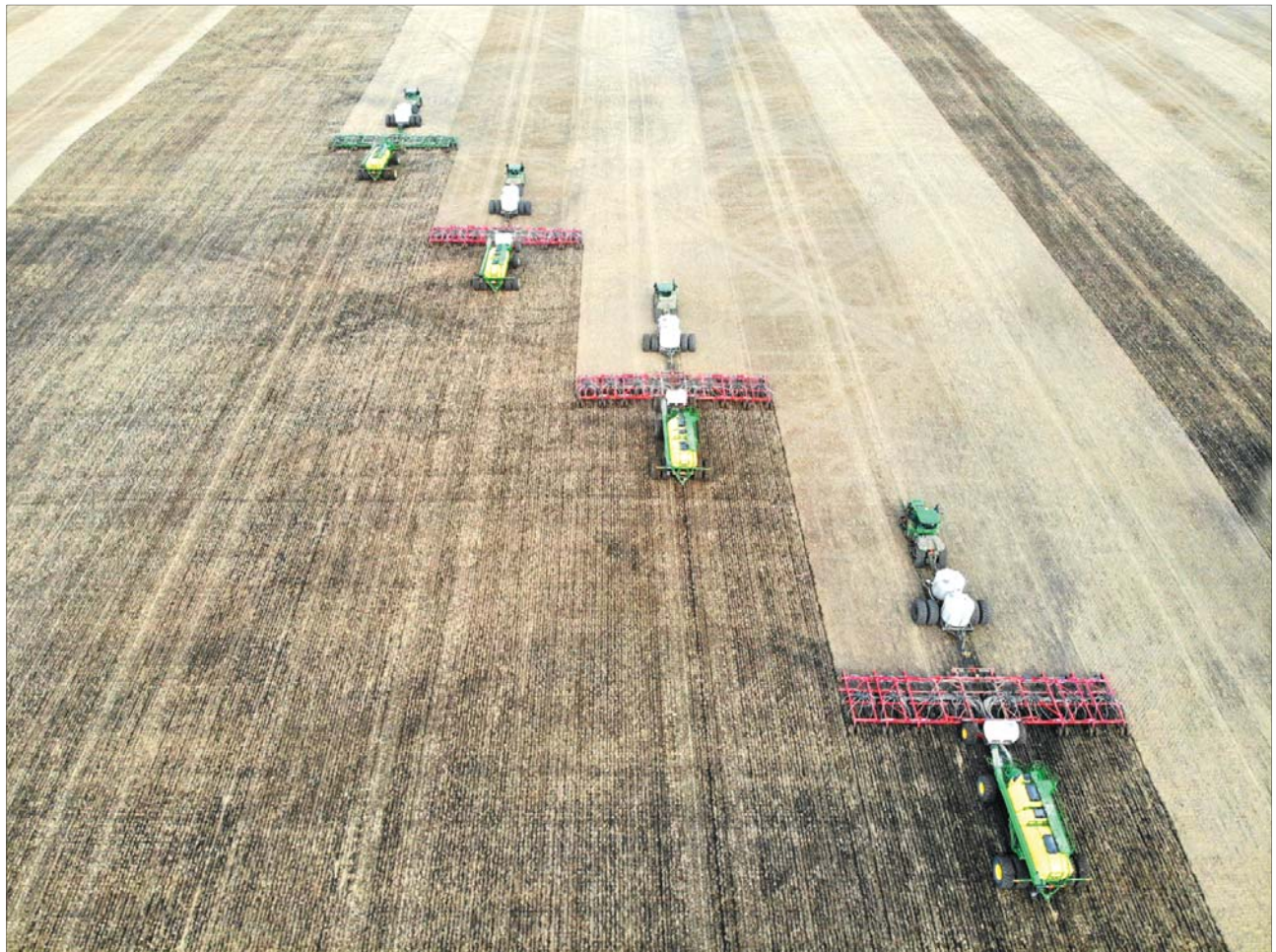


MAY 2024



Seeding on the Hebert Grain Ventures farm in the Fairlight area.

## Best seeding conditions in a long time say area farmers

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

With an early start and some timely rains, most farmers in the region are either finished seeding or looking forward to a couple more days in the field. Hitting that milestone of “seeding complete” will offer just enough time to take a deep breath, then break out the sprayer for those weeds and bugs that tend to rise along with healthy crops.

“We got going on about April 28, which was just a touch early for us,” reported Kevin Hruska, who farms in the Gerald area. “We get started in April maybe one out of seven years. We’re actually going to finish tomorrow, so

that’s a little ahead of schedule. We have finished about four times on the May long weekend, so it’s not totally unusual.”

He noted a few minor rain delays, but nothing that seemed to create a drastic setback.

“We had about four rain delays, however, we’re not wet,” Hruska said. “We’ve had good rains—half-inch rains, one one-inch rain. When it rains, it seems wet, and the second the sun comes out and it gets windy, it seems dry. We better take this rain when we get it, when they’re nice rains like that.”

Hruska estimated last week that the majority of his

neighbours were in the 50 to 60 per cent complete range.

“Beautiful seeding conditions, the best ever seeding conditions right now we’ve seen in a long time,” Hruska said. “I think that’s the case for a lot of people around us.”

“I hope the rains keep coming because we need a few good rains in July or we don’t have moisture to carry us through the year; that just doesn’t happen,” he said. “Our soil isn’t like that.”

A little further south down Rocanville way, Rylar Hutchinson offered the same report—noting a few hiccups to this seeding season, but nothing major.

*Continued on page C2*

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# Best seeding conditions in a long time say area farmers

Continued from front

"Things are going smoothly" he said. "Few showers to shut a guy down for a day or so but it's soaking in good. Myself, I'm about three quarters done. Couple more days of nice weather I'll have things wrapped up!"

Out in Maryfield, John Van Eaton explained the key to avoiding costly down time. When asked if he experienced any hiccups this seeding season, his reply was a hearty "not when you have John Deere tractors!"

"We got going the last couple of days of April, so that's early traditionally for us, but things have actually moved along fairly well," Van Eaton explained. "There's always time for it to change, we don't want to brag too much until we're done because there's usually karma involved in that."

He noted that the beginning of the seeding adventure this year was almost dry, but has transitioned to more on the wet side.

"The last rain we had there, or a couple of rains ago, was about a two days slow rain; it was the first in a while," he said. "It seems like we get all our rain in thunderstorms, but it was nice to see a gentle two-day rain."

Over in the Atwater/Stockholm area, Blake Duchek says he's ahead of the game this year.

"It's been going actually fairly good," he said. "Compared to last year, we're ahead of schedule. I don't think we finished until May 31 or June 1 last year."

With fingers crossed that heavy rains hold off for just a few days, Duchek estimated being finished this week.

"Probably five or six days earlier than last year," he said. "We're about 80 per cent done. Four more days and we should be done."

Things are moving so quickly that Duchek is noticing seeded crops breaching the topsoil in a matter of a few days—a more than welcome sight.

"The crop is all coming up quick, soil conditions are great and the moisture levels are great," he said. "Some of the wheat was up in five days. Some years, we've seeded when it's been cold and it takes you three weeks to seed, and you're finished seeding and you're first stuff isn't up."

He did note one frustrating incident that slowed things, an unexpected cost to boot. A tire on the back of an air seeder cart incurred sidewall damage, and of course they are not readily available compared to those on a car or truck.

"There's only two of that size in existence in Canada," Duchek explained. "One place was \$20,000 for the tire, and another place was \$9,500 for the same tire! I thought the supply chain for parts was getting better, but there's still some items that aren't back to normal availability."

He ended up limping along with the tire for a week,



and wonders if the parts supply chain will ever fully return to normal.

"The smaller common stuff I'd say is back to normal, but when you get these bigger ticket items, like a tire or something, machine specific, the inventory still isn't back up there. I don't know if it will ever get back to where it was."

Circling back to Moosomin, Jeff Warkentin with Hebert Grain Ventures was pleased to report being totally finished seeding.

"We just wrapped up at about three in the morning last night—we're done!" he said. "We seeded for about 21 actual days, give or take, and we started on April 23. The weather was favourable this year, that allowed us to get going at more of a normal timeframe."

The return to more a more typical start to the season was quite welcome.

"The last couple of years were abnormal where we had a later start, but I'd say this is a more normal timeframe," Warkentin said. "It's always good if we can get going that last week of April. Soil conditions were good and we've certainly got a good start."

Even the novelty of seeding over the May long weekend was warmly welcomed, as one last blast of snow is not an uncommon sight for Victoria Day.

"You kind of bank on bad weather for May Long," Warkentin said with a laugh.

Next up will be spraying, something that Warkentin and others noted could be underway within the next two weeks.

"We got to pick up the shrapnel after seeding and we'll be into herbicides here probably in 10 days," Warkentin said.

Producers throughout the southeast and southwest have been the furthest along with seeding progress, with hopes still fresh that the growing season will be just as favourable.

"Producers are busy seeding while watching their early seeded crops begin to emerge," noted a recent Saskatchewan Agriculture crop report. "Many are applying pre-seed herbicide products as the recent rainfall and heat has allowed weeds to emerge ahead of seeding. Cattle are being moved out to greening pastures and branding has started."

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# Speedy pathogen test kit ready for field testing

## PathoScan co-founder shares how concept became reality

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

What began as an efficient solution to lengthy pathogen testing initiated by two Saskatoon-based entrepreneurs will now be coming to a field near you. PathoScan is a pathogen testing kit, boasting results within an hour of taking a sample—all able to be accomplished right in the field. The company received a major financial boost recently being an Agtech Growth Fund recipient—the ag-tech focused version of the Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund. PathoScan received \$75,000, a fantastic boost for the local company.

“Grant recipients like PathoScan get a portion of the funding upfront and the rest of the grant is based on certain development goals,” explained Kari Harvey, CEO of Innovation Saskatchewan. “For PathoScan specifically, a major goal for them in this project is to conduct field trials and refine their product based on the data collected from the trials.”

What the minds behind PathoScan had developed caught the attention of Innovation Saskatchewan, making the decision to back the company an easy one.

“Through Innovation Saskatchewan’s regular engagements with ag producers and others in the ag industry, we heard that quicker disease detection was a need in the sector,” Harvey said. “When we heard PathoScan had a potential solution to the problem, we got in touch with them to encourage them to apply.”

The World-Spectator caught up with Tayab Soomro, one of PathoScan’s founders and CEO. He, along with Scientific Lead and co-founder Ethan Done, have taken their dream from concept to physical solution—on the cusp of field trials this year.

What the duo have designed is a portable test kit that’s rugged, easy to use, and provides quick answers. Knowing whether or not a pathogen exists in a sample can help producers make more informed



PathoScan company founders Tayab Soomro, left, and Ethan Done, right, stand with their innovative pathogen testing equipment.

Image courtesy Tayab Soomro

decisions—saving time and money in the process. Following is the interview with Tayab Soomro:

**What’s the story of PathoScan? How did it start and where did this idea come**

**from?**

After I finished my master’s in Agriculture at Dalhousie University, I came back to Saskatoon. Here, I attended a program called Co.Hack Hackathon by Co.Labs and met the other co-founder, Ethan

Done. It was his idea that was presented.

Ethan and I got together and worked on the idea, spending the weekend doing market research, fleshing out the idea, and creating a presentation. At the end of the weekend, we pitched the idea to the judges and ended up winning first place. That came with a \$3,000 cash prize, and that actually is what kick started us.

Everything else sort of trickled from there. We participated in various pitches—some we won, some we didn’t—but it was a lot of learning that we got from that.

**I heard that you were also involved in Opus at the U of S.**

Opus is an accelerator by the University of Saskatchewan that’s promoting an entrepreneurial spirit in students. We applied for their Idea2Build program, got in, and it has been a tremendous help. They not only help financially, but they also provide resources like business consulting and bringing in mentors.

Both Ethan and I, coming from a science background, didn’t necessarily have a lot of business experience to begin with. So this is something we struggled with initially—we know the science, but how do we make sure we do the business side, right? That’s essentially where Opus helps!

We have also had demo days with them, which is basically an opportunity to showcase our technology. It’s very immersive and exciting. Besides Opus, we are also part of the Cultivator’s AgTech Accelerator program that’s over in Regina. Between Opus, Cultivator, other mentors, and casual chats over coffee with the business partners and startup supporters in the ecosystem have really helped us.

**Networking is so vital. Something as innocuous as a cup of coffee can turn into something big.**

That’s true.

*Continued on page C6*



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Seeding on the Hebert Grain Ventures farm in the Fairlight area.

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# Speedy pathogen test kit ready for field testing

## PathoScan co-founder shares how concept became reality

Continued from Page C3

This seems like solving a major problem. I was wondering if you could walk me through how your device works and what the concept is, because to send a sample away for testing in a lab—that could take weeks.

The current problem is up to about 20 to 25 per cent of the world's crop production is lost every year due to preventable plant diseases. These diseases have very narrow diagnostic windows, so immediate results are really important, but the current lab facilities that exist take far too long to be useful for some of these farmers. It takes days to weeks sometimes to get the results back. By that time, the crops are already dead. Farmers need a technology that provides results quickly and cost effectively. So that's our motivation to develop PathoScan. With our device, farmers can test for any crop anywhere without any technical background, and they can get the results within 40 minutes to an hour.

That's amazing—to have something that jam-packed with technology, but easy enough to utilize.

That's one of the other things that we really work hard to do is make it as simple as possible. Current technologies that exist require at least a biochemistry degree or some sort of agronomy background to be able to run these tests. We tried to make this as simple as possible that anybody without any technical background should be able to operate this. Much like Covid test kits—we all had these kits in our homes, we were able to test for it without knowing a lot of biochemistry. So that's sort of the idea.

I'm envisioning a moisture tester, where you just throw in the sample, flick a switch, dial it in, and now you know your moisture content. Is this pretty much the same thing; take a sample, and there's your test?

Exactly. The device is shaped like a box, and we like to call it PathoBox. Inside, there are basically sockets or grooves for the farmer to put the sample for the tube in. That tube actually contains a sample in it. There's a few steps for preparation for that tube, once the tube is prepared, you put it into this device, and you flick the switch on. That starts the reaction and in 40 minutes, there will be a sound signal on your cell phone telling you that the pathogen is present or not. We're detecting the colour change in the tubes, and based on that we're determining whether the pathogen is present. The upshot to using cell phones is that you actually get the report right on your cell phone so you can send it to your agronomist or any ag consultant that you're working with.

That's amazing. So you don't even have to be watching this device, you can just get an alert on your phone and you could be out doing something else, getting into the next field. How long did it take for you and Ethan to develop this idea?

This idea was basically conceived by Ethan, so he's worked on it quite a long time, just mentally conceptualizing this. I jumped on board during the Hackathon in October, and then after that is where we actually materialized it into a product. And so between October, 2022 and now, we basically have been working nonstop.

I can appreciate you guys probably put in a lot of hours every day!

Juggling that and a full time job was not easy!

You recently received grant money from the AgTech Growth Fund. What's that going to help with? Is that taking you to the next step now?

We're really excited to be receiving that funding. That actually channeled into our R&D. Even though we have a prototype developed, there's a lot more iterations that need to happen in the R&D for it to make it commercially viable. This summer, we're actually going to be in the fields all across Saskatchewan, Alberta, and other provinces of Canada. In doing those field trials, we're going to learn a lot about the things that we have to change and the feedback that we need to incorporate. That funding actually helps with the R&D part,

to make it better over time, essentially.

I suppose right now you're assembling a pool of producers to do that literal field testing?

That's exactly right. We have a few clients on board. Quite a few, actually. And we're always looking for more clients. We have created a form where we can onboard farm producers, so they can go to pathoscan.com/signup and they can sign up for a demonstration, and we'd love to get down there and get to work.

Is a larger pool of producers better for your results?

That's exactly right. The more producers that we have, the more data points that we have and the more feedback we have, the faster we can make it better.

In terms of pathogens, is it a narrow scope of what you're testing for, or is it wide open to everything?

Theoretically, yes, it is wide open to everything, just because of the nature of the technology. It's a PCR technology, which means that it works with DNA. Practically every pathogen has DNA, so we can make it work with any pathogen, but for now—for the summer, at least—we're focused on demonstrating with leaf diseases. The reason for that is we want to showcase the usability and the easiness of this tool. With leaf diseases, it goes for an easy demonstration. That's what we're hoping to do, and that's really what our motivation is to focus on leaf diseases. So like powdery mildew, downy mildew, leaf spots, mold and things like that.

So you'll be focusing on broadleaf crops then?

We're focusing on broadleaf crops, we're also focusing on canola. Sclerotinia (a fungal stem rot in canola plants) is one that we're getting high demands of so we're doing that, but mainly leaf disease.

With the sign up for producers right now, would that be a free trial or would there be a cost for them to participate?

It's in a cost-sharing fashion. We'd love to make it free, however, we need some way to compensate for that. Right now, we're doing it on an 'at-cost' basis. So producers, farmers, and greenhouse producers, they basically share the cost for the amount of equipment required, for the use of biologicals. As long as those are covered, then we're okay.

Is the PathoBox something that's a 'one use and done,' or is it a fixture that you can add different tubes to?

There are two products, there is the PathoBox that's a reusable tool. You just buy it once and you keep using it year over year. But then there's these pathogen assay kits. These are pathogen specific and they're designed for a single pathogen. They are essentially consumables that are bought again and again, for every disease that you want to test for.

The PathoBox is designed to be bouncing around in the truck, we have made it sturdy enough. It can connect with your 12V socket in the vehicle, it can operate with a portable charger, it can operate with an outlet, you can plug it into the wall. There are multiple ways to operate that.

Have you figured out a price point yet, once production starts and you're selling these to Prairie farmers?

We are very close to doing that. Currently, we're focused on the field trials so that we can actually get the data and make it better before we start mass producing and selling. Right now, we can say that it's going to be 30 to 40 per cent cheaper than the current market solutions. I don't have an exact price point, that comes after we have gone through the first set of field trials and have gathered some data and figured that out. But I can already see that it's going to be a lot cheaper than what's out there. And quicker.

That allows for some quick decision making for farmers.

That's one of the biggest challenges. A lot of times farmers end up spraying regardless of whether they have a good rea-

son to spray or not just because the cost for not spraying is really high. We also can't discount the cost of spraying, because spraying costs a lot. If we can save even a single cycle of spraying or two cycles of spraying for a farmer, that's a huge cost saving.

Do you think production would start taking place over the winter, or would you prefer maybe one more growing season?

It's going to be an ongoing effort of field trials, even after we launch. We're going to do a soft launch hopefully next summer, to be able to get this in the hands of some of the farmers for testing. The field trials are going to keep going because we are in the business of constantly improving it and constantly making sure that it fits the needs of the farmers. It's going to be an ongoing effort. By next summer we're hoping that this will be in the hands of farmers.

From a larger standpoint of predicting trends, you'd get a wide swath of the province to see where different pathogens are and what some of the hotspots are.

That's right. I think that's really valuable to know—where the Ministry of Agriculture should focus their attention, based on what we find, what trends we find. There are predictive models, of course, that tell us about where certain diseases are going to be prevailing, but this is a hardcore, precision ag-type data that we can have as a province.

The fact that this is a homegrown idea, it's really putting Saskatchewan on the map in terms of our technological advancements.

I have a lot of people to thank, but one of them is the ecosystem that we have. I'm really grateful to have such awesome cheerleaders behind us. The folks that we have in Saskatoon and even in Regina that have built these systems and programs that help us get up the ladder. That's really something that I would be remiss if I didn't mention, because if programs like Opus and Cultivator did not exist, then it would be really tough for two local Saskatchewan residents to build something like this.

It's such a huge launchpad. Do you see this as being something that the global market would be very interested in as well?

Totally. I think Saskatchewan is getting a spotlight in the world because of that, and I'm really excited. It's a really exciting time right now.

So these long hours you're putting in—they're not going to go away for a while!

I keep telling myself that it's going to get slower and slower, but no, it's going to be quite a few long hours still! It's the motivation that I have that keeps me going, and what makes it all possible is the conversations that I have with farmers pretty much every day about the problems that they are facing. That's basically the main driver for me.

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LAW FIRM

# Governments invest \$25 million in agriculture researchers

On May 8, Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lawrence MacAulay and Saskatchewan's Agriculture Minister David Marit announced \$25 million to support 15 strategic research chairs at the University of Saskatchewan's (USask) College of Agriculture and Bio-resources through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

"Investing in research is vitally important to the long-term resilience and continued growth of Canada's agriculture sector," MacAulay said. "I have no doubt this innovative research will help ensure our farmers stay on the cutting edge."

"The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to funding evidence-based research initiatives to better serve our agriculture sector," Marit said. "Providing stable funding to attract and retain leading scientists in key strategic areas increases the competitiveness and resilience of Saskatchewan's agriculture sector and our provincial economy along with it."

Funding is provided through the Strategic Research Program and is focused on supporting crop genetic improvement, livestock development, food and bioproducts development and soils and environment.

"This investment in USask research is an investment in the success and sustainability of Saskatchewan's agriculture sector," USask College of Agriculture and Bio-resources Dean Angela Bedard-Haughn said. "USask researchers are advancing innovative solutions that meet the needs of farmers, industry and consumers."

The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership is 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 that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and

territories.

For more information on the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership suite of programs, please visit: website.

## Ducks Unlimited and PepsiCo announce collaboration to provide additional incentives to producers enrolled in FCC's Sustainability Incentive Program



Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) has joined forces with PepsiCo to offer additional financial incentives for producers who participate in Farm Credit Canada's (FCC) Sustainability Incentive Program and grow oats or canola within their crop rotation. Beginning May 2024, PepsiCo will provide financial support to eligible producers based in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba who commit to planting perennial forage on unproductive cropland to improve biodiversity and drive positive change. Support will equal 50 per cent of the total payment producers receive on behalf of FCC's program, up to a \$1,000 maximum per application.

At its core, PepsiCo is an agriculture company. PepsiCo believes that regenerative agricultural practices will be pivotal in meeting the increasing demand for food as the global population grows, while also addressing the need to protect and enhance our natural resources. By collaborating with DUC, PepsiCo will extend its engagement

with farming communities in Canada, helping to create a more resilient, sustainable agricultural system.

"The uptake from our producer partners who have already taken advantage of our partnership with FCC has been incredible," says Paul Thoroughgood, national manager of sustainability at DUC. "Now with PepsiCo at the table, we can support even more farmers across the Prairies, recognizing them for the positive impacts they have on the landscape by providing even more incentives."

Ducks Unlimited Canada's Marginal Areas Program offers a solution for Canadian farmland that lacks productivity due to poor drainage, soil conditions, periodic flooding, inaccessibility, or salinity. Historically, DUC has offered participating producers a 10-year agreement as a way to assist with the cost of establishing perennials while alleviating the financial burden associated with land management challenges. Additionally, FCC participants who also partake in DUC's Marginal Areas Program

will be eligible to receive an incentive payment based on a percentage of their total borrowings, up to a maximum payment of \$2,000 or \$50/acre of enrolled acres.

"Our Sustainability Incentive Program encourages sustainable farming practices while supporting nature-positive outcomes," says Curtis Grainger, FCC director of sustainability programs. "Now, with support from PepsiCo, we can further reward producers who take steps to add to the long-term health of Canada's agriculture and food industry."

Driving environmental enhancements across unproductive farmland continues to positively impact biodiversity across the Canadian landscape while also supporting producers' profitability – contributing to stronger, more viable rural communities.

To learn more about DUC's innovative environmental solutions and services, including these new incentives from PepsiCo, please visit [ag.ducks.ca](http://ag.ducks.ca).



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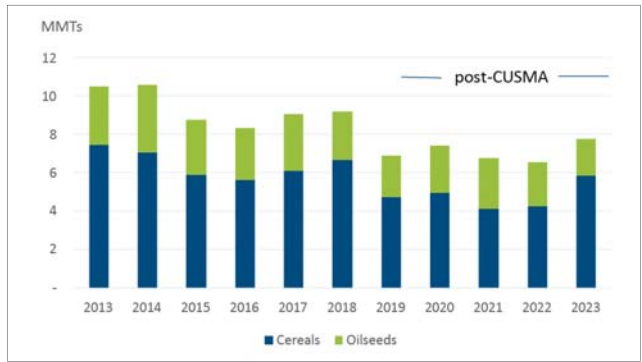


Figure 1: CUSMA allows Canada's exports to the U.S. to grow when needed

# Growth in Canada's cereal and oilseed exports post trade agreements mixed

Over the last six years, Canada has signed three multilateral trade agreements with some of the world's largest economies. The Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) came into provisional force in 2017, giving Canada preferential access to the (now) 27 countries in the European Union, with a total population of near 450 million in 2023 as one of the world's largest economies and one of Canada's largest agrifood export markets.

In 2018, Canada signed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Canada-United States-Mexico trade agreement (CUSMA) which, in many ways, continued the preferential access granted by the former North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and was in force as of November 2020. CUSMA is arguably Canada's most lucrative agreement, with the U.S. our largest global trading partner. Given the many ways our economies are tied together, it has always been our largest export market for food products.

The CPTPP opens access to ten Pacific Rim countries (Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam), many of which, while not Canada's traditional partners in agriculture and food trade, are growing their imports as their domestic household spending grows. The United Kingdom is expected to join the CPTPP as a member state by 2025.

But while opening access is necessary to improving trade, it doesn't guarantee that Canadian exports will grow to those regions with whom we share agreements. Five years after the signing of CUSMA and CPTPP, and six years after signing CETA, the agreements have paid off for Canada's cereal exports, but to a lesser degree for oilseed exports.

### Post-signing cereal export growth rates show benefits of trade agreements

Before the introduction of the trade agreements, overall Canadian cereal export volumes were growing. Annual growth averaged 4.4% in the 2014-2018 period, with exports to the European Union driving much of the increase. Exports to CPTPP countries also had a higher annual average growth rate than the total. Several factors underscored the upticks. In 2014, cereal export volumes rose 21.2% YoY, driven by strong domestic supplies and a rapidly deteriorating Canadian dollar relative to the strengthening USD after the Russian invasion of Crimea.

Over the next five years, growth in overall cereal exports slowed somewhat, falling from 4.4% to 4.0% average annual growth. They were initially buoyed in 2020 in

response to burgeoning global demand for ag commodities but fell in 2021 and 2022 when Canada faced cereal production losses due to poor moisture conditions in the West. The signing of CUSMA, CETA and CPTPP then had varying degrees of influence on Canadian cereal exports to the three regions.

The U.S. serves as an aftermarket for Canada's crop exports. It becomes a destination when exports to other, more lucrative, markets have been maxed out. As cereal volumes increased to Europe, Asia and elsewhere, volumes exported within North America lagged (Figures 1 and 2). CUSMA boosted cereal exports to the U.S. and Mexico in 2023, when volumes were closer to the level in 2018.

Growth in cereal exports to the E.U. averaged a very healthy 25% increase each year between 2013 and 2017 (Figure 2). In 2014, Canada exported 3.6 MMT, a 160% YoY increase, to European countries. But that kind of growth proved difficult to sustain, despite the introduction of CETA.

In both Europe and among CPTPP countries (Figure 3), we see the impact on volumes shipped of the drought-reduced production levels in 2021. Nonetheless, the agreements were in place when the world suddenly wanted more ag commodities during COVID-19. Canada's tariff-free status in the E.U. helped boost cereal export volumes between 2018 and 2020 by 15.7%. In the CPTPP region (without Mexico), cereal exports rose 24.9% between 2019

and 2020, after having increased at an average annual rate of 5.7% between 2014 and 2018. However, exports to Japan, the CPTPP's single largest market, fell 23.4% between 2020 (their high) and 2022, pushing down overall volumes to the region. This trend may show the limit of trade agreements to boost Canadian exports. Australia, with a transport advantage over Canada in exports to Japan and their own bilateral free trade agreement, had excellent cereal production at the same time, perhaps raising their relative competitiveness.

### CETA signing just in time for extra demand from E.U. for oilseeds

Canada's oilseed exports were increasing overall, averaging an additional 7.8% each year between 2014 and 2018, based primarily on strong sales to China. China's huge spike in imports of Canadian soybeans, growing 500% between 2014 and 2018, was replicated to varying degrees in their imports from other suppliers to feed swelling pork production levels.

Continued on Page C17

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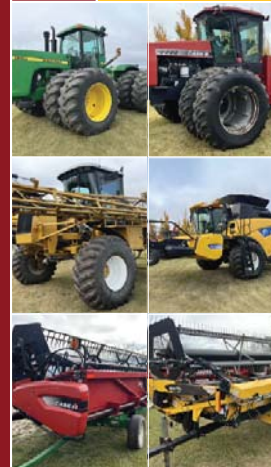
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Dale Woods submitted this photo of Sarah seeding at sunset as part of The World-Spectator's 2024 Spring Seeding Contest.

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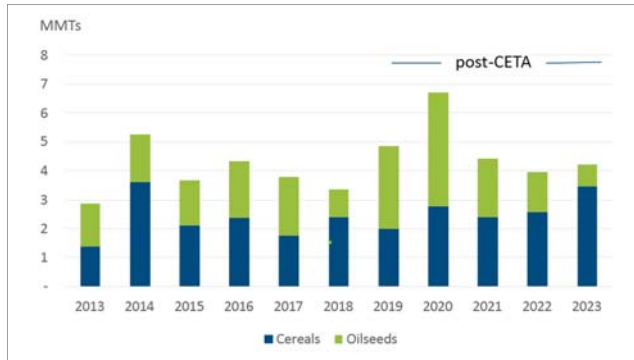


Figure 2: COVID boosts the AAGR of ag exports post-CETA

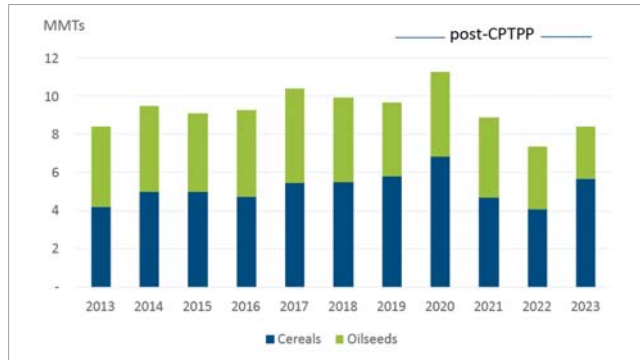


Figure 3: Crop exports given initial boost post-CPTPP introduction\*

# Growth in Canada's cereal and oilseed exports post trade agreements mixed

Continued from Page C8

Such strong growth in Canada's export volumes generally tapered off after 2018, however, for numerous reasons. Overall oilseed exports fell dramatically as African Swine Fever hit the Chinese herd and China's soy imports stopped almost overnight. Canadian exports have also tailed off as additional domestic oilseed crush capacity has become available. Between 2019 and 2023, oilseed exports averaged a -3.3% loss per year. Comparatively, exports to North American and CPTPP partners dropped at even faster rates, while exports to the E.U. soared.

Despite the existence of NAFTA/CUSMA, Canada's oilseed exports to North American markets dropped in the first five years since signing. They had been falling each year between 2014 and 2018, but the losses picked up speed between 2019 and 2023, in part due to limited production levels and as exports to other markets increased (Figure 1).

Oilseed exports to countries in the CPTPP region (excluding Mexico) also fell in the five-year period immediately after the agreement was in force (Figure 3). They fell, on average, -8.5% each year. Most of that was due to large reductions in trade with Japan. Between 2020 and 2023, canola exports to Japan declined 56%, with Australia able to pick up the slack.

In the five years before signing CETA, Canada's oilseeds exports to Europe fell, on average, -3.6% each

year, a figure impacted heavily by a dramatic 52.7% YoY drop in 2018 (Figure 2) when losses in canola and soybean production limited exports. Between 2014 and 2017 (i.e., without the lowered crop in 2018), oilseed exports showed an AAGR of 4.1%. As strong as that was, it was dwarfed by export growth post-CETA. Between 2018 and 2022, oilseed volumes to the E.U. rose, on average, 20.5% each year, and looking only at the period 2018 to 2020, they grew more than 300%.

### Bottom line

Many factors influence trade performance. Relative global crop production matters to Canadian export volumes, as do relative currency fluctuations between suppliers and buyers. With the first five years since signing the three agreements marred by domestic crop production losses, it's hard to fully assess their impacts. However, CETA's availability when European demand for cereals and oilseeds increased, pushed Canadian exports higher. Given that ratified countries grew their oilseed exports, on average, 53% annually and unratified countries had an AAGR of 13.4% between 2018 and 2022, there's more potential to unlock with full ratification (if possible). CUSMA has had a more muted effect, not surprising perhaps given the gains made earlier by NAFTA. The CPTPP region saw an initial boost to crop exports during COVID, which faltered when Japan cut back their shipments.

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# Ag extension specialists commemorate 15 years of regional services for producers

Saskatchewan's Ministry of Agriculture is marking 15 years of highly successful work by agriculture extension services that continues to provide producers with relevant, timely information to help ensure the profitability and sustainability of their operations.

Since 2009, teams of extension specialists throughout the province have worked directly with farmers and ranchers, as well as with producer groups and industry agronomists, to ensure they have access to the agronomic and business support they need, when they need it.

"It has been 15 years since we reopened the remainder of the extension offices, which were closed by the previous government of the day," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "The goal has always been to ensure that we are providing the right services to our agriculture producers in the best way possible - at the community level, where producers live and work."

The establishment of the regional offices in 2009 created

an increased presence in rural Saskatchewan to refocus previous services back on meeting the needs of primary producers, with each office staffed by a complement of agriculture specialists in livestock and feed, crops and irrigation, programs, range management and agri-environmental areas.

There are approximately 45 extension specialists in total based in regional offices in 10 communities across Saskatchewan, with the Agriculture Knowledge Centre (AKC) in Moose Jaw serving as a call centre and first point of contact for program and service inquiries from farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses.

In the past year alone, the AKC and regional offices responded to nearly 12,000 inquiries through telephone, email, text, office visits and farm calls. Among the variety of activities and services they carried out in 2023-24, extensions specialists:

Provided 214 technical, informational and program-

related presentations at extension events, industry meetings and schools and conducted lectures at the University of Saskatchewan on topics such as seeding marginal acres and forages and crop disease identification and management;

Organized or partnered on 57 virtual, in-person and hybrid extension events, attracting roughly 6,500 participants; and

Received 763 applications, fielded nearly 300 inquiries and completed 48 program audits for the Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program alone.

Enabling producers to remain competitive, sustainable and profitable is central to Saskatchewan's key long-term economic growth targets for 2030, some of which rely on agriculture. The Growth Plan goal of increasing the value of agri-food exports to \$20 billion has already been surpassed years ahead of schedule, with \$20.2 billion in 2023.

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# What's fair when everyone contributes to the farm differently?

BY ANNESA GOOD-HASSARD, BUSINESS ADVISOR, AND VALERIE PANKO, BUSINESS ADVISOR, FCC

Two things are needed to run a business: time and money. Family partners may be contributing labour, management, financing, or all of these. To find balance and harmony, you need to have conversations that ensure all contributions are valued in a way everyone pro-actively agrees to.

I see situations where one sibling works on the farm full time and the other works on the farm part time. The on-farm sibling reaps the benefits of the farming lifestyle, while the other off-farm sibling has comparatively significant disposable income. Each benefit has value, and that value may be viewed differently by different people.

Or, a younger producer might not yet be at a management level with the farm but is learning new skills and contributing in meaningful ways. What is the value of those things? It's important to communicate about this and find agreement on this or resentment can begin to creep in.

A good way to find balance in such cases is to track gains over time. As a family, set expectations for future gains. Decide together what's possible financially. Think about how much cash flow is needed to sustain retirement or to add on other assets in the future.

Ensure there is clarity around decisions. Know how many full-time or part-time employees the operation can afford to help ensure expectations are realistic. If the business doesn't have the capacity to employ all children full time, can the part-time individual(s) convert their sweat equity into future ownership?

I think one of the most effective ways to ensure things feel fair and balanced is to put governance processes in place.

## A sweat equity formula

This formula, created by Merle Good, farm succession specialist with GRS Consulting, can be used to determine value and find balance. It shows you are worth more than the farm can afford to pay you:

$$\text{Value} = \text{Cash} + \text{Perks (fuel, rent, etc.)} + \text{Equity}$$

### Example 1

The full-time junior generation is worth \$120,000 (above and beyond labour). While they only take home a salary of \$55,000, they're owed \$65,000 in "sweat equity" for 2023. That sweat equity needs to be tracked and recorded. It's included in the balance sheet when the equity is converted to ownership – examples may be shares, land or operational assets such as cattle.

### Example 2

A sister works off farm part time. She hasn't taken any cash out but has put money in. She receives a credit – which is all equity. This needs to be tracked from year to year. While this isn't part of the balance sheet, it needs to be recorded. Everyone must agree on the expectations and formula for converting sweat equity to real equity, and the numbers must be transparent.

Families can track their equity in an online journal that is reviewed annually, and that everyone has access to. To determine your family's annual expectations for how this sweat equity will be converted to ownership, ask the following questions:

- What are the expectations for when/how this equity will be converted and into what asset?
- How are we addressing time value of money?
- How is this being addressed in the parents' estate plan?
- Keep the lines of communication open and share evolving expectations. Include everyone's goals and vision including individual family goals.
- Formalize the process and discussions around this and set expectations for future gain – and track it!

Governance is the process you use to avoid relationship breakdown. It allows you to design your own set of rules around how contributions are valued, recorded, tracked and compensated for.

Without governance, the word 'fair' may not hold much meaning, as fairness is what you design it to be. Everyone needs to be involved in deciding what is fair together.

For example, someone may contribute through dollars instead of hours, and fairness will depend on the policies you set (through governance) around how that contribution is measured and valued. If you're measuring to determine equity of compensation, what is fair needs to be pre-defined and agreed upon.

When setting up a governance process, there are four main areas to begin with: decision-making, communication, conflict resolution and compensation.

Decide what you, as a family, want to determine within each area. While there is no 'right' way to do this, there are tools and ways to determine it, and governance helps to decide which ones are right for you.

A facilitator can help decide what to include, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute to determining what is important to them, and how that is measured or valued. They can help to set rules around compensation, communication and conflict resolution – how are we governed as a group? Down the road, if there happens to be an objection, you will have rules around conflict resolution and then use those to determine compensation.

Overall, governance is the process of defining what is fair. It allows both sides to build the definition so that all sides have been fully involved. This ensures everyone is aligned, has made agreements and feels empowered.



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| <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red;">SALE 1</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">FARM EQUIPMENT ONLINE AUCTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup><br/>at 8:00<sup>am</sup> CST to<br/>Monday, June 3<sup>rd</sup><br/>at 10:00<sup>am</sup> CST<br/>Clayton &amp; Marilyn Clow<br/>Carnduff, SK<br/><br/>Contact:<br/>Clayton 306-483-7760</p>       | <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red;">SALE 2</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">ONLINE FARM &amp; LIVESTOCK EQUIPMENT AUCTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup><br/>at 8:00<sup>am</sup> CST to<br/>Monday, June 17<sup>th</sup><br/>at 10:00<sup>am</sup> CST<br/>Brown &amp; Molstad<br/>Middale, SK<br/>Wayne &amp; Ann Brown 306-458-7911<br/>Blaine &amp; Chelsea<br/>Molstad 306-458-3539</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red;">SALE 3</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">ONLINE EQUIPMENT-RV-VEHICLE AUCTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup><br/>at 8:00<sup>am</sup> CST to<br/>Tuesday, July 2<sup>nd</sup><br/>at 10:00<sup>am</sup> CST<br/>Estevan Motor Speedway<br/>Estevan, SK<br/>To Enter Auction<br/>Contact: 306-421-2097</p>  | <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red;">SALE 4</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">2024 ESTEVAN 4H REGIONAL SHOW &amp; SALE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thursday, July 4<sup>th</sup><br/>6:00<sup>am</sup> CST<br/>Show 9:00 am<br/>Awards 5:30 pm<br/>Steer Sale 6:00 pm<br/>Estevan Exhibition<br/>Fairgrounds<br/>Estevan, SK</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red;">SALE 5</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">FARM EQUIPMENT ONLINE AUCTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sunday, July 7<sup>th</sup><br/>at 8:00<sup>am</sup> CST to<br/>Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup><br/>at 10:00<sup>am</sup> CST<br/>Tim &amp; Charlaire Berday<br/>North Portal, SK</p>    | <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red;">SALE 6</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">FARM EQUIPMENT ONLINE AUCTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Friday, July 26<sup>th</sup><br/>at 9:00<sup>am</sup> CST to<br/>Tuesday, July 30<sup>th</sup><br/>at 10:00<sup>am</sup> CST<br/>Wayne &amp; Wendy McLaren<br/>Balcarres, SK<br/>Contact:<br/>Wayne 306-331-8112</p>    |



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# Weak grain and oilseed outlook to pressure harvest equipment sales

Coming off a strong 2023 the farm equipment market is set to take a breather this year. However, there will be pockets of strength, specifically 4WD tractors and corn headers. Demand for most harvest equipment will soften throughout the remainder of this year, due to elevated equipment prices, high interest rates, and tighter grain and oilseed profitability. This outlook highlights the harvest equipment sales opportunities and risks for primary producers, agricultural equipment dealers, manufacturers, and industry stakeholders.

### Key observations

- New combine sales are projected to decline 20% in 2024.
- New combine inventories are projected to be above the 5-year average.
- Used combines, headers and grain cart sales expected to soften, trending below the 5-year average.
- Used combine inventory continues to outpace demand, prices expected to be pressured.
- New 4WD tractor sales are projected to decline only 2% in 2024 but remain above the 5-year average.
- New and used 4WD inventory are projected to remain low until end of the year.

Combine market shifts to a buyers' market. New combine sales grew 4.9% last year due to continued improvements in supply chains, along with strong profitability in 2022. New combine sales are projected to decline 20% this year and drop below the 5-year average due in part to declining grain and oilseed revenue and the strong sales from the previous year (Figure 1).

The decline in new combine sales will lead to increased inventory levels that will be above the 5-year average. The used combine market was strong in 2022 as new orders were delayed from supply chain constraints following the pandemic. However, so far this year used combine sales have trended lower, inventories are increasing faster than demand and as a re-

sult it has now become a buyers' market (Figure 2). Prices of used combines are expected to moderate further, particularly in the higher-class categories (e.g., Class 8+).

### Complementary harvest equipment sales expected to slow

The number of combine header units sold increased last year with sales picking up in the July to October period, normally the busy season. However, as supply chains improved new models were delivered in 2023, resulting in multiple used models being traded for every new sale. We don't anticipate the combine header market to be as strong this year as used sales through March 2024 were below last year and the 5-year average, similar to what is being observed in the used combine market. The exception is corn header sales which have been strong year-to-date relative to 2023, and we expect this trend to continue throughout the remainder of this year. The strength in this market is being supported by several years of good yields and profitability in Eastern Canada.

The grain cart market is also expected to trend like the used combine and header market as sales year-to-date are below the five-year average. The grain cart market had a strong year in 2022 with sales slightly lower in 2023, due to the drought in Western Canada. A softening in grain cart sales is largely driven by slower combine sales and expectations of another year of drought in Western Canada.

### Strength in 4WD tractor market for now

High horsepower 4WD tractors are necessary to not only pull air drills but large grain carts as well. The 4WD tractor market is expected to stay strong with new sales expected to decline only -2% in 2024, after growing over 40% in 2023 (Figure 3). Market uncertainty and revenue pressures led to

low sales in 2019 and 2020. Farms are now looking to upgrade their aging 4WD tractors. So even with inventory levels expected to improve by the end of the year, sale volumes are expected to trend above the 5-year average.

Continued on Page C23

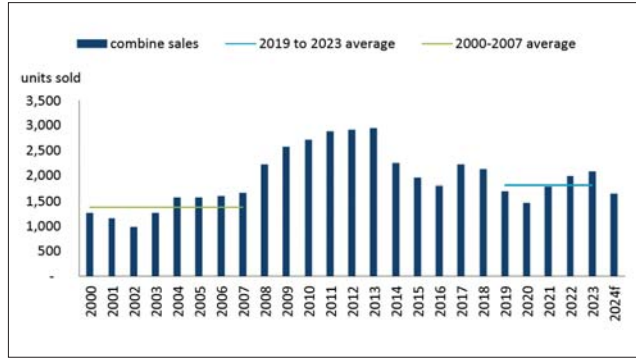


Figure 1: New combine sales will decline in 2024

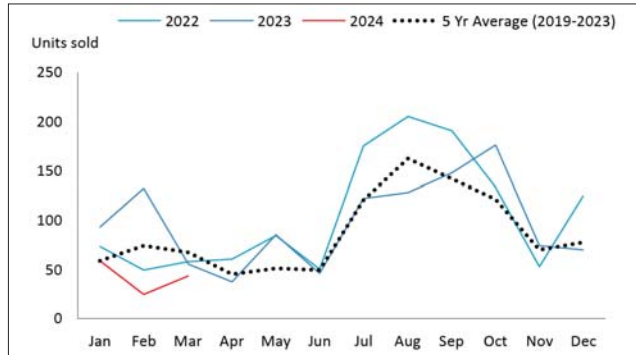


Figure 2: Used combine sales have trended lower and are expected to remain soft

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# Weak grain and oilseed outlook to pressure harvest equipment sales

Continued from Page C21

### Trends to monitor

- Canadian dollar and interest rates
- Drought impact on equipment demand

The value of the Canadian dollar and interest rates are two macro-economic variables that have a direct impact on the farm equipment market. An appreciation of the Canadian dollar would help to offset higher prices on new equipment imported from the U.S. However, the Canadian dollar has been pressured by U.S. dollar strength (due to the U.S. Federal Reserve's hawkishness), and the expectation is the latter should fade as the Fed cuts interest rates, allowing the Canadian currency to find some support later this year. FCC Economics expects the Bank of Canada to cut its overnight rate by 75 basis points this year with the first rate cut occurring in July. We're projecting the overnight rate to fall further in 2025 before stabilizing around 3%. In terms of fixed rates, we expect rates to continue de-

clining through the year as bond rates fall in synch with soft economic growth and declining inflation. Drought conditions in Canada particularly in the West continue to be on the radar for the 2024 crop. Depending on how moisture levels evolve over the coming weeks and months, demand for harvest equipment could be further impacted.

### Bottom line

As seeding is now underway, there is plenty on the radar that could influence the harvest equipment market. Drought concerns, rising farm equipment prices, elevated interest rates and tighter farm profitability have farms placing a greater emphasis on their per acre equipment costs reducing demand for equipment. While the harvest equipment market has turned to a buyers' market, there are pockets of strength and opportunities. Farms have an opportunity to work with all their partners including dealers, farm advisors, and financial institutions in finding the right piece of equipment that



Figure 2: New 4WD sales expected to remain strong

has the greatest profitability on a per acre basis. Farms have strong balance sheets navigating a lean year of farm profits and making equipment investments for long-term efficiency gains.

# Gov'ts of Canada and Saskatchewan invest \$5 million in Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute

On May 14, federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lawrence MacAulay and Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit announced \$5 million over five years for the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute (PAMI).

This funding, delivered over the five years of the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) agreement, will be used for project development, delivery, knowledge transfer and training, ensuring PAMI has the stability to continue to deliver its valuable services to the sector. "The Prairie Agricultural Machinery In-

stitute has a proud history of helping farmers adopt new technologies and practices," MacAulay said. "This funding will help them continue their great work, and ensure farmers remain on the cutting edge, so they can keep producing top-quality food for Canadians and folks around the world."

"PAMI provides a key service to the agricultural sector, as well as the transportation and mining sectors," Marit said. "Thanks to the work of organizations like PAMI, Saskatchewan is recognized internationally not only as a source of safe, reliable and sustainably produced food, but also

for some of the best tools in the world to grow it."

PAMI provides engineering solutions for the agricultural sector, working with large manufacturers, producers and the broader industry. Their work helps to further innovative research that supports Saskatchewan's strong agricultural industry and beyond.

"This increased funding will allow PAMI to keep doing what it does best, support the innovation and excellence of agriculture in Saskatchewan and beyond," PAMI President and CEO Paul Buczkowski said. "We are proud the Governments of Canada and

Saskatchewan have recognized the value of the work we do, and are grateful for this increased and extended funding, which helps ensure PAMI's continued success."

The Sustainable CAP is 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 that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.



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