



Combines standing ready, moments before taking off 221 tonnes of canola from 230 acres. That comes roughly to 41 bushels an acre.

Harvest of Hope grows 221 tonnes for those in need

BY VICTOR VAN DER MERWE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Anyone that has lived on the prairies for even a few months know just how important this time of year is to farmers. The effort and investment of the whole growing season comes down to a few weeks of harvest.

With a hint of dust in the air at harvest time, kicked up by combines across the area and overflowing grain trucks overflowing, it is hard not to be grateful and hard not to feel lucky to live in a place where the harvest has been good.

Not everyone in the world is this lucky. Kyle Penner and the volunteers that gathered together in a field north of Moosomin on Saturday, September 19, know this and that is why they took time away from their land to come and work the 230 acres set aside for the Moosomin Harvest of Hope.

All proceeds from the seventh annual Harvest of Hope will go to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to support their goal of ending global hunger.

"The Moosomin Harvest of Hope really represents what the Canadian Foodgrains Bank has always done, since its inception, which is largely around people in the Canadian prairies. They were able to be generous to those who do not have enough food in other parts of the world, to those that are struggling. That can sometimes be because of disaster, and sometimes it is the result of situations that are really difficult for families to overcome in developing nations. Now you have Canadian farmers' support and lots of other people and businesses that want to contribute to help end hunger," said Rick Block, Regional Representative for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Why the Canadian Foodgrains Bank?

Kyle Penner who is a project leader for the Harvest of Hope, feels that the Canadian Foodgrains Bank makes a real difference.

"The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a fantastic organization with a track record of wanting to help people. I've be-

come and stayed involved for three reasons. The first reason is that I have family involved in another Foodgrains Bank project in another part of the country and have seen other examples of what can be done when a community comes together. It's happening here too, with all of our private and corporate sponsors getting and staying behind the project. The second reason is recognizing the local impact we can have on a global scale.

"A few years ago a representative from Lebanon came to Moosomin to talk about what our fundraising was being used for at that time. We were helping feed something like 30,000 refugees per month who had been displaced from Syria due to the civil war. I think it's amazing that doing the things we are good at, like farming, and giving up a small portion of the plenty we have here in Canada, we can help make that kind of an impact on the other side of the world," said Penner.

His third reason has to do with the multiplication provided through the partnership of the Foodgrains Bank and the federal government. "Where else can you get your investment of time, energy, and resources leveraged up to 4:1. It's an amazing charity with good connections that makes a real difference," said Penner.

Within three hours, the combine harvesters produced 221 tonnes of canola. That comes roughly to 41 bushels an acre.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank has about 220 growing and community projects each year. Last year, together they raised \$6.5 million. In Saskatchewan alone, there are 24 growing projects and 23 in Manitoba this year.

The Moosomin Harvest of Hope has raised almost \$360,000 since it started back 2013.

Conservation Agriculture

The Foodgrains Bank is not just providing emergency food assistance to those who need it, Block talks of helping local farmers in other parts of the world get the most out of their own piece of land and how to grow more and better food.

"There is a program called Scaling up Conservation Agriculture in east Africa that, as of last year, have trained now over 65,000 families within the whole network and region. There's lots of smaller partner organizations that are helping to extend that training and in a nutshell, farmers in Saskatchewan and across the prairies really get it, because we transitioned from a traditional heavy tillage system which is where you grew a crop one year and then you just had summer fallow another year and you were just always tilling your land and losing carbon and losing organic matter. We were "mining the soil." Nowadays with continuous cropping, which does require inputs and being very astute in terms of the soil fertility, you are protecting the soil and you are cycling nutrients more fully in the system. That whole idea is modified and adapted to the context of a small holder farms in Africa, but the idea is similar. Instead of heavy mechanical tilling or even if you are using hand tools, instead of turning your soil so much it is really trying to minimize the amount of soil that is disturbed. The idea is keeping a mulch over your soil, and in the tropics trying to keep the soils cooler is actually a benefit, and that requires rotating crops as well. With that kind of (tilling) system, if you grew the same crop year after year, you would come into too many issues with disease and pests, so it requires this idea of crop rotation. Which dovetails well into the importance of understanding nutrition," said Block.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is committed to ending global hunger, and part of that commitment is nutrition education.

"Sometimes the talk of helping to end hunger boils down to just growing more food. We sometimes say in many parts of the world the answer is not just eating more corn. In some ways it is energy but it doesn't have the nutritive value that healthy bodies require. We (Canadians) are privileged to have a plethora of food. So the emphasis is on not just more food, but also better food, more nutrient dense food and crop rotation is really kind of helped offer that kind of opportunity" said Block.

Continued on page 24 ^{EST}

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It was a busy day on the Hanlin farm near Whitewood when the sheep were sheared. The Hanlin's raise about 175 sheep on their farm.



Delaney Hanlin (10) packs wool into wool bags during a busy sheep shearing day at the Hanlin farm near Whitewood.

Sheering sheep on the Hanlin farm

BY DONNA BEUTLER

When it comes to sheep, Tim and Jen Hanlin of the Whitewood area have been in the business for the past 13 years.

"We bought our first 15 ewes 13 years ago," Jen told the Moosomin World Spectator in a recent interview. "Our flock numbers have gone up and down over the years," she added, saying that they have had as many as 275 but presently have 175.

The Hanlins are busy both on and off the farm and raising four children, Tristan 19, Sam 14, Sydney 12 and Delaney 10. Both Jen and Tim work off the farm as well with Jen working part time for PIC as well as running a professional photography business. Tim works in the oilfield and also runs his own farrier business. The Hanlin family also raise livestock guardian dogs.

Jen told the Spectator their planned shearing day ear-

lier this year didn't materialize until August but with the whole family working together, along with sheep shearer Cliff Metheral, the job got done and Jen, a professional photographer, was able to have her camera on hand to get a few pictures of the crew on hand, including Sue, the dog.

The Hanlins are very dependent upon their Collie who is used, as Jen says, "for everything." Sue gathers and sorts in the pens and makes the Hanlins' lives so much easier.

The night before shearing, the Hanlins are busy setting up for the next day. The ewes are pulled off pasture so their tummies are empty for shearing day.

Shearing day happens once a year at the Hanlin farm and the wool is shipped off. The cost of shearing is covered by what they get when they sell their wool.

"We average about 1.6 lambs per ewe by weaning

time," Jen explained of the sheep. "They can be very productive and can wear more than an ewe's own body weight in lambs." In comparison to cattle, they can run about six ewes to one cow.

Jen says one of the things she likes about raising sheep and working with sheep is that she doesn't have to worry about the kids getting hurt when helping (as compared to large livestock like cattle). This was especially important to the Hanlins when their children were younger.

It is important to shear the sheep because without the regular shearing of their wool from their bodies, a sheep's ability to regulate their body temperatures is impeded.

As for the downside to sheep-raising, Jen lists predators and fencing as the top challenges.

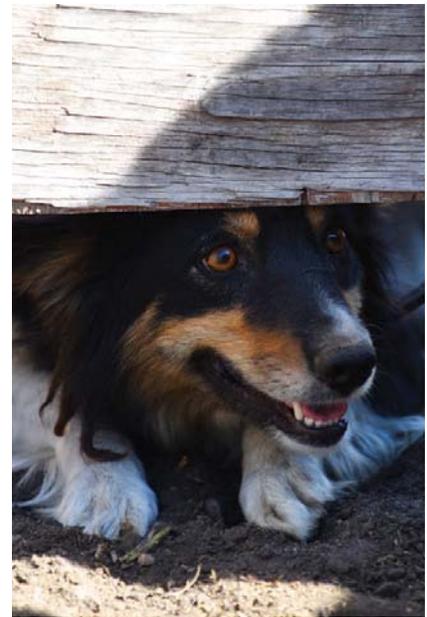
With shearing done for this year, the Hanlins will gear up for next year's lambing season and next year's shearing day!



Cliff Metheral shears sheep on the Jen and Tim Hanlin farm. Though the Hanlin's and their children all help during sheep shearing day, they hire a sheep shearer to help out for the day.



Cliff Metheral shears sheep at the Tim and Jen Hanlin farm on an August 2020 sheep shearing day. Jen and Tim are assisted by their children as well as Cliff during the annual event.



Sue, the working Collie, watches intently during sheep shearing time on the Jen and Tim Hanlin farm near Whitewood. Her owners say she is invaluable as she gathers and sorts in the pens and helps make their lives so much easier.

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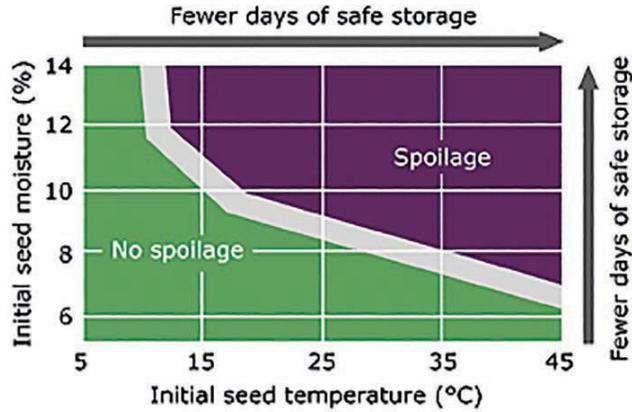
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Spoilage brought on by these risk factors can lead to a bin of heated canola, as shown here.



This table from the Canadian Grain Commission provides a rough guideline of the canola temperature and moisture levels needed for safe long-term storage.

High moisture is the top canola storage risk for 2020

BY ANGELA BRACKENREED

All canola should be conditioned immediately after combining to cool it down, even out the temperature throughout the bin and remove any moisture released through natural seed respiration that occurs in the first hours to weeks after harvest.

In some cases, canola will need some extra care to make it safe for long-term storage. A Canola Watch Twitter poll in mid-September asked farmers, "Which risk are you most concerned about for your binned (or soon to be binned) canola?" Forty-five per cent of respondents chose "Nothing major so far," which is good, but 38 per cent said moisture, 10 per cent said green seed and seven per cent said dockage. This article describes each of these risks.

Moisture. The ideal moisture is eight per cent, but growers should consider moisture and temperature together. For example, eight per cent moisture is still too high if the grain temperature is 25°C or more, and 10 per cent is probably low enough if the grain temperature is cooled to 5°C degrees or less.

Moisture creates a more hospitable environment for moulds that trigger heating. Clumping is a sign of mould growth. This can occur fairly quickly. Lab-based research found that canola seeds at 25°C and 10.6 per cent moisture clumped together after 11 days and visible mould colonies appeared after 21 days. With variable conditions in most bins, clumping may occur more quickly in an on-farm situation.

Green canola. Green canola seeds can increase the storage risk, even if canola is dry and cool. Monitor closely. Small shriveled canola seed, which often comes with high green seed, can mean smaller air pockets between seeds in the bin. Smaller particles will increase the resistance to air flow. This makes it even more important to leave the fan on as it will need to work longer to cool the entire bulk.

Dockage—weed seeds. Weed seeds tend to contain more moisture than canola seeds, especially if they are green or immature. These high-moisture seeds may not be enough to elevate overall grain moisture tests, but if they congregate in pockets in the bin they can create a localized hot spot for spoilage to begin. Bits of green plant material in the sample similarly increase the risk.

Dockage—chaff. Without a spreader in the bin, chaff

tends to concentrate closer to the walls of the bin and fines closer to the centre of the bin. This distribution exaggerates airflow problems, with more air taking the path of least resistance up along the walls of the bin and less pushing through the central core. Chaff can also have higher moisture than seed, adding to the risk. That is why concentrated areas of chaff could be a start point for spoilage, even in a bin where the seeds test dry.

Dockage—insects. In some years, the canola harvest sample can include a lot of grasshoppers, crickets, cabbage seedpod weevils and even flea beetles. Vincent Hervet, stored product entomologist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, says insect species that come from the field are not a problem with regard to feeding on canola in the bin. However, he says that if the grain has a lot of dead insects coming from the field, the grain should be conditioned (even dried, if necessary) to prevent the development of mould. Hervet adds that canola is not a hospitable environment for most storage insects. Often insects found in canola storage are those that were in the bin prior to loading from previous cereals or other decaying material, but they generally are unable to survive in a canola bin. If bins are treated this fall with malathion to remove any previously-existing storage insects, note that those bins cannot be used for canola.

Hot canola. This may not be a big concern this year, but canola binned hot, even if it has low moisture, low dockage and low green, should be put on aeration to cool it down. This will even out the temperature throughout the bin, and help remove some of the moisture from respiring seed. Even at low moisture, air movements within the bin could concentrate this moisture. Try to get canola down to below 15°C at harvest time, then turn that fans on again in the early winter to bring it down even lower. Don't be afraid to freeze a bulk during periods of cold winter weather.

Farmers can find more information in the storage chapter at canolaencyclopedia.ca and under the harvest and storage tab at canolawatch.org. If canola needs to be dried, look for the Canola Watch article called "Tips for drying tough or damp canola".

Angela Brackenreed is an agronomy specialist with the Canola Council of Canada.

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Grain growers say ag concerns not addressed in Throne Speech

Following Wednesday's Speech from the Throne, the Grain Growers of Canada (GGC) said they are disappointed that many of the pressing needs for Canada's agriculture industry were left unaddressed by the federal government.

Earlier this week, the Grain Growers launched its own Speech from the Combine, outlining six priority areas for Canada's agriculture sector that require immediate attention, in the hopes that this messaging would be reflected in the throne speech. These areas included: Business Risk Management programs; agricultural science and innovation; crop health; trade access; carbon tax exemptions; and cellular service and connectivity in rural areas. "Our goal with the Speech from the Combine was to provide the government with clear and specific directives for what our industry needs right now to drive an economic recovery and benefit all Canadians," Nielsen explained.

"We are disappointed that so little attention was paid to addressing the challenges facing our sector."

During the Speech from the Throne, it was stated that, "[the] Government will recognize farmers, foresters, and ranchers, as key partners in fight against climate change, supporting efforts to reduce emissions and build resilience."

GGC said it is pleased with this statement as the organization has consistently shared with the government that farmers wish to be part of the solution.

Unfortunately, the Grain Growers said this sentiment has not been reflected in the recent conversations that the group has had with the government.

"From consultations on carbon offset protocols to the criteria for the proposed



Clean Fuel Standard, we have not felt that our perspective has been acknowledged," said Nielsen.

"We hope that today's message sets a new tone going forward as we are more than willing to step up and play a role in addressing climate change."

Going forward, GGC will work closely with federal and provincial agriculture ministers to ensure that Canada's agriculture industry remains top of mind, Nielsen added.

"Although we are disappointed today, we will continue to do what we always do - advocate for Canadian farmers."

One bright spot was the indication by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that 'improving rural connectivity' will be a priority for this session of parliament.

"COVID-19 has highlighted more than ever how critically rural areas need improved cellular wireless, internet connectivity, and broadband access," Nielsen said.

"The cutting-edge tools available in today's agriculture world, which help us reduce inputs and produce more crops on less land, are only as good as the connection they have."

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Harvest is not always picturesque! Sometimes it's about work. Brothers-in-law Glen Hainsworth and Dale Turton are bonding over why the chopper isn't working at 100%. Photo submitted by Jocelyn Hainsworth northwest of Redvers, SK

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Above: Photo by Jenna Toth. Jeff Toth is driving the combine.
Below: Photo taken at the Ivey farm near Moosomin



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Above: Randy, Sarah and Dylan looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow on the Bruce family farm near Moosomin. Submitted by Dale Woods
Below: Photo submitted by Kerstin Fouillard from St. Lazare, MB



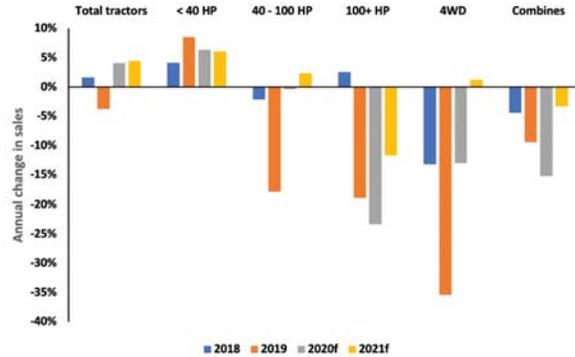
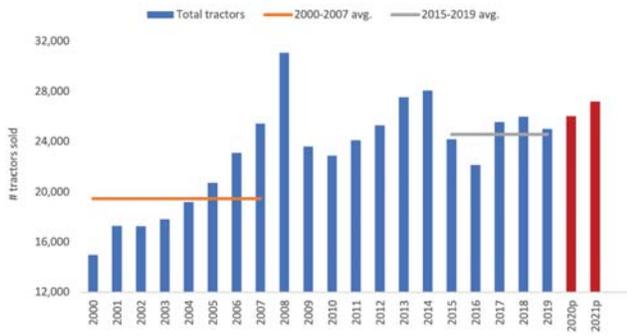
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Farm income key driver of equipment sales

Investments in farm equipment, buildings and land are essential to sustain an operation's productivity.

And new farm equipment sales provide a strong indicator of the health of Canadian agriculture.

Over the past few years, market uncertainty and revenue pressures have reduced profitability in the agriculture sector, resulting in lower agricultural equipment purchases.

Future sales rest on the ability for the ag sector to rebound.

Trends in Canadian farm equipment

Through the first six months of 2020, COVID-19 has created significant headwinds for the Canadian economy and agri-food supply chain.

Despite these challenges, year-to-date (as of July 31) total farm equipment sales have increased 4.8% in 2020 compared to 2019, according to the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (graph above on right).

Breaking down the equipment type provides a different picture.

Tractors sales less than 40 HP or utility tractors have increased, while equipment

primarily used on agriculture operations have declined or remained flat.

Utility tractor sales, representing nearly 70% of total tractor sales have increased by 12.3% year-to-date in 2020.

The health of the Canadian economy generally drives this market segment.

Tractors 40 to 100 HP sales have remained unchanged, and 100+ HP has declined 21.1%.

Large four-wheel-drive tractors and combine sales have declined 12.4% and 16.8% respectively year-to-date.

Farm equipment sales surged in July 2020 relative to 2019, as the economy continues to re-open after the COVID-19 lockdown, and farmers took delivery of their new equipment.

With farm revenues expected to tighten, producers should change their buying behaviour, either keeping equipment longer or exploring the used equipment market.

Farm revenues expected to soften in 2020

Our 2020 forecast of farm cash receipts suggests a 3.4% decline, the largest year-over-year decline since 2003. However, the impact across sectors varies with livestock

sectors hit the hardest from disruptions to processing facilities and lower prices.

Grain and oilseed revenues are expected to improve with higher producer deliveries and record grain movement.

According to Statistics Canada, current crop conditions are also supportive of farm revenue with an expected production of 96.8 million tonnes.

Trends to watch for in 2020 and into 2021

Canadian dollar

The Canadian dollar has gained value against the USD since it reached a low of US\$0.69 in March 2020. We believe the loonie has limited upside at the current levels, yet it's possible it could trend sideways in the CAD\$0.75-\$0.76 range for the remainder of 2020. The higher loonie softens inflationary pressures on equipment but can introduce pressures on farm income.

Interest rates

COVID-19 has significantly changed the outlook for interest rates. We expect interest rates to stay at historically low levels

into 2021.

This low-interest rate environment may increase producers' incentives to revisit their equipment replacement plans and financing needs.

Trade landscape with the U.S.

The implementation of CUSMA solidifies the trade relationship with the U.S.

On August 16, 2020, a 10% tariff on Canadian aluminum exported to the U.S. took effect.

We expect these tariffs to have minimal impact on farm equipment sales since most farm equipment uses little aluminum in manufacturing.

Steel tariffs that were removed in May 2019 were not re-enacted.

Farm equipment sales are an important indicator of overall farm health.

While overall tractor sales often mask equipment trends primarily used for agriculture, tighter profitability in Canadian agriculture and market uncertainty has decreased demand for larger HP tractors and combines. I

Improvements in farm cash receipts and lower interest rates are expected to support improved equipment sales in 2021.

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October will be Agriculture Month in Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan has proclaimed October as Agriculture Month in Saskatchewan. Agriculture Month is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of the agriculture industry to our province and to increase consumer understanding of and trust in modern food production.

Everyone is encouraged to celebrate by exploring their connection to food and food production through the theme, "#CelebrateAg."

"We recognize the hard work and dedication of Saskatchewan producers," Agriculture Minister David Marit said.

"Saskatchewan producers are known worldwide for their ability to produce high-quality, safe food and this month we celebrate their contributions to our province."

Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan is once again collaborating with Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan and industry partners throughout Agriculture Month to share food stories and encourage the public to learn about modern agriculture.

"We are fortunate to live in a province that's rich in a food and farming culture," Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan Executive Director Clinton Monchuk said. "Each year, we're excited to celebrate everything agriculture during the month of October."

ensuring the sustainability of our industry," Marit said. "Saskatchewan's biotech sector has been at the forefront of ensuring our producers have the innovative technologies and agronomic practices they require to feed a growing population."

Saskatchewan is considered a biotechnology leader, with roughly one-third of Canada's agricultural biotechnology sector calling the province home.

Biotech Week, first proclaimed in Canada in 2003, celebrates the work of these researchers and raises awareness of the role the sector plays in agriculture and the life sciences.

Biotech Week in Saskatchewan coincides each year with Global Biotech Week.

"Global Biotech Week is an opportunity to celebrate Saskatchewan's bioscience sector," Ag-West Bio President and CEO Karen Churchill said. "Saskatchewan organizations are involved in sustainable crop development, creating products that use enzymes to replace harsh chemicals, producing nutraceuticals and healthy foods, environmental remediation using microbes, and of course vaccine development. We should all be very proud of the accomplishments of our local scientists and entrepreneurs."

The Government of Saskatchewan supports agri-

cultural innovation through a variety of research-focused programs and initiatives. This includes a \$32.9 million commitment to agricultural research for the 2020-21 fiscal year. Ag-West Bio is coordinating activities across the province to mark the week that will be held virtually this year.

Next week is Animal Health Week

Agriculture Minister David Marit proclaimed October 4 to 10, 2020, as Animal Health Week in Saskatchewan.

This year's national theme, Understanding Zoonotic Diseases, reminds animal owners of the importance of relationships with their veterinary team in protecting their family and animals from disease. Animal Health Week recognizes the high level of care Saskatchewan ranchers provide and the important vet-client relationships that guide animal care decisions.

"Animal Health Week is an important reminder for all animal owners about the importance of animal care," Marit said. "Animal health is a key element of any successful operation and our producers follow best practices to provide a high level of care for their animals."

Animal Health Week has been celebrated across

Canada for more than 30 years and is proclaimed nationally by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). The week is supported in Saskatchewan by the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association (SVMA). This year, the CVMA is using the week's theme to encourage animal

owners to have regular contact with their veterinarian regarding animal health and vaccination.

"The SVMA is proud to support Animal Health Week and the spotlight it sheds on the importance of veterinary care; specifically, how that interaction affects humans," SVMA President

Nick Hawkins said. "The impact of zoonotic diseases from livestock to wildlife to pets can be wide-ranging and your veterinary care team is there to help ensure the safety of humans and animals alike."



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12	Monday	No Butcher Sale Receive Feeders Presort	10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
14	FULL	Presort Angus Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
15	Thursday	Sheep/Goat Sale	12 Noon
19	Monday	Butcher Sale	9 a.m.
21	FULL	Presort Charolais Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
26	Monday	Butcher Sale	9 a.m.
28	Wednesday	Presort Angus Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
30	Friday	Special Yearling & Feeder Sale	9 a.m.

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4	Wednesday	Presort Charolais Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
9	Monday	Butcher Sale	9 a.m.
11	Wednesday	Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
16	Monday	Butcher Sale	9 a.m.
18	Wednesday	Presort Angus Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
20	Friday	Bred Cow Sale	11:30 a.m.
23	Monday	Butcher Sale	9 a.m.
25	Wednesday	Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
27	Friday	Bred Cow Sale	11:30 a.m.
30	Monday	Butcher Sale	9 a.m.

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Farmland values influenced by many factors

For most farms, farmland is the biggest asset, and in recent decades, land values have appreciated steadily, making it a great investment. In many cases, the increase has contributed more wealth to the farm than the income derived from the production.

Beginning farmers wonder how they'll ever be able to afford to buy land. Retiring farmers wrestle with how to transition the farm to the next generation when so much value is in the land base. Everyone wishes they could know what farmland values will do in the future.

The annual FCC Farmland Values Report tracks and highlights average changes in cultivated farmland values – regionally, provincially and nationally. Using a system based on benchmark farm properties across the country, it provides important information to help producers manage risk and make informed business decisions.

Over the past decade, the biggest increases in the national value of farmland came in 2011 to 2014, at over 14% in each of those years. In 2013, the increase was more than 22%.

Since 2015, national increases have been more modest with 2019 pegged at 5.2%. However, the FCC Farmland Values Report recorded a great deal of variability across the country. While Alberta had a 3.3% increase in 2019, Prince Edward Island's farmland prices increased by 22.6%.

The variation in prices within a specific region can be huge. For instance, in B.C.'s Okanagan region, 2019 farmland prices ranged from a low of \$9,500 to a high of \$163,800 an acre. The value range represents 90% of the sales in each region and excludes the top and bottom 5%.

Price variation within a region comes from different use options and suitability, parcel size, quality and location. The FCC report highlights the factors affecting prices in each region.

Supply and demand

Land values follow the laws of supply and demand. A shortage of available land in a region (low supply) and many farmers interested in buying land (high demand) are factors contributing to higher prices.

Since farmland prices in almost all regions of the country have steadily increased for many years, there is sometimes an assumption that land prices will never decline. However, land prices fell in many regions from the early 1980s to the early 1990s due to low farm gate returns and record-high interest rates.

Interest rates

Interest rates have hovered near record lows since 2010. Low interest rates favour increased farmland values.

With low interest rates, mortgage payments are more affordable, allowing buyers to pay a higher land price as long as they have the down payment and can demonstrate repayment ability.

Low interest rates also make land an appealing investment compared to investment bonds or GICs (Guaranteed Investment Certificates).

Outside investor influence

Non-farmer investors influence land prices, particularly in scenarios where they anticipate a strong return on investment. However, in most land markets, the main factor is competition from farmers looking to expand their operations.

When investors own a significant amount of land in

a region, they can impact the land rental market. Local producers usually end up farming the land even though they don't own it.

Relationship between prices, rental rates and farm income

Land prices and cash rents for land are both influenced by the farm revenue generated from that land. However, prices and cash rents can sometimes move in opposite directions, and the relationship between the two can be very different in different regions.

Consider land that's selling for \$3,000 an acre and is cash renting for \$100 an acre. The rent provides an annual return of 3.3% before the payment of property taxes.

Now consider land with a value of \$10,000 an acre with a cash rent of \$200. That's an annual return of just 2% before property taxes.

For an investor, the annual return is more attractive on the lower-priced land in this example. Of course, an investor would also consider which property has the most significant opportunity to increase in value.

The bottom line is that land prices, cash rents and farm revenue will tend to move together over time. But there are periods when one of these variables may not match the pattern of the other two. Market adjustments can take time, and past relationships in these variables can evolve based on the outlook of the farm economy.

The productive value of land

You'll sometimes hear someone proclaim, "That land is so expensive that it will never pay for itself." The net farm revenue you can derive from a parcel of land may not make the mortgage payment on its own. Revenue from other land or off-farm revenue can be required to afford that new parcel of land.

Does that make buying land a bad deal? There are two revenue considerations with land – the revenue from what you produce on the land and the wealth generation if the value of land continues to appreciate.

As a farmer, you can be cash poor while being asset rich. Revenue and cash flow can be a struggle while your net worth continues to increase courtesy of the land you own.

When is farmland overpriced?

To determine if land is becoming more expensive in relation to the income it generates, a price-to-revenue ratio is often used. Analysts take the average farmland price per acre in a region and divide that by the average expected receipts per acre.

To calculate the expected receipts, a standard crop rotation is assumed, and the average crop prices and average expected yields are used.

There's no "ideal" value for the ratio as the mix of crops, the region and the outlook for crop revenues all influence. According to FCC analysis, the price-to-revenue ratio has been rising since 2014 and is now above its historical average. That means affordability has been declining relative to farm income, and that land is expensive from a historical standpoint. But this is not necessarily indicative of future land price declines. The higher ratio can be sustainable if buyers and sellers believe in stronger future growth in farm revenues, continued low interest rates, etc.

Making land purchase decisions

While passion is commendable, it's unwise to let emotion govern farmland purchase decisions.

If you're a field crop producer, you need access to fields, and you can either rent the land or own it. Most producers have a combination of both.

Farmland has always appeared too expensive, but waiting for prices to drop has been an unsuccessful strategy for many decades.

Farmland often carries an emotional attachment, particularly if it's land that has been in the family for many years. While passion is commendable, it's unwise to let emotion govern farmland purchase decisions. Be clear on your short and long-term goals and objectives and crunch the numbers for a detailed financial analysis.



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Balance Sheet of Canadian Agriculture weakening

Canadian agriculture has faced strong headwinds in 2020 created by COVID-19.

Assessing the strength of Canadian farms' financial position at the beginning of the year is crucial to understand how farms will be able to weather current challenges. 2019 was not without its challenges, from inclement weather and trade disruptions, to weak commodity prices and higher input costs negatively impacting Canadian agriculture.

The 2019 Balance Sheet of Agriculture reveals Canadian agriculture weakened but remains healthy and well-positioned to face the current challenges in the operating environment.

Current ratio of Canadian agriculture softening

Working capital, also called the current ratio, is an important measure of an operation's overall health. It measures the ability of an enterprise to cover its short-term (current) liability with current assets (i.e. its liquidity).

In 2019, the current ratio of Canadian agriculture declined to 2.20. It was the lowest level since 2006 (2.11), but well above a 20 year low of 1.93 in 2003. Liquidity positions of farms tightened across all provinces except for PEI and Nova Scotia.

Generally, a current ratio above 1.5 is considered healthy.

More specifically, a healthy current ratio depends on the type of operation and payment frequency.

For instance, we expect a grains and oilseeds farm with a single harvest per year to have a higher current ratio than a dairy farm that produces milk throughout the year.

Although the current ratio for Canadian agriculture declined, its aggregate level remains healthy.

Current liabilities increasing faster than assets

The current assets of Canadian farms stayed stable, decreasing by only 0.2% in 2019.

This stagnation is due to a 1.5% decline in inventories stemming from a 9% decline in the value of oilseeds and an estimated 3 million acres left unharvested.

Current liabilities grew nearly 5% in 2019 from tighter cash flow and higher input costs, which has increased the

demand for short-term financing for production inputs.

Cash is king. Producers need to continue to monitor their balance sheets and ensure that they have sufficient cash available to deal with liquidity challenges.

The 2019 balance sheet of Canadian agriculture reveals the industry's financial health prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ability to cover short-term liabilities with cash or liquid assets declined in 2019, which suggests a weaker first line of defence for farms facing financial challenges.

The balance sheet's overall strength is also measured by the degree of financial leverage in the industry.

The debt-to-equity or leverage ratio measures the total amount of debt in Canadian agriculture relative to total equity.

This equation is important because it measures how much of the operation is financed by creditors compared to the farm. It also assesses an operation's ability to access capital and address operating environment challenges.

Debt-to-equity in Canadian agriculture weaker

In 2019, farm debt increased by 8.4% to \$109.2 billion, while farm equity increased \$18.7 billion or 3.6% to \$546 billion. As a result, the debt-to-equity position increased to 0.2, implying that 16.7% of assets in Canadian agriculture is debt-financed.

Operations expanding or making investments often find themselves with a ratio larger than this on their bal-

ance sheet.

The nature of the investments also results in differences across sectors. Portfolio data from FCC reveals that the median grain and oilseed farm operation had a leverage ratio of around 0.8 in 2019. The median debt-to-equity ratio was about 1.1 for poultry operations.

This is the fifth year in the row that the debt-to-equity ratio is trending higher, and it's the weakest the ratio has been since 2010. Despite the higher leverage, Canadian agriculture remains in a strong position to weather potential challenges in 2020 as farm equity is five times larger than the debt.

What we expect moving forward

The debt-to-equity of Canadian agriculture is expected to soften further in 2020. Lower livestock prices, labour challenges and demand disruptions are expected to result in weaker farm revenues and higher operating costs.

As a result, the demand for operating debt will remain strong.

Conversely, lower farm revenues are expected to slow the appreciation in farmland values and overall farm equity. FCC will release its mid-year farmland value assessment in mid-September – so stay tuned.

Overall, Canadian farm operations have access to the financing they require to weather current industry disruptions. Work with your lender and accountant to determine the suggested ratios for your specific industry and be sure to understand them according to the strategy and risks facing your operation.

Dawn Nagy, CAIB

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Harvest wrapping up across the region

A year ago, harvest was only 39 per cent complete due to wet conditions

Harvest is wrapping up across the region, and is much farther ahead than at this point last year, when wet conditions were delaying harvest.

According to Saskatchewan's weekly crop report, Seventy-seven per cent of the 2020 crop was in the bin, which is up from 62 per cent last week, and remains well ahead of the five-year (2015-2019) average of 59 per cent for this time of year. An additional 18 per cent of the crop is swathed or ready to straight-cut.

A year ago, on September 23, 2019, only 39 per cent of the crop was harvested.

Harvest is most advanced in the southwest region, where 96 per cent of the crop is now combined. The southeast region has 89 per cent combined and the west-central 78 per cent. The east-central region has 69 per cent combined, the northeast 51 per cent and the northwest 43 per cent.

Ninety-nine per cent of lentils, 98 per cent of field peas, 95 per cent of durum, 86 per cent of barley, 77 per cent of chickpeas, 74 per cent of spring wheat, 71 per cent of oats, 61 per cent of canola and 52 per cent of flax has been combined. An additional 35 per cent of canola is swathed or ready to straight-cut.

Provincial cropland topsoil moisture is rated as 37 per cent adequate, 39 per cent short and 24 per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as 27 per cent adequate, 38 per cent short and 35 per cent very short. These conditions have slightly improved this week in areas thanks to the recent rain.

The majority of crop damage last week was due to wind, frost, waterfowl, wildlife and lack of moisture. Heavy rain

in some areas has resulted in lodging of crops.

Pasture conditions are rated as two per cent excellent, 16 per cent good, 32 per cent fair, 33 per cent poor and 17 per cent very poor. Conditions vary across the province, with the northern regions rating most of the pastures as in fair-to-good condition and the southern regions having more pastures rated as very poor-to-fair condition.

89 per cent done in southeast

Eighty-nine per cent of the crop is now in the bin in southeast Saskatchewan, up from 77 per cent last week and remaining ahead of the five-year (2015-2019) average of 72 per cent for this time of year. An additional six per cent of the crop is swathed or ready to straight-cut.

There was very little rainfall in the region again last week. The Tantalion area received the highest amount of rain with nine mm. The Vibank area and area north of Weyburn received five mm, the Marquis area four mm, the Grenfell and Briercrest areas three mm, the Broadview

area two mm and the Redvers area one mm. The Tantalion area received the most precipitation in the region since April 1 with 337 mm.

Minimal rain has further depleted topsoil moisture conditions. Cropland topsoil moisture is rated as 14 per cent adequate, 51 per cent short and 35 per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as five per cent adequate, 49 per cent short and 46 per cent very short. Farmers need rain to help improve moisture reserves for next spring.

The majority of crop damage this past week was due to wind, frost and lack of moisture. There was also damage caused by wildlife and wildfowl. Most crops have avoided damage due to frost, but some of the later maturing crops such as corn and soybeans have seen some damage.

Pasture conditions are rated as two per cent good, 35 per cent fair, 43 per cent poor and 20 per cent very poor. Rainfall continued to be minimal in the region in later summer, which has resulted in dry pastures with little growth.

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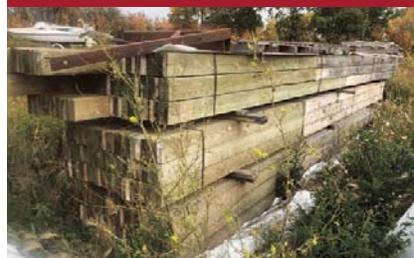


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CBRC commits \$2.7M to USask CDC barley breeding activities

The Canadian Barley Research Coalition (CBRC) announced it will invest \$2.7 million over five years in the University of Saskatchewan's Crop Development Centre (CDC) through a core breeding agreement to develop barley varieties with improved agronomics, disease resistance and end-use quality.

The CBRC is a collaboration among the Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission (SaskBarley), Alberta Barley and Manitoba Crop Alliance (formerly the Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association).

"The agreement with the CDC ensures that western Canadian barley farmers can expect new and improved barley varieties from a world-class, multi-million dollar breeding program over the next five years," says CBRC Interim Chair Jason Skotheim and SaskBarley Chair.

"This investment into the CDC breeding program will produce deliverables that will allow our farmers to stay competitive," Skotheim says. "The last round of producer funding provided to the CDC saw the registration of two new malting varieties, one feed variety and one hullless variety. In the next five years we expect another three varieties to be released. This will have major benefits to our farmers."

The CDC, which is known for research excellence in developing high-performing crop varieties, is uniquely set up to deliver effective results for western Canadian agriculture. The new agreement will enable the program to expand and capitalize on new opportunities.



Crop Development Centre barley breeder Aaron Beattie.

ing lines," Skotheim says. "This CBRC funding will support these pillars moving forward."

Investment in CDC plant breeding activities has helped create new markets and opportunities for a wide variety of crop producers, said CDC barley breeder Aaron Beattie.

"We are very pleased with the long-term funding from the CBRC and appreciate the confidence they have in our program," he says. "We look forward to continuing to deliver improved varieties to the Canadian barley industry and providing value to all within the value chain."

Finalizing this agreement with the CDC was the first order of business for the CBRC, officially formed earlier this year, and is in line with the organization's goal of facilitating long-term investments aimed at improving profitability and competitiveness for western Canadian barley farmers.

The organization will also provide funding for qualifying regional projects that align with variety development and agronomic priorities.

"The keys to past success within the CDC barley breeding program have been the skilled staff, the in-house malt and molecular marker labs and the ability to evaluate large numbers of breed-

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Above: Photo submitted by Alina Zander, taken by Sinclair, MB

Below left: Andrew Lonseth took this photo while helping out at Hutch Farms

Below: Elize Steyn submitted this photo of harvest in the RM of Silverwood



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Above: Photo by Jenna Toth by Stockholm, SK

These photos were submitted in the World-Spectator's Harvest Photo Contest
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Left: Bodyn Hintz with Uncle Kirk west of Wapella

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Above: Photo submitted by Alina Zander, taken by Sinclair, MB



Above: Photo submitted by Amber Hintz



Above: Joshua Deramas took this photo with a drone at Hutch Farms in the Rocanville area.



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Canadian Foodgrains Bank has a new Executive Director

BY VICTOR VAN DER MERWE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Andy Harrington is the new Executive Director of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. He has taken over from Jim Cornelius, who held the post since February 1, 1997. Cornelius is still with the Foodgrains Bank in an advisory capacity.

Harrington was previously the CEO of Wellspring Foundation for Education before being approached by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

"I've known about the Canadian Foodgrains Bank work for many years. I've been in the same sector, the development sector. I have headed up an organization that was very engaged in systemic change in education in east Africa. As part of that, we worked in the whole educational ecosystem, so that would include what happens in the local communities that were often very poor so we were very engaged at times in food security issues. So, I worked within the same sector as the Foodgrains Bank and was very aware of them. I was approached last year, and asked to consider putting my name forward. I didn't feel it was right at the time for a whole bunch of reasons but was then approached again six months ago and at that stage I felt perhaps it is something to look at, and the rest is history. I loved the work of Foodgrains and I am very committed to ending global hunger," said Harrington.

Make a Difference

Along with his commitment to ending global hunger, Harrington brings decades of leadership experience to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

"I've been in leadership in non-profit now for 30 years. Before Wellspring, I was engaged in an organization called Youth Unlimited, and worked across the world. I worked in places like Rwanda and in Croatia and Bosnia during the war there in refugee camps and before that in the UK. I have always worked with the marginalized. My work has always been with those who do not have access to the resources that some of us had, or who have not had the agency to make change in their lives. That has been the case since I left university. I got my degree in international relations and directly went into work with marginalized youth and have been leading in non-profit for 30 years. I have always wanted to make sure that what I did made a difference in the lives of other people and made their lives better. That has always been a driving force for me and my whole family," said Harrington.

Harrington has seen some devastating conditions, and uses this to drive home his commitment to change.

"We lived in the war zone in Bosnia and Croatia for a couple of years and I also worked a lot in Africa and I got to see the utmost in poverty and the worst, most marginal situations that human beings can be in and it made a huge impact on me, gave me the desire to see 'Why can't things be different?' I found that there is an awful lot of people that feel the same way and when we come together to collaborate, we can make a change," said Harrington.

First days at Foodgrains Bank

When Harrington came on board with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, it was during a very strange and challenging time.

"I show up for my first day in the middle of a major crisis happening around the world that impacts our work. There are over 680 million people in the world that are going hungry at the moment, and the World Food Program has projected that figure will rise by up to 150 million more this year because of three major issues," said Harrington.

According to Harrington, the three major issues are an increase in conflicts around the world and the displacement that happens as a result, climate change that is really affecting agriculture in places like sub-Saharan Africa, and COVID-19.

"Because of the way lockdowns in particular worked across the world, we have seen the breakdown of many food systems, globally. In places like Africa and other parts of the world as well, the access to some of the food that was easily accessed before has just not been available," said Harrington.

Dealing with COVID-19 is something that Harrington did before he came to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

"In my last job, we moved from an education organization to providing food for 12,000 people who just didn't have access to it. Everything was locked down, they did not have access to market, no access to transportation, so I had joined at a very specific time, said Harrington.

The long lasting effects of the pandemic is something Harrington is very concerned about.

"I have been in leadership for some time, but nobody has strategies for a global pandemic and nobody understands the ramifications of what that means as you get down stream. When we first got into this we recognized that we would be dealing with a medical emergency, but the down stream effect of what that has meant for food security, for those going hungry for access to resources, for people to be able to provide for their families, that has had tremendous consequences and we are very engaged in that at the moment. We are working alongside our member agencies on a number of emergency response programs across the world for people who have been profoundly affected in terms of their ability to have access to food in a time economic breakdown and lockdown," said Harrington.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 Canadian churches and church-based agencies working



Andy Harrington, the new Executive Director of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Taking over from Jim Cornelius who is still an advisor with the organization

together to end global hunger. They work with locally-based organizations in developing countries to meet emergency food needs, achieve long-term solutions to hunger and work to foster informed action by Canadians and governments to support this international cause.

The legacy of Jim Cornelius

There were a few reasons that compelled Harrington to join the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

"I come from a faith background and part of it was a sense of wanting to serve as well as I could within that. It was right for me to respond to the request. I had put that through my faith background. Also, I really do believe that the Foodgrains Bank has an incredible place in the Canadian development landscape. It is one of the most supported organizations, especially with our wonderful growing projects and the work we do in the agriculture sector, but also across the churches and 15 member agencies. The opportunity to step up and lead an organization that has a terrific impact on the ground in over 35 countries and growing, as well as having the opportunity to be a part of something that is so woven into the fabric of Canadian life, is hard to say no to," said Harrington.

The legacy of Jim Cornelius – who is still with the Foodgrains Bank in an advisory role – was also a factor in Harrington's choice to join the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

"Jim is an amazing man and has created an incredible legacy at the Foodgrains Bank and the opportunity to follow him, is a real honour and that is actually why we asked him to stay on as Special Advisor. I am having the great honour of working alongside him at the moment and having his input as I take up the reins, which is a really wonderful thing, actually," said Harrington.

The Future

Harrington understand very well that he needs to learn first.

"While I do have a knowledge across the sector, I have a lot to learn about the very intricate workings of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We are involved in a lot of different aspects in the development work, all to do with hunger, but around climate around advocacy, around working in long-term change in the agricultural sectors around the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa,"

said Harrington.

With so much to learn about his new role, he does bring a wealth of experience to his new role too.

"What I bring to the job is an understanding of the strategic side of leadership and understanding of the development sector as a whole, and a desire to see Canada step up and really hit some of the targets it set itself in terms of the amount it supplies to overseas development assistance. Canada made a commitment that 0.7 per cent of GNI (Gross National Income) would be given to Overseas Development Assistance. We are currently at approximately 0.25 per cent. What I want to be a part of is advocating for that part to grow," said Harrington.

He is sure that Canadians are up to the challenge.

"Canadians are engaged and care for those who have less than them, and that is represented by the many stakeholders at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. I want to represent them well, to our own government and to our partners around the world. I want to ensure that Canadians stay front and center and that we see the Canadian flag flying over projects across the world," said Harrington.

Growing Projects

What Harrington observed during his first few weeks at the helm has just confirmed his opinion about Canadian compassion.

"The thing that has amazed me most is the incredible level of expertise and passion of the team at the Foodgrains Bank. I spent a wonderful two weeks getting an orientation from them. Even as someone who is in the (development) sector, I was quite surprised at the amount of work that is going on. The amount of projects that have been authorised because of COVID-19, the amount of work the staff is doing, the amount of work our members are doing alongside the staff. It was a real confirmation to see the level of expertise, passion and excellence that the Foodgrains Bank team bring to a time of crisis, to come in alongside the poorest of the poor and saying 'We are going to be there for you,' and I think that we are able to do that because of all the support we have across the country," said Harrington.

Harrington mentions the SAFARI growing project and the Cool growing project of Manitoba.

"I was so impressed by the passion of the people that were there and at the way in which they understood the way they were taking part in feeding people," said Harrington.

He has heard of Moosomin, Saskatchewan's Harvest of Hope and Kola, Manitoba's Crossborders growing project, and hopes to come visit soon.

"They are projects that are well known at Foodgrains Bank and we are very appreciative of the work that the people do there and I hope at some point I can come out and visit when we can all fly around bit more after COVID-19. Those are two long-standing and well respected projects within our network," said Harrington.

Ending global hunger

Although it may seem dire now, Harrington still has hope that Canadians will help bring an end to global hunger.

"Hunger is one of the prime causes of the lack of development in the world. Something we can all rally around is we don't want to see kids keel over because of hunger. One of the things that I want to see happen over the next few years, is that our message spreads. I would like everyone across the country to recognise that we represent them and that together we can join around this common cause. There is hope. I have always believed that hope is a galvanizer of people and I believe that what we and our partners are doing is making a difference in the lives of people. I have seen reports that show that we are making a difference in the world. If we continue to move in the direction we are moving in, we will make a great dent in ending global hunger," said Harrington.



Andy Harrington stand with Project Chair Roger Vaags at the SAFARI growing project in Manitoba.

FCC review suggests modest increase in farmland values for 2020

Average farmland values in Canada are once again showing modest increases for the first half of 2020, although the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has yet to be weighed, according to a review by Farm Credit Canada.

The national average for farmland values increased an average of 3.7 per cent for the first half this year. This increase is in line with mid-year results over the past five years, which showed single-digit increases for the full year.

"Given the global economic situation during the first half of 2020, Canada's farmland market is showing remarkable resilience in the face of adversity and uncertain times," said J.P. Gervais, FCC's chief agricultural economist. "Changes to production and marketing plans induced by the pandemic have had a definite influence on profitability, yet the demand for farmland remained robust."

FCC's review showed lower 12-month increases in average farmland values for most provinces over the last 12 months compared to last year's average, with the exception being in Alberta (8.5 per cent compared to 3.3 per cent) and Saskatchewan (7.9 per cent

Average increase in farmland values			
	January 2020 – June 2020 (six months)	July 2019 – June 2020 (12 months)	January 2019 – December 2019 (12 months)
B.C.	3.0%	3.2%	5.4%
Alta.	4.9%	8.5%	3.3%
Sask.	4.2%	7.9%	6.2%
Man.	2.3%	3.6%	4.0%
Ont.	0.4%	3.7%	6.7%
Que.	2.6%	6.3%	6.4%
N.B.	6.5%	8.3%	17.2%
N.S.	0.0%	0.3%	1.2%
P.E.I.	0.4%	22.1%	22.6%
N.L.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Canada	3.7%	7.1%	5.2%

compared to 6.2 per cent). In general, the pace of farmland value increases over the past six months was slightly higher in western provinces and slightly lower in central and eastern parts of the country, with the exception being New Brunswick.

Average farmland values have increased every year since 1993; however, increases were more pronounced from 2011 to 2015 in many different regions. In 2015, the average increase was 10 per cent, and since that year, Canada has seen more moderate single-digit in-

creases in average farmland values.

Low interest rates, the limited supply of farmland in the market and confidence among producers in the farmland market appear to be the main drivers behind the 2020 mid-year increase.

"Despite supply chain disruptions that have impacted some sectors, such as red meat, the pandemic has so far not significantly affected the agriculture land market," Gervais said. "In fact, the grain, oilseed and pulse sectors have performed well in the first half of 2020, supporting the slightly higher rate of increase in western Canada."

Crop receipts (excluding cannabis) for the first six months of 2020 are 1.6 per cent higher than for the same period last year.

Gervais recommends farm operators should continue to exercise caution, especially in regions where the growth rate of farmland values significantly exceeded that of farm income in recent years. He also recommends operators maintain a risk management plan to protect their business from unpredictable circumstances.

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Left to Right the new Rural Connectivity Task Force: Bev Pirio, Bill Prybylski, Jeremy Welter, Paige Stewart and APAS President, Todd Lewis

APAS launches Rural Connectivity Task Force

BY VICTOR VAN DER MERWE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) has launched a Rural Connectivity Task Force. From now until January 2021, the task force will investigate the barriers to and opportunities for improved internet and cellular service in rural Saskatchewan. They will meet with industry experts, service providers, academics, and the public to find out why a digital divide exists in Saskatchewan and identify the necessary steps to ensure equal access in the future.

The Rural Connectivity Task Force is made up of the following agricultural producers from across the province:

Task Force Chair and APAS Board member Jeremy Welter – RM of Mariposa #350 (Kerrobert).

APAS Vice President Ian Boxall – APAS Representative for RM of Connaught #457 (Tisdale).

APAS Vice President Bill Prybylski – APAS Representative for RM of Garry #245 (Willowbrook).

Bev Pirio – APAS Representative for RM of Laurier #38 (Radville).

Paige Stewart – Co-Chair of the APAS Young Agricultural Producers Committee (Fillmore).

“We’ve got a good cross section of the province represented and one thing they all have in common besides all being from Saskatchewan is that they have all had experience with some pretty poor internet and cell service,” said Todd Lewis, President of APAS.

Lewis acknowledges that there does seem to be progress being made, but not fast enough to keep up with demand.

“We have seen more towers being built and better access as time has gone on, but with COVID, we have seen just how badly we have fallen behind. The demands are ever increasing. We have had some service increases but they have not kept up with the increase of the demand. I think we have to look very seriously at how both the private service providers and Sasktel can give a bit more improved service in these rural areas. It is very frustrating for people living in rural Saskatchewan,” said Lewis.

This frustration at lack of access to good internet and cell service has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. With programs like distance learning and other online education and work solutions relying heavily on good internet service.

“Young people are having to leave their farms and their homes this fall to go to a community with better internet service, because they can’t get their university classes online. It is an ever increasing problem, and we thought we better put some time and effort in and see if we can identify some of the things and hopefully see some improvements,” said Lewis.

Of course the size of Saskatchewan and the unique challenges the province presents has to be taken into consideration.

“Saskatchewan is such a huge geographic area and we know it is difficult to services it, but at the same time, it is a big economic driver and this a big investment in our industries and for our economy it is really important to make sure we have good internet services,” said Lewis.

Even in farming, the need to for good cell and internet services is becoming much more important than in the past.

“With modern equipment, if you don’t have coverage, things like (mechanical) diagnostics and so on could instantly be a \$600 service call for something could’ve been done over the internet. They can pull information remotely off your tractor or combine, but if you don’t have that connectivity, it can cost you a service call,” said Lewis.

The task force wants to explore all possible avenues to bring better connectivity to Saskatchewan.

“We need to connect the dots a little bit between all the players that are involved, the provincial, federal, private and crown corporations. Sask Power and Sask Energy have fibre optic network in place that perhaps can be accessed as well that could provide better service,” said Lewis.

The goal is to provide better connectivity for all the people who live in areas where there is a lack of good cell and internet service.

“If you look at First Nations, they are across rural Saskatchewan as well and they have very poor service and I think a partnership with our First Nations is something the task force will want; good cell service and internet coverage for our First Nations will provide better coverage for rural Saskatchewan as well,” said Lewis.

Lewis admits that service providers and the government have tried to keep up, but that demand is just too high.

“Nobody could have foreseen this spike in online learn-

ing and working from home just six short months ago. It is quickly becoming a necessity and not a convenience. It is not a whole lot different than 100 years ago with the telephone service. It started out being a bit of an oddity and maybe was seen as bit of a luxury, but quickly phone service became critical to communication in the early part of the last century. I think we are seeing the same thing now with the internet and cellphone coverage. It is a necessity and we really need to see it improved,” said Lewis.

The world is moving more and more online and technology keeps advancing faster and faster.

“There are lots of new technologies coming on board that want to use that connectivity, so let us look at new ways to provide it. That is one of the mandates of the task force,” said Lewis.

Lewis makes it clear that results from the task force’s research need to be in as soon as possible.

“It has a very set time limit from now until January when we are going to put a report out. In that time it is really important to look at the improvements that need to be made soon,” said Lewis.

Lewis uses fibre optics as an example of something that needs to be looked at as far as improving connectivity.

“Fibre optics needs to be the back bone of any internet or cell service. Do we need to spend more money on it to ensure that there is a good fibre optic systems in the province? We also can look at what is there and if it is all being utilized, if it is not being utilized, can we access it? If it is all being utilized, how can we expand it? You can build all the towers you want but you need a good fibre optics system,” said Lewis.

The idea is to leave no avenue unexplored for possible solutions.

“Tesla is talking about a new satellite system and if that is going to be the next generation then let’s talk about it. Let’s have that under consideration as well,” said Lewis.

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Manitoba and federal governments to support Agriculture in the Classroom

The governments of Canada and Manitoba will be providing support to Agriculture in the Classroom - Manitoba (AITC-M) to adjust its educational and outreach resources in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau and Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development Minister Blaine Pedersen announced Thursday, September 24.

"Connecting Canadian youth with the farming and agri-food industry is more important than ever during these challenging times," said Bibeau.

"This investment will allow Agriculture in the Classroom to help both Manitoba's teachers and students adapt to new realities as they continue to learn about our innovative agricultural sector."

"The pandemic has renewed many Manitobans' interest in our food, where it comes from and how it gets from farm to table," said Pedersen.

"This investment will help educate Manitoba's youth on the importance of agriculture in Manitoba and the role it plays in our everyday lives."

Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the governments of Canada and Manitoba will be providing

AITC-M with up to \$146,600 to adopt a new service delivery method to adapt to COVID-19 and an increased demand for digital, online and adapted in-person resources.

AITC-M brings together industry, government and educators to increase the public's understanding about agricul-

ture.

AITC-M delivers curriculum based programs, activities and resources for teachers and their students to learn about agriculture and the role it plays in Manitoba.

In 2019, AITC-M reached nearly 38,000 students through events, programs

and professional development days for educators.

"Through this time of uncertainty, our vision to educate students about how their food gets from the farm to their table has never wavered, it just needs to happen differently," said Sue Clayton, executive director of

AITC-M.

"We believe all students in Manitoba should be agriculturally literate when they graduate. Thanks to the generous support from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership program, we move closer to this goal as more students will be able to expand and

deepen their knowledge of Canadian agriculture."

The five-year, \$3-billion Canadian Agricultural Partnership includes \$2 billion for cost-shared strategic initiatives delivered by the provinces and territories and \$1 billion for federal programs and services.

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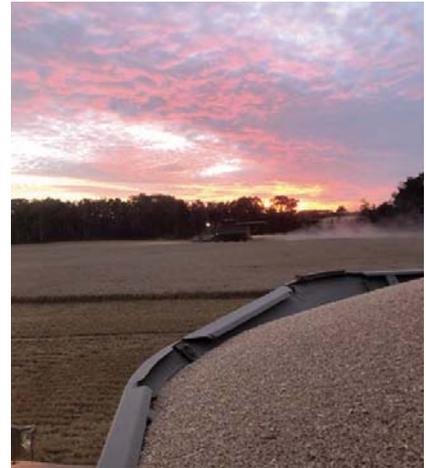
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Above: Harvest is wrapping up across southeast Saskatchewan and southwest Manitoba. These two photo of harvest in the Fairmede district was taken by Elize Steyn.

Above & below: Enjoying the beauty of harvest sunset west of Rocanville. Photos submitted by Melissa Ruhland.



Above: This harvest sunset was photographed by Trevor Green at Elkhorn, MB.

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Rick Block reciting a prayer written by Meagan Silencieux before the volunteers enjoyed a pizza lunch in preparation for the harvest.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank trying to be good stewards

Continued from front

How it works

Rick Block, Regional Representative for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank explained a bit about how the money raised by growing projects like the Harvest of Hope is put to use in places that have food insecurity.

"Two-thirds (of our budget) is really geared towards alleviating hunger in the immediate sense through emergency food distribution or food assistance, but the other third, is used for upstream work. The Foodgrains Bank work within communities and in areas where there still is a very significant food insecurity. We do work in communities where people haven't had to flee and there isn't an immediate disaster, but hunger exists. It is really important to work with those families and within those communities to help build more resilience to fight against hunger," said Block.

Once the grain from the Harvest of Hope is sold, it goes into one of the Foodgrains Bank's accounts.

"The Foodgrains Bank really is an association of 15 agencies, kind of a co-operative structure, and whether you are an individual donor or a growing project group, donors have the freedom and right to designate to whichever agency they would like it to go. There is a 16th account and that is a general account because there are times where people (who donate) like to say, I just want it to go generally. Within the Foodgrains Bank we have a very rigorous framework to help decide how agencies share resources that go to the general account. Now in the instance of the Harvest of Hope, the group decided they want to support the Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM), who have worked in numerous parts of the world. One would be Lebanon, one is in Rwanda and I believe in Kenya. The resources that Moosomin Harvest of Hope generated goes into the CBM's account. CBM has their projects that they deal with overseas," said Block.

The CBM then decides where they feel the need for the money is greatest and the government matches the money they send at a 4:1 rate. "There are people on the ground that represent CBM and represent local partners. The Foodgrains Bank has a 96 per cent efficacy in terms of the dollars going to the designated people in terms of what the original project plan was. That is really high. We have a really good track record in that regard," said Block.

He feels it is the unique structure of the Foodgrains Bank that makes them so efficient.

"We are this association of church-based agencies, each of whom has their own individual networks on the ground and what that means is that there are trusted relationships there and that allows for accountability. That allows for the entire chain, each of the links is strong. It allows us to work in a very effective way," said Block.

He also says the success of the Foodgrains Bank has a lot to do with love. "Part of the idea of the Christian response to hunger is love. We are bound by virtues of friendship and ties that go deep to our member and part-

ner organizations in the various countries and to small-holding farmers. We want to be diligent with resources

we acquire and we want to be good stewards of that," said Block.



Kyle Penner, project leader of the Moosomin Harvest of Hope, thanking volunteers before the harvest starts



Jared Graff, a volunteer who came out to help on the day of the harvest



Three volunteers drive combines crawling over the land

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SaskTel and USask to foster innovation in agriculture

Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), SaskTel and USask will focus on “smart farming” research and innovation to accelerate transformation in Saskatchewan’s agriculture industry. Smart farming involves collecting and analyzing “big data” so that producers can make informed and sustainable farm management decisions that improve productivity.

This initiative—driven by engineering, agriculture and computer science researchers—will focus on conducting research, improving education around Smart Farming, and testing and validating new agtech ideas and solutions.

“The agriculture sector is an important driver in the success of our province,” said Don Morgan, Minister Responsible for SaskTel. “I am pleased to see SaskTel and USask working together on an important initiative to benefit farming in Saskatchewan.”

The LFCE would be the first research Smart Farm in Canada focused on maximizing efficiency in livestock operations through the latest “Internet of Things”-based technology in an interconnected wireless environment.

“We are excited to partner with SaskTel to help producers advance livestock farming to the next level through use of some of the world’s best digital agricultural technologies—from drones equipped with software, to sensors that can monitor herds and their health,” said USask Vice-President Research Karen Chad. “This cutting-edge research will help meet the world’s increasing food demands, while enhancing training of our students in the latest high-tech farming techniques.”

Terry Fonstad, associate dean research and partnerships with the USask College of Engineering, said the MOU underscores the commitment LFCE has made to livestock producer groups to serve as a powerhouse for innovative research and teaching that will improve livestock production in Canada and around the world.

“The MOU brings together new knowledge and applied research at USask in areas of strength in engineering, agriculture and computer science with the infrastructure and expertise at SaskTel to advance agriculture,” Fonstad said.

SaskTel and USask will invite key stakeholders in the agriculture industry, including agtech startups, to identify challenges, propose solutions and initiate projects to test and validate these solutions at the LFCE.

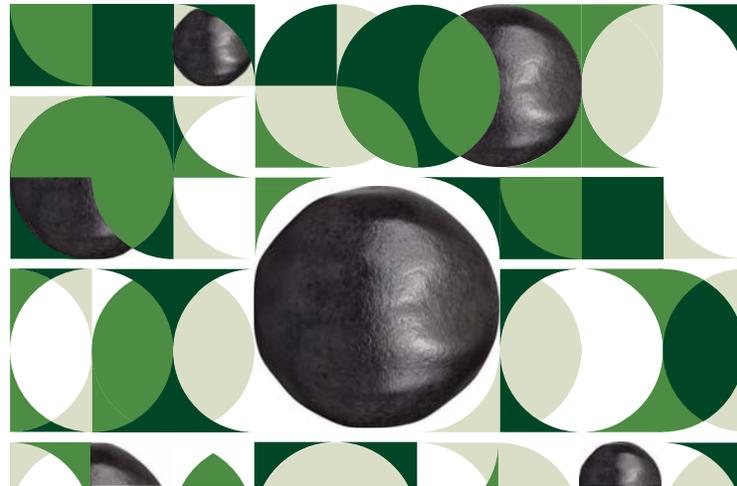
“SaskTel is continually working to grow and innovate as a company. As there is a need for increased data-based decision making and farm-wide wireless connectivity, this agreement presents a perfect opportunity for SaskTel to lend its expertise,” said SaskTel President and CEO Doug Burnett.

Burnett said this collaboration presents an opportunity to bring SaskTel and USask together to forge a path to the Smart Farm of the future, noting the need is there to make the future of agribusiness sustainable in Saskatchewan.

“With modern agricultural technology improving and evolving at an ever-increasing rate, the opportunity to work together will support decision-making and drive innovation into the foreseeable future,” he said.



From left: David Ekstrand, Vice President of Business Sales and Solutions (SaskTel), Angela Bedard-Haughn, Dean of USask College of Agriculture and Bioresources, Terry Fonstad, associate dean research and partnerships with the USask College of Engineering, and Mike Stefaniuk, Director of Business Development (SaskTel).



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Manitoba Farm and Food Awareness Week

Manitobans are encouraged to learn more about where their food comes from and how their food is produced, Agriculture and Resource Development Minister Blaine Pedersen said as the sixth annual Farm and Food Awareness Week officially kicks off today.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we are rolling out Farm and Food Awareness Week this year, allowing for the creation of educational materials that will be available online year round," said Pedersen.

"Now, more than ever, it's important that we continue to celebrate the importance of agriculture in Manitoba and the role it is playing in our economic recovery."

Since 2015, Farm and Food Awareness Week launches on the third Monday in September. The purpose of Farm and Food Awareness Week is to encourage activities to promote Manitoba farms, Manitoba food and other products of farming carried on in Manitoba.

The theme for this year's Farm and Food Awareness Week is '150 Years of Agriculture in Manitoba', highlighting Manitoba's rich agricultural history, the resilience of Manitoba's agricultural industry, and innovation and opportunity in the sector.

Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development will be launching five new videos this week focusing on 150 years in agriculture that can be accessed at www.twitter.com/MBGovAg.

Other virtual resources being made available during Farm and Food Awareness Week include:

- The Bruce D. Campbell Farm and Food Discovery Centre has launched a number of unique at-home learning resources that are available online. More information can be found at https://umanitoba.ca/faculties/afs/discovery_centre/.

- Farm to School Manitoba is developing a series of hands-on videos launching this week with a focus on Manitoba grown vegetables. Visit <https://farmtoschoolmanitoba.ca/> for more information.

"We look forward to celebrating Farm and Food Awareness Week every September, but this year, we had to change how we celebrate," said Kristen Matwychuk, acting manager of the Bruce D. Campbell Farm and Food Discovery Centre.

"Instead of public events, we are hosting a week-long online Farm and Food Awareness Week by releasing resources, activities, videos and fun facts online every day. With daily themes from food and family to sustainability, it is sure to be a fun week."

Nearly 40,000 Manitobans work in the agricultural industry, contributing significantly to Manitoba's economy.



Farm and Food Awareness Week encourages activities that promote farms, food and other products of farming carried on in Manitoba. The program provides an opportunity for students and their families to purchase fresh, local produce while also supporting their schools and daycares.

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GGC make 'Speech from the Combine'

BY ROB PAUL
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Prior to the federal government's Speech from the Throne, the Grain Growers of Canada (GGC) released their own "Speech from the Combine," a video asking for government support for Canada's grain industry in order to drive the post pandemic recovery.

In a seven-minute video from GGC Chair Jeff Nielsen—who made the speech from his farm in Olds, Alberta—the Speech from the Combine outlines six priorities that require immediate attention in order to help position the agriculture industry for success.

The six requests of the federal government are to provide effective Business Risk Management programs, support science and innovation in agriculture, support crop health, help improve trade access, provide carbon tax exemptions, and improve cellular service and connectivity in rural areas.

From his combine, Nielsen walked through why, more now than ever, Canada must support the agriculture industry as the pandemic recovery continues.

"2020 has been tough, Canadians across our country have felt the impact of Covid-19, but as a farmer I'm a natural born optimist and I know the clouds are going to clear," Nielsen said.

"We can recover from this and Canada's agriculture industry is uniquely positioned to drive our economic recovery in the months and years ahead. In rural communities, where farmers live, there is a general rule, when someone needs help we all show up no questions asked. Right now our community is Canada. Farmers want to help and we are eager to help, we just need the federal government to set us up to do so."

With the unpredictability of the agriculture industry, Nielsen and the GGC are asking for the federal government to consider implementing more modernized Business Risk Management programs that fall in line with the current state of farming.

"There are six main areas in which Canadian grain farmers need immediate support right now," he said. "And we along with other farm organizations have clear and direct feedback on how you can support us. Farmers love their jobs but sometimes we face circumstances beyond our control. That is when we need Business Risk Management programs to give us a hand up, not a hand-out. AgriStability is currently the best Business Risk Management program to support farmers impacted by these uncontrollable factors, including weather, trade disputes, and transportation challenges. The program's current parameters were put in place at a time when farm incomes were higher and trade barriers were lower, that's no longer the reality and as a result many farmers simply can't use the program today. We, along with a number of other farm organizations, feel the program should reflect the current realities of farming. We have one clear ask for the government, immediately restore program coverage to 85

per cent of historical reference margins and remove the reference margin limit."

For the agriculture industry to continue to grow in Canada, Nielsen says the government must invest in opportunities to develop innovative ways for farming to advance and reach its potential here.

"Science and innovation are critical to maintaining the profitability, competitiveness, and sustainability of our sector, but Canada is lagging behind" he said. "Already we're seeing U.S. and Latin American farmers access new tools and technology before us. Plant breeding innovations can help us increase productivity and sustainability, improve crop nutritional value and quality, combat pests and disease, and enhance food safety. We have the potential to be a leader in this area, but we need a regulatory environment that creates a clear and predictable pathway for investments needed to ensure this innovation comes to Canada. We also need a commitment to make up for the year of fuel trials that were lost due to Covid-19. And to privatize agricultural research now and into the future. We are asking that you modernize the regulations to enable innovation in plant breeding, pave the way for investments in new technologies that will benefit farmers, consumers, and the environment, such as gene editing, and increase funding towards Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research."

For Canada to continue to be seen as one of the best crop producing countries and uphold its reputation going forward, Nielsen says the government needs to invest in the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA).

"As farmers we rely on the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to approve products to maximize our growing potential, protect the health of citizens and our environment, and protect Canada's reputation for delivering safe high quality crops to the world. However, in the next 10 years, the annual number of PMRA projects involving pesticide re-evaluations will triple, exceeding the existing capacity and resources. We need assurance that our government will provide the necessary support to ensure PMRA can keep doing its job and ensure that we have the tools available to do ours. We also need to ensure that our agencies can generate accurate data going forward to protect the health of people and the environment and our global reputation for safety and scientific accuracy. We are asking that you provide adequate funding to the PMRA to keep up with their increasing workload and establish a Pan-Canadian Water Monitoring Program under the purview of the PMRA, to ensure access to accurate data."

Lack of regulation in free trade agreements have hurt the market in the agriculture industry and Nielsen says to ensure Canada is benefiting from them they must focus on proper implementation of the agreements.

"In order for our industry to thrive, we need to diversify and expand markets for Canadian grains, pulses, and oilseeds," he said. "For many years Canada embarked on an ambitious free trade agenda, which has resulted in the

creation of many free trade agreements over the past decade—including the comprehensive economic and trade agreement (CETA) with the European Union. However, the success of those agreements has been mixed. CETA, which holds much promise for agri-food exporters, continues to fall short. We need you, our legislators, to stand up for free trade and ensure proper implementation of our existing free trade agreements, our bottom line depends on it. We are asking that you provide adequate funding within Global Affairs Canada to ensure that trade agreements such as CETA are properly implemented."

Nielsen says the carbon tax is only punishing farmers who have no other options for cropping drying despite their efforts to make major advancement in reducing emissions in recent years.

"In recent years a carbon tax has been rolled out directly affecting farmers using propane and natural gas to dry their grain," he said. "To date, there is no alternative energy source available to do so. Meaning the tax will not encourage a transition to lower carbon options as it's intended to do. Instead it just unfairly penalizes farmers. Furthermore, farming conditions in recent years have required above normal use of grain dryers, meaning higher costs for farmers at a time when their profit margins are already very thin. As farmers, one of our main goals is to ensure our land is sustainable for generations to come. We have adopted many practices in recent decades that promote lower carbon emissions and now we're looking to you, our government, to recognize the work we have done in this area and not penalize us unfairly. We are asking that you immediately pass legislation to exempt all on-farm fuel from the carbon tax."

The lack of internet and cell service in rural Canada has long been an issue in the agriculture industry, and Nielsen says the pandemic has put an exclamation on an issue that's overdue in being addressed.

"Rural connectivity has long been an issue for the agriculture sector, but Covid-19 has highlighted more than ever how critical rural areas need improved cellular and wireless internet connectivity and broadband access," he said. "Agriculture is developing new innovative tools every year to reduce imputes and produce more crops on less land, however, those tools are only as good as the connectivity we have. We need major investments in infrastructure for high-speed internet in homes, and just as importantly, cell and internet signal availability in farmers fields across the country. We are asking that you expedite the new national target, set out in Budget 2019, to deliver high-speed internet to every Canadian home and business. We are all looking at you, our elected leaders, to restore certainty and peace of mind to our daily lives and sustainability to our economy, a privilege we have long enjoyed and come to expect in this wonderful country. The agriculture sector is ready to help you do this, we have already shown up. We are ready to work and thrive, so let's get started together."

New USask app promotes potential economic value of planting carbon-storing shelterbelts

A unique new app developed by University of Saskatchewan (USask) researchers offers agricultural landowners tailored information about the carbon offset value of planting shelterbelts—a tool that could help reduce the carbon footprint of farming and potentially put a little extra money in farmers' pockets.

"People tend to focus on the negative environmental aspects of farming such as the greenhouse gases emitted from vehicles, fertilizers and grain transportation, when in fact much of this impact can be offset through planting trees. In fact, with shelterbelts on their land, many farmers probably store more carbon dioxide (CO₂) than they use," said Colin Laroque, an environmental scientist in the USask College of Agriculture and Biosciences.

He noted that since the Dirty '30s, shelterbelts have been used to protect crops from wind, prevent soil erosion, and help retain moisture which increases crop yield.

But now, field shelterbelts are being removed to make room for larger agricultural equipment and more crop production.

What some farmers may not realize is that the trees, roots, and soil of shelterbelts sequester enormous amounts of CO₂ from the atmosphere, Laroque said.

His team estimates that a total of more than 21.3-million tonnes of "carbon dioxide equivalent" (CO₂e) is stored in Saskatchewan's 60,000 kilometres of shelterbelts. That represents about \$639 million in total economic value under the federal \$30/tonne CO₂e pricing system.

"Landowners are eliminating shelterbelts on their land without basic knowl-



edge of the implications of eliminating

Master's student Brooke Howatt collects tree cores from a shelterbelt tree to determine its age. (Photo: University of Saskatchewan)

them," said Laroque, an expert in climate

analysis.

"We saw the need to better inform land-

owners, particularly as carbon and carbon taxes have become more important topics in Canada."

The free online app was developed by a large multi-disciplinary team of climate scientists, economists, soil scientists, and computer scientists led by Laroque, who was granted \$1.4 million by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in 2018 as part of an effort to reduce greenhouse gases in agriculture.

In its latest climate change action plan, the Saskatchewan government is proposing to pay farmers for storing carbon, not just charging agricultural producers for emitting carbon into the atmosphere.

The new app helps landowners calculate how much carbon will accumulate in trees planted in shelterbelts under changing climatic conditions and determine how much their shelterbelts are worth in carbon offset value under the carbon tax system.

It also includes a planning tool that shows the best type of trees to grow in various areas of the province and provides users with planting guidelines to ensure their new trees thrive.

Continued on page 32

Trust the food industry to keep delivering

Many months into the COVID-19 pandemic, we know more about this relentless virus and how it behaves and spreads. Using this limited but growing scientific knowledge, public health measures have kept us largely safe.

Back in March, given the unknowns we needed to manage, the only solution possible was a complete lockdown. It came into our lives violently, enticing many to panic buy, thinking they would not be allowed to leave their homes for weeks, possibly months.

As consumers, we behaved irrationally as we coped with many uncertainties.

Regrettably, over-buying food led to more food waste and added unnecessary pressure on the food supply chain.

The food industry was also compromised by a food service sector that was almost completely idle for weeks.

In addition, the livestock industry was hard hit by COVID-19. Twelve meat processing plants had to shut down, some for as long as a month, because so many employees contracted the virus. The Cargill plant in High River, Alta., became a case study when it experienced the largest outbreak at one address in the country.

The weird and wacky quest for toilet paper aside, empty shelves where food belonged gave many a profound, heart-thumping fear of food insecurity. It became real for many people, likely for the first time in their lives.

After all, North America hasn't experienced the famine, major wars or chronic civil unrest seen elsewhere in the world over the last century. In the land of abundance and bounty, running out of food is something that happens elsewhere.

Though pictures of empty shelves led Canadians to believe our food system has its limits, it quickly became apparent that the shelves would continue to be stocked, however messy the process of getting it there might be.

Panic slowly disappeared, allowing collective discipline and peaceful amenability to take over. Measures were put in place to keep people safe and responsible and, a few weeks into the pandemic, rationing became an expectation. All measures were gracefully executed as consumers complied.

Technologies and just-in-time procurement allowed the food industry to absorb the unprecedented shock in



Sylvain Charlebois

March and April. In a stunning display, the food industry really delivered to ensure shelves were stocked. We witnessed a beautiful miracle of collaborative spirit.

The industry also learned how to serve consumers who are unable to get to grocery stores as quarantines and self-isolation measures forced many to order online.

Barely six months ago, it was almost impossible to get a grocery order delivered within eight days. Now, most markets offer great home delivery service and will deliver just about anything, including groceries, within two hours. This was almost inconceivable when this crazy year began.

As a result of the pandemic, online food sales will triple the 2019 volume.

The food industry and consumers also benefited from the decision to allow borders to remain permeable throughout the pandemic. Just a few decades ago, that

would not have happened. But cooler heads prevailed and governments around the world quickly understood that closing the borders to the movement of vital goods would only make matters worse. Canadians should feel comforted by the willingness to allow the borders to remain permeable.

While most Canadians will be food secure, despite higher prices, this isn't true for all Canadians. Poverty rates have increased during the pandemic and Statistics Canada reports that an additional 700,000 people have experienced food insecurity since March.

Let's hope the federal government has long-term plans for financially vulnerable Canadians.

The pandemic has made life challenging and, quite understandably, Canadians are on edge and a little restless going into the fall.

But we don't need to panic. Companies do learn and it's highly unlikely an uncontrolled, mismanaged scenario will happen again.

The food sector has been preparing for a potential second wave for months and though the industry may not be perfect, we should trust that food will remain available across the country.

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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\$134M interprovincial agreement renewed for Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Three provincial governments announced the renewal of their financial commitment to the University of Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary Medicine

The British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments' agreement with the University of Saskatchewan provides more than \$134 million to the WCVM for the next five years.

The agreement helps to ensure that Western Canada has a steady supply of veterinarians with in-depth knowledge of animal health and public health, as well as an awareness of the standards and issues facing livestock, fowl and fisheries producers and pet owners.

"Ensuring that educational opportunities meet labour-market expectations is a Growth Plan priority for our government," Saskatchewan Advanced Education Minister Tina Beaudry-Mellor said. "This agreement allows Saskatchewan, and our partner provinces, to communicate admissions' priorities so they are in-step with each province's labour-market needs."

"The Manitoba government is pleased to renew our commitment to training in veterinary medicine and continue our long-standing partnership that provides high-quality education and training opportunities to Manitobans and helps meet labour market demand across the province," said Ralph Eichler, Manitoba



The University of Saskatchewan

Minister of Economic Development and Training. "This is an important investment in Manitoba's agriculture sector that aligns

with needs under the Manitoba Protein Advantage Strategy. We need good veterinarians in place to help us practice safe animal

welfare and keep growing animal agriculture in Manitoba." "There is an increasing demand for veterinarians and veterinary

research across Western Canada," British Columbia Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training Melanie Mark said. "This agreement helps us focus on equipping students from the western provinces with the expertise to return and practise in their home communities, where they are in demand."

"The WCVM is built on collaboration, and its people and programs strengthen the University of Saskatchewan's impact in everything from agriculture and animal health to comparative medicine and public health," University of Saskatchewan Interim Provost and Vice-president Academic Melissa Just said. "We're excited to see what it will achieve with the renewed support of its provincial partners and our university."

The WCVM is the premier centre of veterinary education, research and expertise in Western Canada and a key member of Canada's veterinary, public health and food safety networks. The internationally-accredited facility includes a veterinary medical centre, a provincial diagnostic laboratory and large-scale research facilities.

The college's new interprovincial agreement is in place until 2025.



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USask researchers' in vitro fertilization successful with baby bison

It's a rare privilege to welcome newborn bison calves into the world. It's even more rare when those calves are the fruit of your labour.



WCVM graduate student Miranda Zwiefelhofer with bison at the LFCE's specialized livestock facility. (Photo: Eric Zwiefelhofer)

By LANA HAIGHT

"I'm thrilled. It's very cool to actually see something that I was able to start from an egg and then an embryo, and actually get a calf out of it. It's very rewarding," said Miranda Zwiefelhofer, a graduate student in the Department of Veterinary Biomedical Sciences at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) and a member of the research team headed by Dr. Gregg Adams (DVM).

In early July, two Wood bison calves were born at USask's Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence's specialized livestock facility, southeast of Saskatoon. The bison calves are the first to be born from frozen in vitro embryos

produced from immature eggs that were collected from live bison.

Adams' team is refining protocols for advanced reproductive techniques to be used with bison in the wild. Zwiefelhofer focused on determining the ideal age and stage of development for an embryo to be frozen in order to result in a successful pregnancy.

"We can make a large quantity of embryos, but only some are capable of producing a bison calf," she said.

Although 500,000 bison can be found in national parks and on commercial farms throughout North America, they are a "near threatened" species, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List. Rare and isolated bison genetics are locked away in remote locations. Adams and his team are determined to preserve these valuable genetics through reproduction.

Zwiefelhofer's project started in the summer of 2019 when she and others in Adams' team collected eggs from 32 bison cows, using minimal handling methods including sedating the bison and using field darts to deliver treatments.

Zwiefelhofer then moved from the field to the lab. First, she grew the eggs to maturity and fertilized them with frozen-thawed semen and produced 75 in vitro embryos. Then, she observed the embryos for several days as the single cell divided into two and then four and so on until the cells became compact and a cavity formed. With different embryos growing at different rates, they were frozen in liquid nitrogen at different stages of development (from morulas to expanded blastocysts) and on different days after fertilization (seven to nine days), all critical pieces of information for Zwiefelhofer's research.

In October 2019, the research moved out of the lab and back to the animals. Zwiefelhofer selected embryos based on the various stages of development and the age when they were frozen. She gradually thawed the ones she deemed to be of the highest quality. The team transferred embryos to 28 bison cows. When examined 30 days later,

five cows were pregnant. Throughout pregnancy, three cows lost their calves. The two bison calves born were the result of morulae frozen seven or eight days after fertilization.

Like an expectant parent, Zwiefelhofer was on baby watch for days before the calves were born.



The two new bison calves, named Skeeter and Mo, born from frozen in vitro embryos. (Photo: Miranda Zwiefelhofer)

"We knew it was coming. We could see the mothers' udders starting to fill up and getting really pink. We made sure to drive by every 12 hours starting about a week before they were born," said Zwiefelhofer, who named the calves Skeeter and Mo.

Continued on page 34 ^{EST}

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New USask app promotes potential economic value of planting carbon-storing shelterbelts



Continued from page 27

"With our new shelterbelt decision support system app, landowners can see the economic and environmental benefits of shelterbelts under a carbon pricing system. It may persuade many to keep their shelterbelts, rather than remove them," Laroque said.

The researchers calculate that a quarter-section-long (0.4 of a kilometre) shelterbelt of caragana, or shrub planted today would be worth roughly \$1,900 by 2050 under a \$30 per tonne CO₂e tax. A three-row farmyard shelterbelt surrounding a homestead with caragana, white spruce, and green ash would be worth about \$5,300 in carbon offset value by 2050. And a five-row farmyard shelterbelt surrounding a homestead with caragana, white spruce, green ash, Manitoba maple, and hybrid poplar would be worth about \$11,700.

"Each of these shelterbelt examples are common in Saskatchewan and may be worth even more under the \$50 per tonne CO₂e tax expected in 2022 in Saskatchewan," said Bryan Mood, Laroque's post-doctoral fellow, who began working on

the shelterbelt project a decade ago when he was an undergraduate.

"Farmers feel they are doing their part for the environment by building shelterbelts, and they benefit from the fact this offsets the carbon they are using. It would be fantastic if this type of app could be available in every province."

Based on years of scientific knowledge gathered by researchers, the app conveys the information in a way that is easy to navigate and understand from the user's point of view.

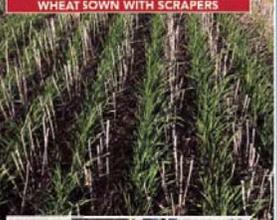
"We have worked on measuring how common shelterbelt tree species have been growing across southern Saskatchewan since they were planted," said Laroque. "Using that information, we looked at how these species may grow in the future using climate projections across different regions of the province, and more importantly, how the trees in each zone will store carbon through time."

To access the app, visit: www.shelterbelt-sk.ca. For more information, email: shelterbelt@usask.ca.

From left: Master's student Brooke Howatt, with undergraduates Scott Wood, and Lindsey Rudd, preparing to survey a white spruce shelterbelt in western Saskatchewan. (Photo: University of Saskatchewan)

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Hailey Gibson wanted a pool, so she decided to build her own using hay bales and plastic tarps. To keep it heated she built her own solar heaters from pool noodles and hula hoops (the black objects in the bottom right photo).



15-year-old makes homemade swimming pool

BY ROB PAUL
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Sometimes when you want something badly enough, you build it yourself. That's what 15-year-old Hailey Gibson of Moosomin did this summer.

Gibson, like most kids, wanted a pool to take advantage of the summer weather, unfortunately she was having a hard time finding one to purchase.

After getting some ideas from social media, she began planning to build her own and with her creativity and enthusiasm it didn't take long to get the project rolling.

"We wanted a pool and instead of having to buy a pool and having to wait for it to get here, we built one," Gibson said. "On August 6 we put it together. We had to figure out how much plastic we were going to need and so we laid out all the bales.

"It ended up being 16 round bales—one side up, one side down alternating—and on both ends we had them on their side so you could slide in.

It's not every day a 15-year-old thoroughly plans to build their own pool, but Gibson really thought it through with what the best method for building it would be.

"We got something like 170 feet of plastic, it was 50x50 and then you fold it in half so you have an extra layer in case you poke holes in it. We bought like \$170 of silage plastic because it's pretty thick plastic and we left it white side up instead of black so we could clean it and see the dirt.

"We laid out all the bales—we already had the bales for our horses—and I got in the middle of it to stomp down the plastic around the sides," she said. "Then we held down the sides with bricks and had to have a strap all the way around the bales or else they'll slide and let all the water out. We had to have that pretty tight. We then filled it up for quite a few days and put stairs on the outside so we could get in and out."

With some inspiration from the internet and plenty of convincing, Gibson took the initiative to plan and eventually build her own pool with some help.

"It took us three hours to actually put it together with laying out the bales and making sure the plastic was folded the right way," she said. "I had been thinking about it for like two weeks trying to convince my mother.

"There was only one other person I had found on the internet who had done it with the large bales instead of square bales.

"I had like two pictures and found a YouTube video where they pretty much did the same thing. So, I used that to help convince my mother. It was just me, my friend, and my cousin—my mom helped us put the bales

around."

Overall, Gibson says building her own pool ended up being a better option than buying one, plus she's starting to make some winter plans for it.

"It was pretty cold, but it got better," she said. "Right now we've got it about four and a half feet deep. You can

slide in on the sides and we have two tubes so you can tube in like a tube slide.

"It's held up pretty well so far and it's still up so we've got to figure out if it's going to be a skating rink! It's a way bigger and way cheaper than any pool I could have bought."

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In vitro fertilization successful with baby bison



WCVM Department of Veterinary Biomedical Sciences graduate student Miranda Zwiefelhofer works in a lab the LFCE's specialized livestock facility. (Photo: Lana Haight)

Continued from page 30

Not only are the new calves the first bison to be born using immature eggs collected from live bison, they are only the third and fourth calves to be born from frozen in vitro embryos.

"This is a pretty big deal. That we have two calves and originally had five pregnancies shows these technologies really do work. Freezing and thawing the embryos is the difficult part. We could use fresh embryos and get a higher pregnancy rate, but to transport embryos in a bio-secure manner, they need to be frozen,"

said Zwiefelhofer, who is working toward earning a PhD.

With this latest research, scientists have new tools in their toolbox for ensuring the survival of pure genetics of wood and plains bison herds that are scattered throughout North America, she said.

The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund contributed funding for this research.

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Above: Photo submitted by Amber Hintz
 Below: Summer Heide took this photo of the harvest from her garden



Above: Photo submitted by Jeffrey Hutchinson taken in his dad's field just North of Moosomin, on the left side of the No. 8 highway



Above: Three generations of Ivey farmers submitted by Amber Hintz



Above: Photo submitted by George Roy
 Below: Photo submitted by Elize Steyn in the RM of Silverwood



Above: Krista Cunday took this photo of her daughter Charlee northeast of Wapella
 Below: Photo submitted by Ross Legaarden at Kenlis Saskatchewan





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