. I wonder, is it going to take a little bit longer to see those effects? I'm still waiting for a drop in commodity prices."

*Continued on page B8*

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Sharon Baker submitted this photo of a "future farmer spending his birthday in the tractor" as part of the World-Spectator's Spring Seeding Contest. This photo was taken in the Whitewood area.

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# The 'joys' of spring seeding

Ahhh...Spring! Finally I might add. And by that I mean finally there is a bit of warmth. A lot of wind, but at least a bit of warmth. I had refused to stay out at the farm in our camper when seeding started the first week or so of May because it was just too cold. Or as I told the farm grandkids, "I am not staying in the camper when there is snow on the steps of my camper!" The twins, now nine, said they would shovel the steps for me. "Nope," I told them, "not staying!"

But now, after two or three days of warmth, I can say I have spent a few nights on-site—well, as close as I am going to get to the field unless someone fulfills my motor-home-for-the-field dream (as if). My home away from home these days is a grassy little spot along the evergreen-tree shelterbelt I planted some 40 years earlier and right next to the old shop just a hop, skip and a jump from the dog house. With a clear view, I might add, of the barn, the bins and the chicken coop. If you look out the windows to the south, you might almost think you are up north in the bush. Well, that's a stretch, but you get my meaning.

On the first night in the camper, I waited and waited and waited for my husband to get in from the field. Finally, at 10 p.m. I went to bed and as I was drifting into never-never land, I heard what I thought was the tractor coming into the yard. It was noisy and he left it running for several minutes for the 'cool-down.'

Meanwhile my husband managed to clankety-bang his way through the camper door and yell up the stairs, "You awake? I'm just gonna let that cool down for a bit." Alrighty, good to know. Then he decided to cook his breakfast (yes, 10:30 p.m. by now) for a quick re-heat in the morning (to save time is the theory, as if getting up at 5:00 won't be early enough to make breakfast AND get to the field in good time). Now, you would think he would know how sensitive that smoke detector is, but nooooooo, we needed to listen to that plus that darn tractor.

Fortunately Joe, the rooster, is asleep at that time of the night, that's all I can say. By the time all was said and

**The Lighter Side of Life...**  
**DOWN ON THE FARM**  
by donna beutler  
FREELANCE PHOTO/JOURNALIST  
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done, it must have been 11:00 and I was basically wide awake. Night #1 – not off to a good start.

Joe is awake by 5:00 a.m. And so was I the next morning. Not to mention whatever tractors and trucks seemed to be roaring outside my bedroom window. Why was it that I was excited about staying at the farm? I managed another hour's sleep, arising to find my husband had left my breakfast on the table—scrambled eggs and bacon, all cooked the night before and so sweetly taken from the fridge, laid out ready for microwaving. Ewwwww!

The next evening, the grandkids were keen to roast marshmallows at Grandma's fire pit. As I was relaying the "noisy tractor" story from the night before, the twins looked at me with disdain. "Grandma! Grandpa would never bring the tractor and air seeder back to the yard. It just goes from one field to the next." Secretly I knew I was right. After all, I HAD heard it running—and quite likely six feet from my 'upper-level' bedroom.

That night, the first question I had for my husband when he got in was about the noisy tractor running the night before. "Oh," he explained, "that was the diesel truck I brought home from the field. It's pretty noisy." Alas, the kids were right and I was wrong. Although, to

my credit, I got the "noisy" part right.

The twins stopped by the camper Sunday morning as I was recording acres on the calendar and as luck would have it, I had the dates and quarter sections marked as well as crop type. A couple of days though, I had missed marking what crop had been seeded. "Hey boys, what did Grandpa seed on the 'Reid quarter?'" I asked. In unison I hear, "wheat."

"What about the field north of the creek, the first field up top?" I continued. "Wheat," I hear them say and then one explains, "Grandma, after the peas and corn, then it's wheat, then it will be oats, then the canola." Sort of with this tone as if, 'how could you not know that, Grandma?' "Besides," he says, "You know that's canola stubble on that field, right?" Last year I was working full-time right through that miserable, awful harvest season and yes, I missed combining altogether. So no, I don't remember what was seeded where last year. Oh, but they do!

I was relaying this story to my husband at supper-in-the-field (courtesy me, two times a day) time the other day as he shared how he gets through his day. "When I get to the field, I say, 'Only 16 hours until home-time.' Then by mid-afternoon, I say, 'Only eight hours to go,' and so on." And I had the audacity to think the hour and a half I spent writing this column was getting to be long.

Back at the yard, I asked the boys if I could go gather a few eggs from the hen house as I was running short. "There are none in there; they only lay in the morning and we gathered them," they said. "You could get one from Zoe later, though," they added. "8:00 p.m., you could get one."

"Who is Zoe?" I ask, wondering if they are talking about chickens or something entirely different by now.

"Joe's wife," was the answer. I didn't bother asking if Joe has more than one wife amongst that hen house full of chickens because I just didn't know if I would have had the right answers for them. And that's just another regular day in our crazy down-on-the-farm kind of life!

## FCC invests \$150 million into Canada's ag and food industry

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) has launched a \$100-million venture capital fund to support proven, viable companies through unexpected business disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Launched in partnership with Forage Capital Inc.—a Calgary-based venture capital firm—the Agriculture and Food Business Solutions Fund is set up to provide companies with the stability and flexibility they need to rebuild their business models during challenging times. FCC is the sole investor in the fund, which will primarily offer convertible debt investments, as well as other flexible financing solutions. (Convertible debt investments give companies the flexibility of paying down debt or providing the investor with equity in the business.)

Michael Hoffort, FCC president and CEO, said the need for this type of venture capital fund is es-

specially evident in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the need will exist beyond the current crisis as companies can experience business disruptions for various reasons.

This strategic investment is another way FCC is supporting growth and innovation in the only industry we serve – especially at this time,” Hoffort said. “As a commercial Crown corporation, we serve as catalyst for private investment in Canada’s agriculture and food industry and we are here for the long haul, through all business cycles.”

In addition, FCC also recently invested more than \$50 million into three new venture capital funds and provided funding to an innovation and growth accelerator to support various parts of Canada’s agriculture and food industry.

These recent investments include:

- InvestEco Sustainable Food Fund – a \$100-million

lion fund to invest in expansion-stage private companies with the goal of promoting health and sustainability in the food and agricultural sector. The fund manager offers expertise in sustainable agriculture and food production and believes these activities are important to environmental and health outcomes. InvestEco has previously invested in many leading food and agriculture brands across North America. FCC’s commitment to this fund is \$20 million.

- District Ventures Fund – is a \$100-million fund that focuses solely on investing in companies operating in the food and beverage sector, health, wellness and beauty consumer goods categories. In addition to capital, District Ventures Capital provides recipient companies with marketing, programming and commercialization support. FCC’s commitment to this fund is \$20 million.

- Ag Capital Canada Fund – is a \$24-million fund aimed at discovering, developing and nurturing Canadian agricultural businesses through capital investment and entrepreneurial expertise. The focus is on established businesses in need of growth capital and business management mentorship. FCC’s commitment is \$12 million, which represents 50 per cent of the fund.

- Bioenterprise – is a non-profit corporation established in 2000 to provide accelerator, mentorship and support services for entrepreneurs and innovative companies in Canada’s agribusiness and agri-food sector. Through its network of regional offices, Bioenterprise provides hands-on mentorship for innovative entrepreneurs

and start-up companies. FCC committed \$1.35 million in program support to facilitate expansion of Bioenterprises’ services to underserved areas across Canada.

“Our investments focus on promoting innovation and sustainability within Canada’s agriculture and

food industry, supporting start-up to growth stage businesses, as well as filling the gaps in financing for underserved parts of our industry,” Hoffort said. “This is another way FCC can support entrepreneurs and promote innovation and success in this exciting and dynamic industry.”

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# APAS says \$252 million for agriculture a step in right direction

BY ROB PAUL  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Recently the federal government announced \$252 million in funding for the agriculture industry in Canada as support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) has responded to the federal funding by saying it's a first step in the right direction, but the group wants more to be done to secure Canada's food supply and address financial difficulties facing Saskatchewan farmers.

"Any assistance to producers is welcome, but this package is only a small first step in addressing the needs at the farm gate," said APAS President Todd Lewis. "We need more action from the government to help reduce our risk and secure Canada's agricultural industry and food supply."

"Cattle and hog producers are facing the most immediate crisis as a result of Covid-19, and the measures announced today will help address specific issues within these supply chains. But there are many other issues that still need to be addressed. The prime minister himself acknowledged that this is a first step."

The \$252 million falls short of the \$2.6 billion the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) identified as the amount needed to avoid serious food insecurity and hardship to both farmers and consumers.

Overall, Lewis says it's nice to see the government going forward with support, but more needs to be done to get through Covid-19.

"It's important that there's some recognition that agriculture does need some support," said Lewis. "Certainly not all sectors of agriculture are getting affected as badly by Covid-19."

"What Covid-19 has done to certain sectors of agriculture such as live-stock and pork producers is far greater an impact than on the grain sector currently. Those sectors that are in trouble certainly need support."

"The CFA looked at the impacts of Covid-19 on agriculture Canada wide—it's had an impact on every sector—and different sectors of the industry have been devastated by Covid-19," said Lewis.

"The situation is very serious and it (\$252 million) was only about a tenth of what was asked for, but let's hope—in the prime minister's own words—that this just the start and let's hope we're able to

press upon them that they need to have more money coming in short order."

With that in mind, Lewis pointed out that the federal support will provide \$50 million each to Canada's beef and pork sectors, but the CFA calculated that \$840 million is needed to assist those sectors.

If more isn't done for the agriculture industry as they deal with Covid-19, Lewis fears it will have a permanent impact.

"I think if we look at the cattle industry for instance, animals are having to be kept back because of the closures at the processing plants and that's instant cost for producers as they've got to hold those animals over and feed them," said Lewis. "That's just one example there."

"Also, the price of live cattle has dropped because of the closures, it's an impact on both sides of the cattle industry. Those losses just aren't sustainable and we're going to see live-stock operations cease and they'll produce less cattle or even exit the industry."

"In a province like Saskatchewan we sure don't want to see any producers be forced to leave the industry because it's very hard to get them back, especially the young producers."

APAS says the agriculture industry needs more than the \$252 million the federal government is giving in support and has released their own policy recommendations to address the challenges facing Saskatchewan producers.

The policy recommendations in APAS' Covid-19 income support for live-stock sector plan cover access to credit, emergency relief programs, domestic processing capacity, and business risk management.

APAS says the livestock producers responding to the APAS Covid-19 Farm Survey, 60% were facing cash-flow challenges and 20% were having difficulties either managing existing loans or securing financing for future operations. The situation will worsen with continued price declines and increased feed costs.

"It's interesting, the FCC amount is about \$5 billion—that was really an election promise that was carried through," said Lewis. "Is that money accessible to all producers and how accessible is it? The jury is still out on that," said Lewis.

"We've heard some producers have been able to access that money, but we've also heard other producers haven't. It's issues like that, with our credit institutions across the board

there's a lot of uncertainty and with the economy. In some situations it's harder to get credit than it was before with Covid-19."

"It's hard to borrow money in the current marketplace and really at the end of the day how sustainable is taking on more debt for producers? Instead of going further into debt they may just cut their losses and exit the industry," said Lewis.

APAS requests FCC develop clear targeted lending criteria for farm businesses producing commodities or holding inventory that has lost 10% of market value due to Covid-19 related market decline. To ensure the additional lending capacity is made available to farm businesses banking with other financial institutions, the lending criteria needs to include financial guarantees or other arrangements provided outside of FCC's portfolio.

With the federal government giving the agriculture industry \$252 million in support, APAS says it's a start, but more must be done and soon.

"These decisions are being made in days and weeks, not months," said Lewis.

"We're pressing upon the government the urgency of the situation."

"For production decisions, there's only one way to 100 per cent guarantee there won't be production—if you don't plant a seed or don't raise an animal. It's seeding time and if they don't see any way forward that they're going to have any kind of certainty or hope to be able to harvest it, then why would they put the money in the ground now? They just won't bother seeding their crops."

"That's one example there, in that industry especially," said Lewis. "There's been lots of labour issues. That's why temporary foreign workers are necessary and it's difficult to get them in place so we're going to need Canadians to backfill those positions."

"One of the unintended consequences of some of the government support programs is that it's difficult to motivate people to come out and work in agriculture. We're looking for some programming that may allow them to keep their government support and be able to enhance their income if they come out and work in agriculture for the summer months."

"That's just an example with labour shortage for producers that if they don't see some way of getting some help on their opera-

tions in the summer and with the economy. In some situations it's harder to get credit than it was before with Covid-19."

APAS supports assistance for:

The Canadian Pork Council request for \$20 per head compensation for hog producers selling into markets below production costs.

A direct grant to producers to increase the retention of heifer calves into breeding stock rather than the meat market thereby reducing the glut of finished animals.

A direct grant to producers to offset feed costs required to maintain cull animals for which there is inadequate processing capacity.

A Financial Stimulus of no less than 5% of Agri-Invest Allowable Net Sales (ANS), without matching producer contributions.

Ongoing Federal Tax Deferral Program to give producer greater flexibility to manage market volatility.

Reintroduction of a Set Aside Program wherein

feedlots would be provided a per animal/per day payment to retain/maintain the animal on feed for up to 90 days until they could move into the slaughter facilities.

A federal food procurement strategy that involves the federal purchase of Canadian produced meat and other food.

With the recent closures and slowdowns at the Cargill and JBS Brooks meat processing plants due to Covid-19, APAS is worried about supply-chain disruptions going forward, especially for smaller processors.

"Part of the announcement for processors was that \$70 million is going to personal protective equipment," said Lewis. "That's paramount now in the processing plants that they're able to provide a safe environment for their employees and for food safety."

"There's a number of small food processors in this province that money should be targeted to. In Saskatchewan's situation

there's lots of small processors that don't have the money up front to make those investments and that may limit their capacity."

"With companies like Cargill, those are big companies with deep pockets and they can afford to put those measures in and they have the opportunity to re-capture those costs when they pass it along to the consumer," said Lewis. "And we're already seeing increased costs with some cuts of meat at the consumer level and that will pay for the added costs to those processors."

"In the small processing sectors they may not be able to do it right from the get go and won't have the opportunity to go through a production cycle and pass those costs along," said Lewis.

"I think this money needs to be put towards small processing plants, local processors like we have a lot of in rural Saskatchewan. It's important that money gets to the right people."



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## U of R business students partnering with agrifood production company

A group of business students at the University of Regina's Paul J. Hill School of Business has been given a unique opportunity to partner with a leader in the province's agri-food industry.

During the Winter 2020 semester, Dr. Tatiana Levit, Assistant Professor, created a group project for students in her International Marketing class. The students were tasked with making strategic recommendations to CanMar Foods Ltd., a leading Saskatchewan agri-food producer. Basing their recommendations on their own extensive market research, they would gain hands-on experience in one of the province's most important sectors.

"We used to run a simulation game as the main group project in this class, but I wanted to try something new," said Levit. "Agriculture is so important to our way of life, and giving students real-world application is key for their future success."

Levit worked with Jeff Thackeray BAdmin'05, Senior Director, Market Intelligence at the Saskatchewan Trade & Export Partnership (STEP) to develop an international marketing project for her students to work alongside the agri-foods industry. Thackeray introduced Levit to Myles Hamilton, President, CanMar Foods Ltd., and the project began to take shape.

CanMar Foods Ltd. is a Regina-based flax and hemp seed producer with a 15-year history, operating farms in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. From small beginnings, the company has grown to be the largest producer of food-grade flax seed in Canada and distributes their in-demand product to more than 20 countries throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. The company owns a patented flax roasting process and sells its packaged flax seed products at major retailers across the country including Costco, Co-Op, Loblaws, and Safeway. Hamilton notes that despite the company's national and international success, they remain locally rooted.

"We have terrific staff, a great culture, and a healthy nutritional product grown right here in Saskatchewan. We may not be the largest food processor in Saskatchewan—but what we do, we do really well," says Hamilton. "What's unique about our business is that we are fully integrated from the farming operation right to the consumer. We think of it as 'from our farm to your spoon'."

For the project, the class was split into five groups. Each group researched the countries in the region they had been assigned, taking into consideration political systems, demographics, culture, food regulations, and distribution. Students had access to international marketing resources from STEP and a detailed presentation by Hamilton, along with a tour of CanMar Foods Ltd.'s production facility. The student groups used online collaboration tools and recorded videos to present their final recommendations to Hamilton.

Carrie Kotylak, a fourth-year International Business student with a farming background, was excited to take on the project to learn how crops grown in Saskatchewan get to the rest of the world.

"It was so interesting to see

a new side of the agri-food business," said Kotylak. "We all learned so much from Mylés and from STEP. It's pretty amazing to see what CanMar Foods Ltd. is able to do around the world from right here in Saskatchewan."

Kotylak's group was assigned the Middle East as their region and had to explore potential expansion into six different countries. After completing extensive research, the group was able to conclude that CanMar Foods Ltd. should expand its distribution to Israel. Other countries that were recommended by groups included Denmark, Czech Republic, Australia, and the Netherlands.

Hamilton raved about the quality of the student research and noted that some gems from each team's recommen-

dations have already been shared with CanMar's manager of marketing. The presentation by Kotylak's group was so convincing that Hamilton has even been considering moving forward with their recommendation.

"We have travelled to Israel in the past, but it was never on our radar as a country for CanMar Foods Ltd. to export to," said Hamilton. "Based on the strength of the students' recommendation, we will be considering Israel as a new market. The students did some very good market analysis with respect to competitors and pricing that will help us to assess market entry."

Kotylak also noted the incredible opportunities presented from working on projects with an industry so tied to the growth of Saskatchewan.

"This project was excellent in terms of providing us with real-world experience in economics and finances that are factors agribusinesses in the province deal with on a regular basis," said Kotylak. "I am definitely looking forward to more class projects having an agri-food focus."

In addition to International Marketing, Levit teaches other marketing courses including Consumer Behaviour. When deciding on projects for upcoming semesters, Levit makes an effort to include agribusiness topics within the syllabus. She previously published a co-authored case study on Canadian Western Agribition through Ivey Publishing, as part of the Hill School's Hill-Ivey partnership agreement, funded by the generosity of Paul J. Hill. As

a result of this partnership, to date more than 80,000 copies of cases co-authored by Hill and Ivey faculty and featuring Western Canadian organizations have been distributed in 86 countries.

"The students learn where food comes from, how it gets to the table, and all of the processes, regulations, and marketing that most don't normally think about when they sit down to eat," said Levit. "In Saskatchewan, with so many businesses boasting national and global distribution, the U of R's Hill and Levene Schools are uniquely positioned to offer a value-add for our students with access to these interesting and exciting educational opportunities related to agribusiness."

Levit is busy exploring additional possibilities with

STEP and their other agri-food clients for future class projects. Based on the success of the first project, Hamilton and CanMar Foods Ltd. are interested in working with the Hill and Levene Schools of Business again.

"Having the students as part of the mix has proven to be valuable - I think we will continue to learn a lot from each other," said Hamilton.

Dr. Gina Grandy, Dean of the School of Business commented, "I am grateful to Dr. Levit, CanMar Foods Ltd. and STEP for providing Hill students with this incredible work-integrated learning opportunity in agribusiness. The Schools' programming and research activities are tied closely to the economic growth of our province, specifically as it relates to agribusiness."



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Mariah Roy submitted these photos as part of the World-Spectator's spring seeding photo contest.  
These photos were taken near Fairlight with Hebert Grain Ventures

## Holding back cattle requires proactive business plan

BY OWEN ROBERTS

Holding back cattle when processing facilities slow—or even stop—has multiple implications on the farm business. And the sooner risks are identified, the better.

"Being proactive is key," says Denise Filipchuk, a farm management advisor of Swan River, Man. "The sooner you identify and address the risks and come up with mitigation strategies, the stronger your farm or ranch will be and be able to weather the storm."

For example, she says keeping cattle back requires adequate holding facilities and pasture, both of which have financial implications. So does the human resources required to keep cattle longer. Producers may need to transition a worker from part-time to full-time, to handle increased obligations, she points out.

Filipchuk says planning is more effective if beef producers have a solid understanding of their financial position, including an updated net worth statement and a fi-

nancial and strategic plan based on historical profitability and a scenario impact analysis.

*Continued on Page B9*



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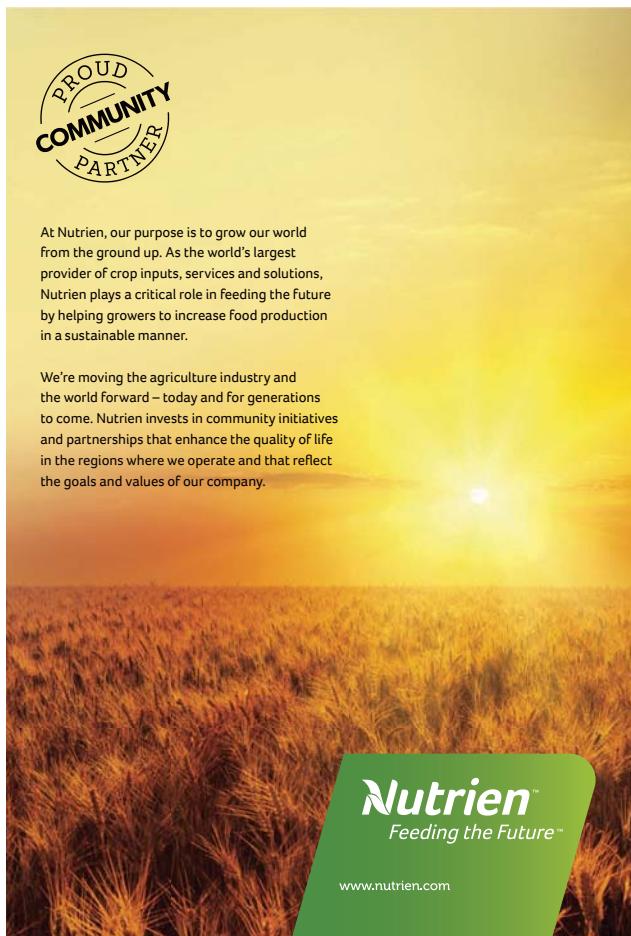
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# Local farmers say seeding going smoothly, Covid-19 having little impact

**Continued from page B3**

"A lot of analysts say otherwise, that it should stay where we're at or maybe even a little better, so I don't know," adds Foy. "If prices were to drop, we would probably have to look at some kind of assistance, maybe a loan or something to tide us over, because it always goes in cycles. The prices for us always cycle up and cycle down. Maybe a loan to get out of the down cycle—that might be something we would have to look at if that happened. But so far it hasn't affected us too much."

"I feel for the smaller businesses around town. It had to affect them to be shut down for a month or two, businesses like the smaller restaurants."

## Duchek right on schedule

Blake Duchek farms in the Atwater, Stockholm and Bangor area, and has planted canola, wheat and feed for cattle this year.

He says the wet weather last year didn't put seeding behind this year, but did create a bit of extra work this spring.

"We got all our crops off but we didn't get all our fall work done in the field," he says. "It never put us behind but it created more work to do in the spring. But we had enough guys. It tied up one more guy for helping to seed."

"We are about 90 per cent done, and should be done in about two days' time," he said on Thursday. "We're right on schedule. We'll be finishing about the same time as last year and we actually started about two days later this spring, so we are right on schedule."

"It was May 3 we started. It was kind of touch-and-go for a few days, but it's dried up real nice and we're basically seeding everything that we seeded last year, so it's been going pretty good actually."

"An inch of rain in three or four days here would be nice, because the soil is getting dry, especially after we've seeded and opened up the soil, what little moisture there is left in it, it's fairly dry. We could use an inch of rain here quite soon."

Duchek says the first crop they've seeded has already started to come up.

He said Covid-19 had them worried at first, but once seeding started he felt better.

"You're worried that somebody is going to get sick and then you'd be short a guy," he says. "By the time you realize somebody is sick, on a farm it's hard to social distance (from the other workers) because you are running the same machinery, and chances are pretty good that if one person got it that pretty much everyone on the farm would have gotten it. That was a little bit of a worry, but once we started seeding and you don't have any contact with anybody else for three weeks beside your crew, it was a relief that everyone made it to the beginning of the season, and that no one was sick."

"As far as logistics of getting seed and fertilizer, we pretty much had everything in place before. Some of the dealerships were doing curbside pickup. It actually went pretty good. We didn't experience any delays, so it's going better than expected."

Like Foy, Duchek says he wouldn't likely need any of the federal aid on offer through FCC this year.

"That money they announced available through FCC, that's just basically available for taking on new loans. I guess if we really needed it, it's there, but to borrow your way out of trouble isn't really the best way either, so I don't think that really hit the spot. I think the farming sector is probably the best industry to be in that's least effected by all the financial effects of Covid-19. It's still business as usual for us. It's not like we're running a restaurant and we're shut down."

"Financially it hasn't really affected us yet. I guess some of the potato farmers in Manitoba, some of the more specialized farmers, they are more affected. Talking to our neighbor, he's a turkey producer, and he's really worried. There is only one plant that processes turkeys in Manitoba where his turkeys go, and if the same thing happens to that turkey processing plant as it did to Cargill out in Alberta, he's booked in for a date already this summer and he says he can only hold his birds for two weeks before slaughter. Guys like that are worried, but for us grain guys, I'm not too worried."

## Hruska wrapping up seeding last week

Kevin Hruska farms between Esterhazy and Langenburg and said they would be wrapping up seeding by the end of last week. He says they was able to get all of their crop off last year, and had a good start this year.

"We finished harvest last year. We didn't have any carry over, so we didn't struggle with that at all, so we were ready to go like normal. But it cooled off, and what looked like it was going to be an early spring with less snowfall, it didn't turn out to be that way because it got so cold. So we had sort of an average startup time, and conditions are average to good for us," he says.

"I would say we are right on schedule for it to be considered a very satisfactory seeding. There have been very few interruptions. We had some snow and we lost a half a day. We'll be finished Friday," he said on Thursday.

"For us it went very smooth. The conditions are good to excellent and the weather in the seeding window was very co-operative. We got started on Wednesday, May 6. We did a test plot of peas over Wednesday and Thursday (that week). And that Friday is when the gates flew wide open and away the horses went."

"I think we are fairly typical. Lots of people will be wrapping up this weekend and in the next few days. The people that have some harvesting to do in the spring will be delayed. But lots are wrapping up, lots are in good shape and lots are well advanced. We wish everybody well for sure."

Hruska has wheat, canola and 2,000 acres of peas out this

year.

"The peas, we're trying them," he says. "We're always looking for a third rotation crop, and we've tried beans and corn but we don't want another late-season crop. So we are looking for an alternative, because we grow wheat and canola back and forth and back and forth, and we have for 30 years, but that's a tight rotation. So we are always testing our skills with another crop in case we have to go to something else because of disease. If we are forced to go to a different crop at least we have tested our skills at growing it."

Hruska says they weren't too anxious about Covid-19, but wanted to get seeding underway just in case.

"Inherently we are quarantined most of the time anyway," he says. "I would say we were getting a little restless and anxious to go seeding because it's self quarantining anyway."

"We own Bridgeview Manufacturing as well, and Covid-19 has stopped the phone from ringing there and really slowed us up, but it has not affected us dramatically (as farmers), and the commodity prices didn't make any extreme moves. It seems like they are suffering a little bit, but not too bad—I guess the world has to eat. Countries aren't going to be running out of food now so they are keeping their shipments coming."

"Without the deep fryers going in the restaurant, at some point in time, you'd think it would have to hit the canola market."

Hruska says they have no interest in the federal loan programs on offer to help farmers.

"We have zero interest in a loan. A loan is not a grant, it could be the kiss of death for some people. If you are already maxed out, what good is a loan? You have to pay it back unless they are going to forgive the loan. I think the people that need it, it's going to harm the most."

## Hutch Farms affected by wet fall

Rylar Hutchinson, who has land east of Highway 8 between Rocanville and Moosomin, says the wet fall did put them behind a little bit. He has planted wheat and canola this year.

"The wet fall did put us behind because we were able to finish harvest last year but weren't able to get back into the field to do any fall work, harrowing, or cultivating," he says. "So we weren't able to start seeding as quick as we did last seeding season."

"Seeding has been going pretty good for Hutch Farms, knock on wood. I'd say we are pretty close to being on target considering how wet we were in the fall."

"Our soil in places is wet. There are places that we could have seeded but can't due to it being too wet. We have to be careful while running the drill. This nice warm, windy weather we've been having lately is helping dry things up though."

"If Mother Nature is on our side we should be able to wrap things up by end of next week," he said on Thursday.

Hutchinson says Covid-19 hasn't had much of an effect on their operation, and Hutch Farms hasn't really looked at any of the financial programs on offer federally because they feel they don't need it.

"We haven't really looked into any of it since the whole Covid thing hasn't really affected our farm. Our operations are the same as years before," he says.

"Covid has affected the livestock farmers a lot more," added Cam Hutchinson, Rylar's father. "Government aid right now is basically loans and extensions that really don't make up for lost income. We need help with global markets and stronger farmgate prices."



**These photos were submitted as a part of the 2019 World-Spectators Spring Seeding Photo Contest!**

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# Holding back cattle requires proactive business plan

Continued from page B7

Ontario cattle producers Scot and Murray Legge know that if a sickness outbreak among workers hits a processing facility, production lines come to a full and sudden stop. As a result, producers may need to hold cattle back for several weeks.

As the COVID-19 pandemic story continues to unfold, the Legges know they need to prepare for any potential processing delays. They're reducing the energy rations in one of their cattle groups, so they finish more slowly than usual. That will buy some time until the current processing plant situation is clearer.

The Legges are more worried about processing than demand. Now, their farm's freezer beef trade is up about 25%, and they're supplying another farm retailer who is also experiencing greater on-farm freezer beef sales.

"Hopefully, this means kitchens are once again becoming places where people cook meals and use beef," Scot says.

Filipchuk urges beef producers to thoroughly assess their operations now and plan for potential marketing disruptions.

She says a close working relationship with farm advisors and creditors is always part of good management, maybe even more so when unfamiliar situations—like a pandemic—arrive and financial upheaval beckons.

Creditors are partners for change, and

the more they understand about the matter, the better.

"If the timing of cash flow and payments are an issue, which they could very well be if cattle need to be held back, have those discussions open and honestly early on and let them know what your plan is," Filipchuk says. "If refinancing or restructuring is required, do the work to have a solid financial and strategic plan so that you can have an open and honest discussion about your business strategy and the support you are asking them to partner with you on."

And don't overlook small opportunities. For example, the Legge's freezer beef sales aren't a big part of their operation. But if food security-conscious consumers are moving more towards support for local commodities, there may be a chance to build that part of the business as a partial defence against unpredictable markets.

"Selling into a local market is an example of looking for ways to do things differently than in the past," says Filipchuk. "It won't alleviate the whole problem, but it might take some of the pressure off."

Holding back cattle comes with risks and implications on the farm, but if processing facilities are closed due to human illness, sometimes producers are left with no choice. Identify and address risks now, experts say, and come up with mitigation strategies. New marketing opportunities may create ways to bring in new income.



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## Seeding moving forward in southeast Saskatchewan

As of May 18, 57 per cent of seeding is complete in southeast Saskatchewan, up from 23 per cent last week.

This is slightly behind the five-year average of 61 per cent (2015-2019) for this time of year. Within the region 83 per

cent of the field peas, 81 per cent of the lentils, 71 per cent of the durum, 61 per cent of the chickpeas, 59 per cent of the spring wheat, 58 per cent of the canary seed, 55 per cent of the barley, 46 per cent of the oats, canola and soybeans and 33 per cent of the flax has been seeded to date.

As of May 18, seeding progress in southeast Saskatchewan ranged from 36 per cent in Crop District 1B to 73 per cent in Crop District 2A.

Earlier seeded crops have started to emerge in the region.

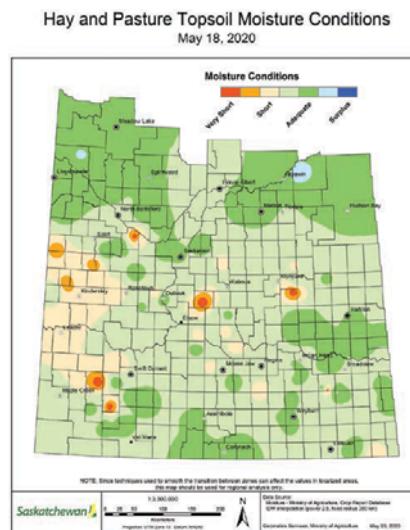
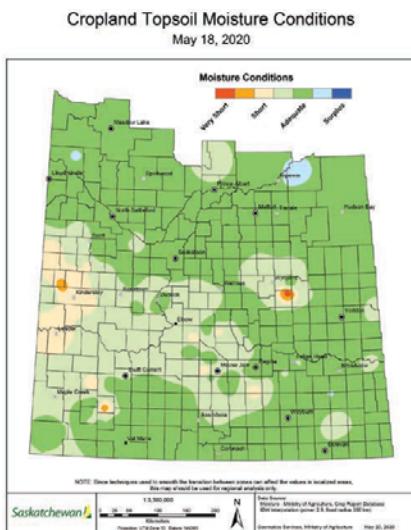
Weeds are also emerging, but windy conditions this past week have prevented many farmers from being able to spray herbicides. Minimal rainfall has allowed for seeding to progress but farm land will need moisture soon to support crop and pasture growth.

There were scattered showers in some areas of the region this week. The Maryfield and Radville areas received the highest amount of rain at approximately 12 mm. The Frobisher and Kisby areas received 11 mm, the Broadview and Creelman areas three mm and the Odessa and Regina areas two mm.

Cropland topsoil moisture in the southeast is rated as three per cent surplus, 81 per cent adequate, 15 per cent short and one per cent very short. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as one per cent surplus, 64 per cent adequate, 32 per cent short and three per cent very short.

Farmers have been busy seeding, spraying when they are able, harvesting last year's crop and picking stones.

Across the province, cropland topsoil moisture rated as two per cent surplus, 75 per cent adequate, 20 per cent short and three per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as one per cent surplus, 67 per cent adequate, 26 per cent short and six per cent very short.



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Elize Steyn submitted these photos from Eastview Farms as part of the World-Spectator's spring seeding photo contest. "Days are getting better. We love being out seeding!" she says. These photos were taken in the RM of Silverwood.

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# How advisors add value to your farm management plan

BY RICHARD KAMCHEN

Experts in various fields can help farmers better understand the nuances of farm management. Consulting with one or more farm advisors in aspects ranging from farm transition to animal care gives farmers focused advice from specialists.

But the array of farm advisors is wide-ranging, and knowing who's needed for farm management can be a challenge. And while gathering for in-person visits at the farm may have once been common, current practices now call for advisory sessions by phone, video call or physically distanced on-farm visits. Regardless, getting advice from an expert is still valuable. Here's a look at some of the experts available in the field.

**ACCOUNTANT**

Beyond doing your tax return, accountants can work with farmers as business advisors.

"Your accountant should be able to help you understand the financial impact of larger decisions by running cash flow projections, and answer/ask key questions," says Maggie Van Camp, BDO Canada's national agricultural practice development leader.

**LENDERS**

Strong relationships with lenders are important, and even more so during challenging times, says Manitoba Agriculture farm management specialist Sharon Ardron.

"It's easier to find solutions to challenges when there's adequate time to evaluate all options," Ardron points out.

But strong relationships take time to cultivate, so be proactive: keep in touch with your lenders to help strengthen the working re-



lationship, Ardron says.

**FINANCIAL PLANNER/FARM MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS**

These experts specialize in intensive debt management and strategic business planning, says Denise Filipchuck, consultant associate with Backswath Management.

"Having a consultant or financial planner as part of the management team on an ongoing basis can act as the quarterback for the team and keep all the wheels moving and in the same direction," Filipchuck says.

**MARKET STRATEGIST**

On top of working with farm managers to create and follow through with marketing plans, market strategists can also provide valuable training or information for those who seek a more proactive approach to marketing, says Filipchuck.

**PEER ADVISORY GROUPS**

Some farmers work with peer advisory groups to share knowledge, experiences and engage in joint

strategizing and problem-solving, says Heather Watson, executive director of Farm Management Canada.

"While these farm management groups have been around for a long time in Quebec, and predominantly in the dairy sector, they're becoming more and more popular in other regions for other commodities, and even cross-commodities, where business management practices transcend commodity specifics," Watson says.

**LAWYER**

These professionals are often used to draft legal documents and agreements or documents for litigation purposes, explains Filipchuck.

"[They] have a wealth of knowledge that can assist

farm managers in preparation and strategic planning prior to drafting final documents," says Filipchuck.

Mathieu Lipari, program manager with Farm Management Canada, adds that in the ag context, lawyers will mainly get involved in estate law, transitioning farm purchases or sales, divorce and important changes in an operation's business structure.

**TRANSITION ADVISORS**

An anticipated 37% of the agricultural workforce is expected to retire in the next decade.

Van Camp, a farmer who's acted as an executor, says transition planning is about more than lowering tax exposure. It should also create business and estate solutions that work for

your family and your farm.

**Coaches**

Farm family business coaches help families discover expectations and communicate more clearly.

"Coaches can help with getting unstuck, conflict resolution and family meeting facilitation," says Elaine Froese, farm family transition coach and farmer.

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

Managing your HR is an important part of your success, says Hali Van Vliet, senior manager HR Advisory at BDO Canada.

Critical HR processes to help your farm business succeed include offering training and development, managing employee performance, maintaining competitive compensation, and following health and

safety guidelines, VanVliet says.

**AGROLOGIST/AGRONOMIST**

Agrology applies science to agriculture, agri-food, the environment and the economy, Agrologists Agromones Canada explains.

"Agronomists are sometimes used for business advice, especially in Quebec, so they fulfil multiple advisory roles," adds Mathieu Lipari of Farm Management Canada.

**Vets**

Veterinary services can play critical roles in biosecurity, animal health, animal welfare, food safety and rural business success, Manitoba Agriculture explains.

**FIND AN EXPERT**

For producers seeking to hire their first advisor—or to add to the team they have in place—Canadian Association of Farm Advisors offers a comprehensive list of potential candidates.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Farm advisors are a valuable resource to bring to farm management for expert advice on a variety of issues. Be proactive and seek out advisors when there is adequate time at the farm, recognize their expertise and work together towards achieving the farm's goals. Organizations such as the Canadian Association of Farm Advisors are a valuable resource to identify and find the farm experts available across the country.

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# Canadian farmers deserve better from feds

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture really set the bar high with its \$2.6-billion aid request last week. When a federal program barely worth \$252 million was announced, the disappointment felt throughout the farming community wasn't surprising.

The funds were indeed underwhelming and won't be enough to get some of those producers to stick around. Many will exit the industry, regrettably.

Before the announcement, we expected to lose as many as 15 per cent of Canadian farms due to COVID-19. Ottawa's plans won't change that.

The \$125-million program to support livestock raises a variety of concerns:

- Executing the program will take time, something producers don't have.

- Few details were provided about the role of provinces or how much farmers will receive.

- The measures will likely not prevent more animals from being euthanized in days to come and killing farm animals for no reason is never a good thing. Along with the milk dumping, COVID-19 is clearly giving animal activists many great case studies served on a silver platter.

It's all such a shame for our farmers.

Losing farms won't compromise our nation's food security, obviously. Farmland never disappears and can always be exploited by someone else.

The most significant concern is how we create jobs and wealth in rural economies located far from urban centres. This should be a priority for the federal government. Occupying our vast nation's topography should be top of



**Sylvain Charlebois**

can't be vigorous without a reliable, strong processing arm.

The Canadian processing sector, however, is incredibly anemic and in crisis. In fact, it was in a crisis when it entered the pandemic. The sector has lost 12 jobs a day, every day, since 2012. That's 35,000 jobs but barely anyone has spoken about it.

Processing is the cornerstone for any food supply chain, although Canadians appear to have forgotten over the years.

Weakeness in processing will always arise in times of crises, like COVID-19, and this sector is desperate for more attention.

Ottawa presented a decent, measured plan, if too little too late. But it was wrong to expect so much from a government that's obsessed with city-slicking ideas. Under its regime, pet shops have a greater chance of survival than some farmers.

But the program gives a sense of what needs to be improved over time. Food processing needs support to keep employees safe at work, and we need mechanisms to prevent spoilage at the farm gate. Those issues are both within the scope of the program, which is a good sign for the future.

Ottawa needs to make sure there are fewer divisions between the players in the food chain. Farmers should care about processors and vice versa. The same goes for the rest of the food chain. There are good examples in other parts of the world, so much work is still needed.

An urban-rural divide remains entrenched in most federal government policies, including this announcement.

However, knowing how that divide can skew everything, \$252 million for farmers is a decent start. Expecting more was a mistake.

*Dr. Sylvain Charlebois is senior director of the agri-food analytics lab and a professor in food distribution and policy at Dalhousie University.*



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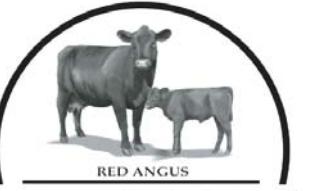


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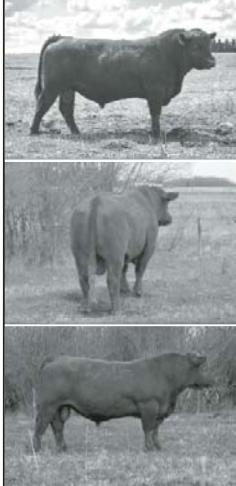
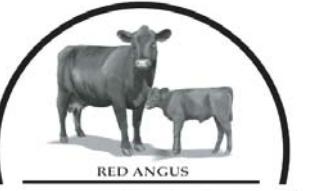
  
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**Agriculture a big part of growing exports:**

# Sask exports up 4.2 per cent in first quarter

The Government of Saskatchewan released the first quarter 2020 export numbers from the province last week, which were more than \$7.4 billion, up 4.2 per cent (seasonally adjusted) compared to the same period last year.

This increase was the fourth highest among the provinces, while nationally exports declined by 1.0 per cent.

"These positive export numbers from the first three months of the year show that Saskatchewan has what the world needs, and our province is well positioned for a strong economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19," Trade and Export De-

velopment Minister Jeremy Harrison said.

"Due to the economic impacts of the ongoing global pandemic, we know there will likely be a drop in international exports in the second quarter and into the second half of 2020, but these numbers are very encouraging and we remain optimistic about the opportunities for Saskatchewan in the future."

Saskatchewan's export performance was strong despite the significant challenges resulting from the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic during the period.

While exports to China and Brazil saw a decline, solid growth in the first quarter

was seen in exports to Japan, the European Union, India, Mexico, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

## Ag a big part of the story

Agriculture as one of the industries responsible for the growth in Saskatchewan exports in 2020

Exports that showed the highest increase in the first quarter included crude oil, canola seed, pulses, canola oil and meal, agricultural machinery, oats and soybeans.

On a month-over-month basis, Saskatchewan exports increased 30.5 per cent

between March 2020 and April 2020, the highest rate of growth amongst provinces.

"While many Saskatchewan people and businesses are focused on dealing with the current pandemic, it is important to recognize that some sectors of our economy are having periods of growth, which are positive signs we are weathering the unprecedented COVID-19 storm," Harrison said.

"Challenges are still ahead, but as we work together on each key phase of the Re-Open Saskatchewan plan, we will see further positive signs of economic recovery both here at home and with our international exports going abroad."



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# CFIB says farmers need urgent help

**Only 29 per cent of farmers say \$252 million relief package is helpful**

Canada's food producers are urgently asking for more help from the government amid supply chain interruptions, labour shortages and mounting costs, says the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).

New survey results reveal only 29 per cent of farmers say the federal emergency funding that was recently announced will be helpful for their agri-business.

"We are hearing heart-breaking stories about farmers having to plough down crops, destroy produce, or contemplate putting down their livestock due to reduced capacity at processing facilities or changes in market demand brought on by COVID-19," said Marilyn Braun-Pollon, CFIB's vice-president of Western Canada and agri-business.

"The government needs to move fast and provide more support for the entire industry to protect Canada's food supply."

The federal government announced \$252M in emergency funding to help farmers and processing facilities adapt to the pandemic and \$5B in increased lending capacity through Farm Credit Canada. CFIB also recognizes the government's hard work in ensuring temporary foreign workers can come for the critical planting season and helping farmers offset the cost of quarantining workers for two weeks. The new 3-year Agri-Food Pilot will also help fill ongoing labour needs and provide a pathway to permanent residency which CFIB has advocated for in the past.

"We understand there are enormous challenges in designing support programs and getting them out quickly, so we appreciate the government's willingness to change and improve emergency programs such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA), based on feedback from small businesses and groups like CFIB," said Braun-Pollon.

"Unfortunately, food producers say the effects of the pandemic will be felt for many seasons to come and that the recent emergency relief announcements and current programs will not work for most. CFIB's surveys found that:

- 42 per cent of farmers in the livestock sec-

tor said the emergency relief will be helpful for their agri-business, while almost 50 per cent said it will not be helpful

- 25 per cent of fruit, vegetables and horticultural farms and 28 per cent of food product processing say the emergency relief will be helpful

- 48 per cent of farmers are worried about debt (long-term financial consequences of debt & depleted savings)

- 40 per cent of agri-business owners are worried the "new normal" will not be sustainable for their business

"While the \$252M in emergency funding is a good first step, these survey results indicate there is much more needed to address the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the agriculture sector," noted Braun-Pollon. "The federal government has indicated "these measures are an initial investment and if we need to add more we will" – well the time is now to do more."

To support farmers, CFIB urges the federal government to immediately act on the following:

- Provide additional emergency funding to the agriculture sector to offset lost income resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic

- Improve current Business Risk Management Programs to ensure they are timely, responsive, effective and transparent

- Reduce red tape and barriers to interprovincial trade in agri-food products

- While it is too late for some agri-businesses, continue to negotiate and work closely with key source countries for Temporary Foreign Workers

- Exempt propane, natural gas and aviation fuel used for farming activities from the federal carbon tax.

- Continue to focus on trade and market access for all Canadian agri-food products.

"While a lot of economic activity has been frozen during the pandemic response, farmers can't do that. Their animals still need to be fed and cared for. They have tight windows in which they can plant, harvest and get their product to market. Government needs to act quickly to ensure farmers have the support they need," concluded Braun-Pollon.



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