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Brake time

The debate over whether farm machinery should have brakes is intensifying. Some manufacturers and engineers say the time has come. The Producer takes an in-depth look at the issue. | **P. 72-75**



QUITE THE SPREAD



Trevor Wathen spreads hay for a herd of pregnant cows on his farm near Namaka, Alta. The recent warm, dry weather is a welcome change during his busy calving season. | KEVIN LINK PHOTO

CROP DISEASE

Canola council backs off on clubroot biosecurity

Washing and sanitizing machinery no longer emphasized for disease management

BY ROBERT ARNASON
BRANDON BUREAU

DAUPHIN, Man. — For years, plant pathologists and agronomists have told prairie farmers to thoroughly wash and sanitize tractors, cultivators and seeders between fields to stop the spread of clubroot.

That isn't happening so the Canola Council of Canada is taking a different approach. Washing and sanitation is still a recommendation, but it's no longer a point of emphasis for clubroot management.

"It works. Absolutely it works. But realistically it's not going to happen," said Dan Orchard, the council's agronomist in central and northern Alberta, who spoke at a Canolab agronomy workshop held March 15-16 in Dauphin, Man.

SEE BACKING OFF, PAGE 5 »

CROP DISEASE

Organic wheat dodges mycotoxin

Prairie organic producers defied conventional wisdom last year by escaping fusarium scourge

BY ROBERT ARNASON
BRANDON BUREAU

Cody Straza doesn't understand it. Last year when fusarium head blight plagued thousands of conventional farmers in Saskatchewan, Straza and other organic farmers were seemingly protected from the fungal disease.

Straza grew kamut on his farm near Wood Mountain, Sask., and he had few issues with fusarium or the mycotoxins caused by the disease, such as deoxynivalenol (DON).

"It was tested for DON and it was accepted without any question," said Straza, who is vice-president of SaskOrganics.

Fusarium hasn't been a big issue this winter at organic production meetings in Saskatchewan, he added.

"In the organic world it's not a priority issue. People are aware of it... but it's not a hot button topic."

The lack of concern is odd because fusarium and mycotoxins were a massive issue for conventional cereal growers in Saskatchewan last year.

The 2016 wheat crop was one of the worst on record for fusarium and DON levels in many crop districts on the Prairies.

The fungus affected all types of wheat, but durum was hit especially hard in Saskatchewan. Some growers are wondering if it's still feasible to grow durum on their farm because many can't meet the standards for mycotoxin contamination. Durum and other cereals must have DON levels below a certain level to enter the food or feed market.

"The risk of fusarium at this point is seriously, seriously impacting

our ability to successfully grow durum wheat," said Levi Wood, president of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association and a farmer near Regina.

Will Oddie, who also farms near Regina, isn't as worried. Oddie had a successful wheat crop on his organic farm last year, and it was "fusarium free."

Oddie attended a workshop for Saskatchewan organic growers in March and the disease didn't come up.

SEE ORGANIC WHEAT, PAGE 4 »



MARCH 30, 2017

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
Box 2500, Stn. Main,
Saskatoon, SK. S7K 2C4

The Western Producer is published in Saskatoon by Western Producer Publications, which is owned by GVIC Communications Corp. Publisher: Shaun Jessome
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WHAT'S IN  THIS ISSUE



Miss World: An Alberta ranch sees one of its cows win the Hereford Miss World Competition in Texas. See page 33. | BARBARA DUCKWORTH PHOTO

NEWS

- » **TOUGH BUDGET:** Farmers will feel the effects of the tough budget announced last week in Saskatchewan. **14**
- » **INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIT:** Rural municipalities in Alberta struggle to maintain their roads and bridges. **16**
- » **GLYPHOSATE TESTING:** The CFIA will soon release the results of testing for glyphosate residues in food. **17**
- » **CATTLE CALL:** We take an in-depth look into the health of cows in this edition of Cattle Call. **35**

MARKETS 6



- » **WHEAT PRICES:** There are signs that the wheat supply might be tightening. **6**
- » **LAMB PRICES:** China is the only bright light in a dismal lamb market. **7**

FARM LIVING 18



- » **WAR TRAGEDY:** The memory of Japanese Canadian internment is kept alive. **18**
- » **SASK BUDGET:** School boards avoid amalgamation, but funding is cut. **19**

PRODUCTION 72



- » **BRAKE CRISIS:** Some in the agriculture industry are worried about the lack of braking power on the large equipment being pulled by today's farmers. **72-75**

LIVESTOCK 31



- » **TB UPDATE:** More Alberta cattle are released from TB quarantine. **31**
- » **TRACKING LIVESTOCK:** Traceability regulations are about to be amended. **33**

AGFINANCE 76



- » **NEW ENERGY GAME:** Oil and gas rules don't apply to wind and solar projects. **76**
- » **FARMLEAD RAISES FUNDS:** An online grain marketing service raises US\$6.5 million. **77**

COLUMNISTS

- » **D'ARCE MCMILLAN:** The weather keeps co-operating in the world's wheat areas. **9**
- » **KELSEY JOHNSON:** Ottawa leans on agriculture to drive the country's economy. **10**
- » **KEVIN HURSH:** Profitable farming becomes more elusive. **11**
- » **MICHAEL RAINE:** What it means to be a leading provider of ag news. **11**
- » **JODIE MIROSOVSKY:** Enjoy these spring recipes that focus on vegetables. **21**
- » **ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN:** Nicaragua is rich in natural and historic treasures. **22**
- » **ED WHITE:** When the cultures of agriculture, journalism and academia meet. **26**
- » **BRUCE DYCK:** Farmers were urged to grow only rust-resistant flax in 1967. **28**
- » **JOHN CAMPBELL:** Vaccines and biosecurity are good ways to combat IBR virus. **34**
- » **GRANT DIAMOND:** It's not always easy to know when to collect the GST. **77**

REGULAR FEATURES

Ag Stock Prices	76
Classifieds	43
Ag Notes	27
Livestock Report	9
Market Charts	78
Opinion	10
Open Forum	12
On The Farm	20
Weather	79

CONTACTS

- Subscriptions & Marketing**
Ph: 800-667-6929
- Advertising**
Ph: 800-667-7770
- Newsroom inquiries:** 306-665-3544
Newsroom fax: 306-934-2401
- Shaun Jessome, Publisher**
Ph: 306-665-9625
shaun.jessome@producer.com
- Brian MacLeod, Editor**
Ph: 306-665-3537
brian.macleod@producer.com
- Michael Raine, Managing Editor**
Ph: 306-665-3592
michael.raine@producer.com
- Bruce Dyck, News Editor**
Ph: 306-665-3507
newsroom@producer.com

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FEATURES



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WARTIME INTERNMENT PHOTOS
View a photo gallery of Japanese Canadians who were crowded into inland internment camps during the Second World War.



SEED TREATERS VIDEO
Four companies selling seed treaters displayed their offerings at Bayer's SeedGrowth Expo in Saskatoon.

VIDEOS

SEED STOCK
Bruce Carriere of Discovery Seed labs talks about the availability of durum seed.



MARKETS WRAP
WP Markets editor D'Arce McMillan looks at the week's top developments in crop markets.



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MARKETS



MARKETS EDITOR: D'ARCE MCMILLAN | Ph: 306-665-3519 F: 306-934-2401 | E-MAIL: DARCE.MCMILLAN@PRODUCER.COM | TWITTER: @DARCEMCMILLAN



Weak wheat prices will likely reduce spring wheat acreage in North America. | FILE PHOTO

2017-18 OUTLOOK

Wheat surplus might shrink

Potentially smaller crops in the U.S., Russia and Canada could moderate the global oversupply

BY SEAN PRATT
SASKATOON NEWSROOM

There is an ever-so-slight bullish sentiment creeping into the wheat market, says an analyst.

Even as wheat futures prices fell in the past week, a few events happening around the world could help reduce the burdensome global supply of the crop, said Neil Townsend, senior market analyst with FarmLink Marketing Solutions.

One positive is the report out of Russia that it will likely have less wheat to sell in 2017-18.



NEIL TOWNSEND
FARMLINK MARKETING

SovEcon has downgraded its forecast of Russian 2017-18 grain production to 109.5 million tonnes from 112.5 million tonnes previously. The crop harvested last summer was record large at 121 million tonnes.

Of that, the wheat crop is forecast at 62.5 million tonnes, down

from 73.3 million in 2016. It sees wheat exports falling to 24.5 million tonnes from 27 million in the current marketing year.

SovEcon said it downgraded its current forecast because it believes there will be a shortage of rain in Russia's southern regions from April through June, according to Reuters.

The market has already factored in a smaller U.S. winter wheat crop but some analysts also anticipate the smallest U.S. spring wheat crop since 1972.

Townsend expects Canadian spring wheat acres will also be down with an increase in Saskatchewan more than offset by decreases in Manitoba and Alberta.

Another bullish factor is that U.S. wheat has become competitive in world markets in the last few weeks, which should stimulate its exports and reduce carry-out in that country.

U.S. wheat exports could pick up because wheat export programs are winding down in Australia and the European Union and the U.S. soybean export program is slowing down, making room in the export pipeline.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that China's 2016-17 wheat crop had serious quality issues.

Industry sources say that 10 percent of the crop may be spoiled

and another 24 percent out of condition in four of its main wheat producing states.

That is causing a shortage of milling-grade wheat in the central and southern production regions of the country.



Canadian wheat matches up really nicely with Russian wheat, so if they want to substitute one for the other I guess they could.

NEIL TOWNSEND
ANALYST

Sino Grain, a state owned grain buyer, bought the highest quality wheat at the start of harvest. What's left on the open market is below the average grade.

Milling wheat prices jumped 10 to 12 percent between September and January and are as high as \$11.37 per bushel in South China.

American, Canadian and Australian milling wheat can now compete in China even after paying a 65 percent out-of-quota tariff.

The USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service expects China in 2016-17 to import four million tonnes of wheat, a 500,000 tonne bump from its January forecast.

Townsend said an extra 500,000 tonnes of demand doesn't sound like much considering total world trade is estimated at 181 million tonnes in 2016-17, but it helps.

"It's positive. I mean, we need positive things in the wheat market for sure."

Reuters reports that Turkish buyers have put purchases of Russian wheat on hold due to political tensions between the countries. That could create an opportunity for Canadian wheat.

"Canadian wheat matches up really nicely with Russian wheat, so if they want to substitute one for the other I guess they could," said Townsend.

None of the factors are enough to move the wheat market on their own but combined they could help boost prices, although by a modest amount.

"Wheat can go up 15 or 30 cents a bushel but it's not going to be able to drive itself up \$1 a bushel without a broader commodity rally," he said.

Townsend expects global wheat stocks to be down three to four million tonnes when the USDA issues its first world supply and demand outlook for 2017-18 in May.

He thinks stocks would have to fall by 10 to 20 million tonnes to sustain a price rally.

sean.pratt@producer.com

MEAT SCANDAL

Brazilian meat fraud rocks markets

Benefit to Canadian meat exporters likely indirect

BY ED WHITE
WINNIPEG BUREAU

Analysts have no clue how much the Brazilian meat scandal could affect Canadian meat exports or prices.

However, as some of Brazil's main markets re-open their doors to the country's beef and poultry, the direct physical dislocation of the country's products might not be the biggest impact.

"We'll have to figure out how deep it goes and how significant the damage is to their credibility," said Tyler Fulton, hog market analyst for Hams Marketing.

"There's a lot of moving parts."



We'll have to figure out how deep it goes and how significant the damage is to their credibility.

TYLER FULTON
MARKET ANALYST

Brazil's massive exports of beef and chicken crashed to a halt when it was revealed that Brazilian police were investigating a number of meat plants for bribing meat inspectors to ignore tainted or otherwise unacceptable meat for export.

All of its biggest markets immediately blocked imports of Brazilian beef, but China, Chile and Egypt lifted their bans March 25, alleviating the risk of a massive pile-up of meat within the country.

However, the scandal could damage Brazil's reputation for safety and quality, which could have indirect effects on Canada and overall North American meat production and exports.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

21 of Brazil's
84 meat plants
are included in the
Operation Weak Flesh
investigation

FORECASTING FORECAST

When will the run of global good weather run out?

MARKET WATCH



D'ARCE McMILLAN

Rain this week in the United States southern Plains and the Midwest is putting to rest for now concerns about drought in American winter wheat crops.

Winter wheat crops in Europe, Ukraine, and India are all said to be in good shape. Rain in Russia might not be enough to sustain another record crop, but so far there is no concern

about a production disaster.

The wheat story on page 13 shows that there is a glimmer of hope that the oversupply situation might moderate in 2017-18.

The International Grains Council forecasts 2017-18 wheat production at 735 million tonnes, down from 752 million this year.

That means production would fall short of demand and ending stocks would shrink but not to a level that would suggest a recovery to the price levels of a few years ago.

With ample supply of grain and oilseed and weak crop prices globally, we wonder what could happen to change the dynamic.

Can we expect to continue to have big harvests in the most important production regions?

Even with a changing climate that doles out more weather extremes, we have not had serious global production declines for years.

In global wheat production, we've had four consecutive great years. The past 12 months have been particularly impressive with record production in Russia and Australia, the second largest crop in 20 years in Canada (albeit poor quality) and above average crops in the U.S. and Ukraine.

Global wheat production in 2016-17 rose to more than 751 million tonnes, up 15.8 million tonnes from the year before.

We have to look back to 2012 for the last bad production year in wheat causing a year over year decrease in production. Russia and

Ukraine suffered a severe drought that followed on the heels of a poor crop in that region in 2010.

There have been weather problems more recently around the world, but not of a scale that seriously threatened global markets.

Last year, late-season dry weather trimmed Brazil's soybean crop and deeply cut its corn crop.

El Nino dryness hurt palm oil production in Indonesia and Malaysia last year, resulting in a year over year decrease in global production.

In 2014-15 and 2015-16 India's monsoon fell short, forcing it to increase pulse imports, but large domestic stocks of government-owned wheat saved it from needing to import huge amounts of wheat.

However, there was nothing like the series of weather problems of the 2000-07 era that slashed global wheat and corn production even as the booming U.S. ethanol sector was fueling rapid demand growth.

At the other end of the scale, we've now had several years of relatively benign crop weather resulting in rising year-end stocks and falling crop prices.

Are we due for a weather problem? It is impossible to tell.

But if every year is a gamble against the weather, I'd have to say that the run of weather luck would have to run out eventually.

Follow D'Arce McMillan on Twitter @darcemcmillan or email darce.mcmillan@producer.com.

\$100 MILLION

Grain Millers expands Sask. oat plant

Expansion to create 25 new jobs in Yorkton

BY ROBERT ARNASON
BRANDON BUREAU

Grain Millers, one the largest oat buyers in Western Canada, has quietly announced a \$100 million expansion of its plant in Yorkton, Sask.

Grain Millers Canada Corp. said in a news release the project would add 80,000 tonnes of production capacity to its mill, where it manufactures a range of conventional and organic oat food products.

"We've operated in Saskatchewan for 20 years," said Terry Tyson, grain procurement director for Grain Millers.

"Yorkton is in the heart of oat country and, with the skilled workforce we have here, it is a great location for us to continue growing our milling business."

Grain Millers has headquarters near Minneapolis and it operates mills in the U.S. Midwest, Oregon, Mexico and Yorkton. Along with Richardson International, it is one of the largest oat processors in Western Canada.

"This expansion is the latest in a series of capacity and capability investments for (Grain Millers)," said Steve Eilertson, company president.

A bigger oat mill means that Yorkton, already home to two major canola crushing plants, becomes an even larger destination for prairie grain and oilseeds.

The Grain Millers expansion will create 25 new permanent jobs, along with 110 jobs during construction.

"Our government welcomes this large \$100 million investment," said Premier Brad Wall in a statement. "Our government has worked hard to strengthen the Saskatchewan Advantage and we will continue to ensure we have a competitive environment for projects like this one."

Grain Millers said the project should be complete by late 2018.

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CANFAX REPORT

FED MARKETS RISES

It was another great week for cash cattle with the Canfax weighted average for steers rising \$3.14 to \$170.66 per hundredweight and heifers up \$3.42 at \$169.48.

There was strong demand and tight supply.

Dressed trade was \$3-\$6 per cwt. higher than the previous week with sales ranging \$285-\$288 delivered.

U.S. buyers were in the market, but few if any local cash cattle traded south because they did not meet American slaughter specifications.

The Alberta cash-to-futures basis weakened a bit but was seasonally strong at +\$7.79.

Weekly western Canadian fed slaughter to March 18 rose three percent to 30,711 head.

Weekly exports to March 11 fell one percent to 7,142 head. Exports

are down eight percent for the year at 56,687 head.

Marketings during the week had clean-up loads of various types of cattle, implying feedlot supplies are very current.

A few fed calves were marketed but could have easily remained on feed another month.

In the United States, live sales in the south were up US\$2, and in the north prices rose \$3-\$5. Rail grade prices in the north were up \$6-\$7.

COWS SET HIGHS

D1, D2 cows ranged C\$95-\$111 to average \$103.63, up \$2.72

D3 cows ranged \$80-\$99 to average \$90.56.

It was the first time since September 2015 that D1, D2 prices were above year ago levels.

Rail grade cows ranged \$195-\$200.

Bulls averaged \$122.38 per cwt., up 17 cents. Bull prices have rallied 20 percent from January lows. Higher yielding bulls are now trading in the low to mid \$140s.

There are reports that purebred bull prices have increased slightly since the beginning of the year.

Most of the cows bought on speculation and put on feed early in the new year have been marketed. Alberta cash cow prices are now at a slight discount to the U.S. utility market.

FEEDERS RISE

There was a big run of feeder cattle at auction facilities.

The feeder steer average rose \$3.07 per cwt., while heifers were up \$3.05.

The most noticeable price strength was on 650-725 pound feeders because demand for grass

cattle remains firm.

Steers 550 lb. traded at the highest level since late June 2016.

From their January lows, 550 lb. steer prices have rallied eight percent, the smallest first quarter rally in the past decade.

From the lows posted four weeks ago, 850 lb. steers have rallied \$8.50, but Alberta fed steer are now at a premium to 850 lb. feeders.

The five-year average for 800-900 lb. steers as a percent of fed steer prices stands at 117 percent for March.

Based on that average, steers should be closer to \$200, compared to the current price of about \$169.

Deferred live cattle futures are at a significant discount to current cash prices.

There is little price slide between weight classes. Some feeders weighing more than 1,000 lb. are fetching the same price as 900 lb.

cattle.

Over the past three weeks, feeder exports have ranged from 3,400-4,700 head, which is down from last year when exports ranged 5,000-7,300 head.

U.S. BEEF RISES

U.S. boxed beef prices to March 23 rose with Choice up US\$1.14 at \$222.28 and Select up 84 cents at \$215.77.

With the strong rally in the last few weeks, the cutout is now only one percent below last year.

U.S. cattle slaughter surged four percent to 613,000 head. That was 14 percent larger than the same week last year.

Weekly Canadian boxed beef prices to March 11 rose 44 cents to C\$274.76 per cwt. on AAA and \$5.03 to \$271.72 on AA.

Canadian prices were still four to six percent below last year.

This cattle market information is selected from the weekly report from Canfax, a division of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. More market information, analysis and statistics are available by becoming a Canfax subscriber by calling 403-275-5110 or at www.canfax.ca.

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WP LIVESTOCK REPORT

HOGS LOWER

A large number of meat importers stopped taking Brazilian meat because of the bribery scandal, but that did little to raise Chicago hog futures. Cash hog supply was adequate for demand.

The U.S. national live price average for barrows and gilts was US\$52.34 per cwt. March 24, down from \$53.01 March 17.

U.S. hogs averaged \$64.38 on a carcass basis March 24, down from \$65.43 March 17.

The U.S. pork cutout was \$78.48 per cwt. March 24, down from \$81.60 March 17.

The estimated U.S. weekly slaughter for the week to March 25 was 2.313 million, down from 2.335 million the previous week.

Slaughter was 2.166 million last year at the same time.

In Canada, the March 25 Signature Five price was C\$166.39 per 100 kilograms, down from \$169.21 the previous week.

The price was \$75.47 o a per hundredweight basis, down from \$76.75 the previous week.

BISON STEADY

The Canadian Bison Association said Grade A bulls in the desirable weight range sold at prices up to C\$6.30-\$6.50 per pound hot hanging weight. U.S. buyers are offering US\$4.75 with returns dependent on exchange rates, quality and export costs.

Grade A heifers sold up to C\$6-\$6.30. U.S. buyers are offering US\$4.50. Animals outside the desirable buyer specifications may be discounted.

SHEEP STRONGER

Ontario Stockyards Inc. reported that 646 sheep and lambs and 22 goats traded March 20. All classes of lambs and goats traded steady to strong. Sheep sold steady.



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FOOD SAFETY

Cutting red tape OK, but preserve food safety rules

The rapid fallout from Brazil's meat scandal highlights the zero tolerance that importers have for any hint of danger when it comes to food.

A host of countries, including Canada, imposed restrictions on Brazil's meat and poultry, and market valuations of the country's major packers plunged by billions of dollars, leaving one to wonder why any meat company, indeed any food producer, would engage in underhanded dealings that would call into question its reputation for safety?

The situation also highlights the constant tension between the desire to let business be free of onerous government regulation while at the same time desiring that consumers be protected from unscrupulous or negligent operators who put dangerous food on the market.

Police dropped a bombshell on Brazil's successful meat industry March 17 when they announced they were investigating an apparent widespread scandal in which government officials were bribed to approve the sale and export of rotten and contaminated meat.

That set off a cascade of slamming doors as China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Switzerland and Canada announced partial or all-out bans on meat imports from Brazil, the world's largest beef and chicken exporter and fourth largest pork exporter by volume.

Meat processing giants JBS and BRF saw their stock price swoon.

Brazilian politicians were shaken by the international reaction and stepped in to try to calm fears. Agriculture Minister Blairo Maggi suited up in sanitary white coveralls for the media to photograph him inspecting a spotless poultry plant. The government issued statements that blamed the problem on the professional misconduct of a small number of workers rather than a "widespread malfunction of

the Brazilian system."

China, Egypt and Chile have since lifted their bans, but Brazil's meat industry has been damaged.

It is mystifying any time companies try to get around safety regulations just to collect the small profits from selling a tainted product.

It endangers the huge and incalculable value of reputation and good will of the directly involved business and perhaps of the whole industry.

And it weakens arguments that the food business needs less regulation and monitoring rather than more.

A lot of people in agriculture believe that there is too much government red tape in their lives, tying them up and inhibiting their productivity and growth.

In agricultural circles, there is a lot of support for initiatives such as Manitoba's Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act.

In the United States, agricultural leaders applauded when President Donald Trump signed executive orders to repeal and simplify regulations and to eliminate two old regulations for every new one brought in.

We are all for reducing bureaucracy, simplifying regulatory language and rational harmonization of regulation at each level of government and even across national borders.

However, when it comes to rules and regulations that aim to protect the public, such as ensuring that food is safe, then great care must be employed.

Thoughtless rule slashing to win political favour could endanger the public and make possible scandals that compromise the type of spotless reputation needed to build market share in this global economy.

Bruce Dyck, Barb Glen, Brian MacLeod, D'Arce McMillan and Michael Raine collaborate in the writing of Western Producer editorials.

CRAIG'S VIEW



BRAKES ON FARM EQUIPMENT

I showed CSA (Canadian Standards Association) the data and explained simply that we've got to ... make our equipment safe. If we don't, one of these days we're going to have that big accident. And when that happens, all our farm equipment will be legislated right off the public roads.

BRIAN OLSON
POWER PIN, PAGE 72

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Liberals embark on plan to boost agricultural industry

CAPITAL LETTERS



KELSEY JOHNSON

Ottawa's desire to lean on the country's agriculture industry to spur economic growth is big news for the sector, despite concerns around labour, funding and infrastructure gaps, farm groups say.

"That's a big target, but I think we're up to it," Canadian Federation of Agriculture president Ron Bonnett said post-budget.

He added that because the federal government set out a dollar figure goal instead of increased tonnage or yield, the target could be easier to achieve, thanks to value-added processing.

Ottawa wants Canadian food exports to grow to \$75 billion annually by 2025, an increase of nearly \$15 billion from current levels. The target was a key piece of the federal government's 2017 budget.

It's a big jump; one Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay said he thinks is achievable.

"When you look at what's taking place worldwide, it certainly is," he said in an interview March 25.

"It's obvious the government has put great emphasis on agriculture."

Global demand for protein and a growing middle class in Asia has provided market opportunities that are there for the taking, he added, a message the agriculture industry has been pushing in Ottawa for years.

"I want to make sure that our farmers and ranchers get a portion of that increase," MacAulay said.

Ottawa isn't the first government in this country to push the agriculture sector to grow its economic contributions.

As agriculture minister, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne challenged the sector in 2013 to double its annual growth and create 120,000 new jobs by 2020.

Four years later, that goal remains an industry target, despite concerns around labour, soaring power costs, a new provincial cap and trade carbon-trading system and the lure of investing south of the border.

If Ottawa is serious about expanding agricultural trade, Conservative agriculture critic David Anderson said the federal government must know when to interfere and when to mind its own business.

"If government will work alongside industry and let industry develop their capacity, typically they can reach that," he said. "If government thinks they're going to manage that growth or whatever, often you find that it just doesn't seem to work very well.

"Hopefully, we see them standing to the side and saying, 'we'll

assist in the development of these new opportunities and not thinking that we have to manage it through some government department. If that happens I'm sure we will never reach those targets," Anderson said.

MacAulay said federal investment will be needed, which he hopes his cabinet colleagues will be willing to provide now that the sector has been picked as a potential leader for economic growth.

The last federal budget did have some new money for agriculture, including more innovation funding and opening up the program to food processors.

The industry has also been named as one of the sectors eligible for \$950 million in "supercluster" money, funding meant for projects that can generate economic growth quickly. Most of that funding (\$800 million) was promised last year.

Expanding Canadian food processing is critical to achieving

Ottawa's new export target, MacAulay said.

"I think it's so important that we not only produce the food but we make sure we do as much processing in this country that we possibly can."

Still, farm groups warn innovation funding is only one piece of the puzzle. Getting products to market, reliable transportation, ensuring rural communities and businesses have access to reliable internet, securing farm labour, easing succession issues, and bridging the gap between people's forks and the farm are some of the other policy issues that must be looked into.

Some of those issues are expected to be raised during the ongoing agriculture policy framework negotiations underway between Ottawa and the provinces. Ottawa hasn't said how much it's willing to put into the collective pot.

Kelsey Johnson is a reporter with iPolitics, www.ipolitics.ca.

OPEN FORUM

WATER DRAINAGE CLOSURES

To the Editor:

The Saskatchewan Water Security Agency's recent policy of enforcing drainage closures will destroy the profitability of farming across two million acres of farmland within the Quill Lakes Basin. This policy will only serve to further deteriorate a damaged provincial economy, cause unnecessary financial ruin among the farmers of the basin, and do nothing to alleviate the real problem — the rising of the Quill Lakes.

It is agenda-driven, with a focus on optics and perception, rather than fact-driven with a focus on a solution.

In recent years, excessive moisture has plagued the Quill Lakes Basin. Using data from The Weather Network, since 2005 the Quill Lakes basin has received, on average, 202 inches of rain. This rainfall amount is unmatched in the recent history of the region.

By comparison, over the same period of time, the Saskatoon region has averaged only 91 inches, while the Yorkton region has averaged only 134 inches.

The Water Security Agency has opportunistically capitalized on this unprecedented weather to try to vilify farmers and their water management as the cause for the rising Quill Lakes. If drainage is the reason why the lakes are currently so high, then why, as stated in the recent KGS report (commissioned by the WSA and released Nov. 6, 2016) were they within a few inches of their current level in 1914?

For farmers, water management has allowed us to succeed through this current period of unprecedented rainfall. The KGS report shows that 92.4 percent of sloughs are less than five acres in size. On each quarter section of land there can be dozens of these. They can be so close to each other that it is often not possible to seed between them.

On a typical year, these are usually dry within one to three weeks after seeding. They are managed to allow farmers to seed earlier and avoid frost damage, or harvest before the snow.

If the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency could ruthlessly enforce the closures of drainage works, permitted and non-permitted, on all sloughs five acres or less, these potholes would hold back, according to their own research, 38.3 million cubic metres of water.

Based on the current area of the lakes, this would prevent them from rising only 1.9 inches. To put this in perspective, in the past 10 years, the lakes have risen by 248 inches.

This holding back of water would submerge 36,570 acres of productive farmland, but effectively destroy more than 100,000 acres, due to the proximity from each other and the extremely "gradual" shoreline of these potholes.

The Saskatchewan WSA refuses to acknowledge the contribution crops make to removing water from the basin. The average crop consumes 18 or more inches of water per acre during its life cycle. By growing a healthy crop in this area of 100,000 acres, 185.2 million cubic metres of water will be removed from the Quill Lakes basin, thereby preventing the Quill Lakes from rising by 9.3 inches. The crop grown removes

just about five times as much water as these potholes can hold.

At an average revenue of \$400 per acre, this would remove \$40 million from the local economy annually, not to mention added fuel, fertilizer, chemical and labour associated with driving around these potholes. The holding of water would also increase the salinity of the surrounding soil. The farming practices necessary to manage these flooded acres would contribute to increased nutrient runoff into the watershed, increased soil erosion, and increased carbon emissions through burning, tillage and added fuel.

The ecological benefits of zero-till would likely be abandoned.

In dry years, agriculture is blamed for consuming too much water. Ironically, agriculture is now blamed in this wet cycle for con-

tributing too much water. So which is it? Do our crops use water or not? It is difficult to fathom what the WSA hopes to accomplish by enforcing ditch closures in return for sacrificing so many family farms? One would hope that they would focus their efforts on explaining the benefits of responsible water management, rather than destroying farms only to appease a misguided public perception.

We are, and have always been, in the top five countries for food affordability. I believe this is taken for granted by those who are pushing their idealistic agenda of wetland restoration forward at the expense of agriculture in this province.

I have deep sympathy for the farmers who have lost land along the Quill Lakes, and for those who

are in danger of having their farmyards flooded by water. They have been begging the Wall government for a solution for more than five years. With this perverted policy of ditch closures, the Wall government is simply deflecting the blame, and in doing so, will fail the rest of the Quill Lakes basin as well.

More worrisome is the recent introduction of changes to the water security act through the Bill 44 proposal. This legislation, designed by the WSA, for the WSA, and ignoring all concerns by farmers and commodity groups, will only serve to give the WSA a bigger "stick" to enforce the stupidity of this and other ill-conceived policies they might pursue. It will remove the appeal board of the WSA, and will allow the ministry of environment to pursue fines of up

to \$1 million per day against farm families with no limit.

Most of us would be bankrupt by breakfast.

I am encouraging all farmers across Saskatchewan to please contact your MLA, the ministers of environment and agriculture and the premier. Tell them you are proud of what you do. Tell them you will no longer stand by and be vilified for events you can't control, and tell them to design policy and legislation that will continue to help agriculture drive the economy of this province. Tell them Bill 44 is a destruction of our landowners' rights and needs to be scrapped, along with the WSA for drafting and promoting this draconian legislation.

Jeff Pylatuik
Humbolt, Sask.



Dow AgroSciences

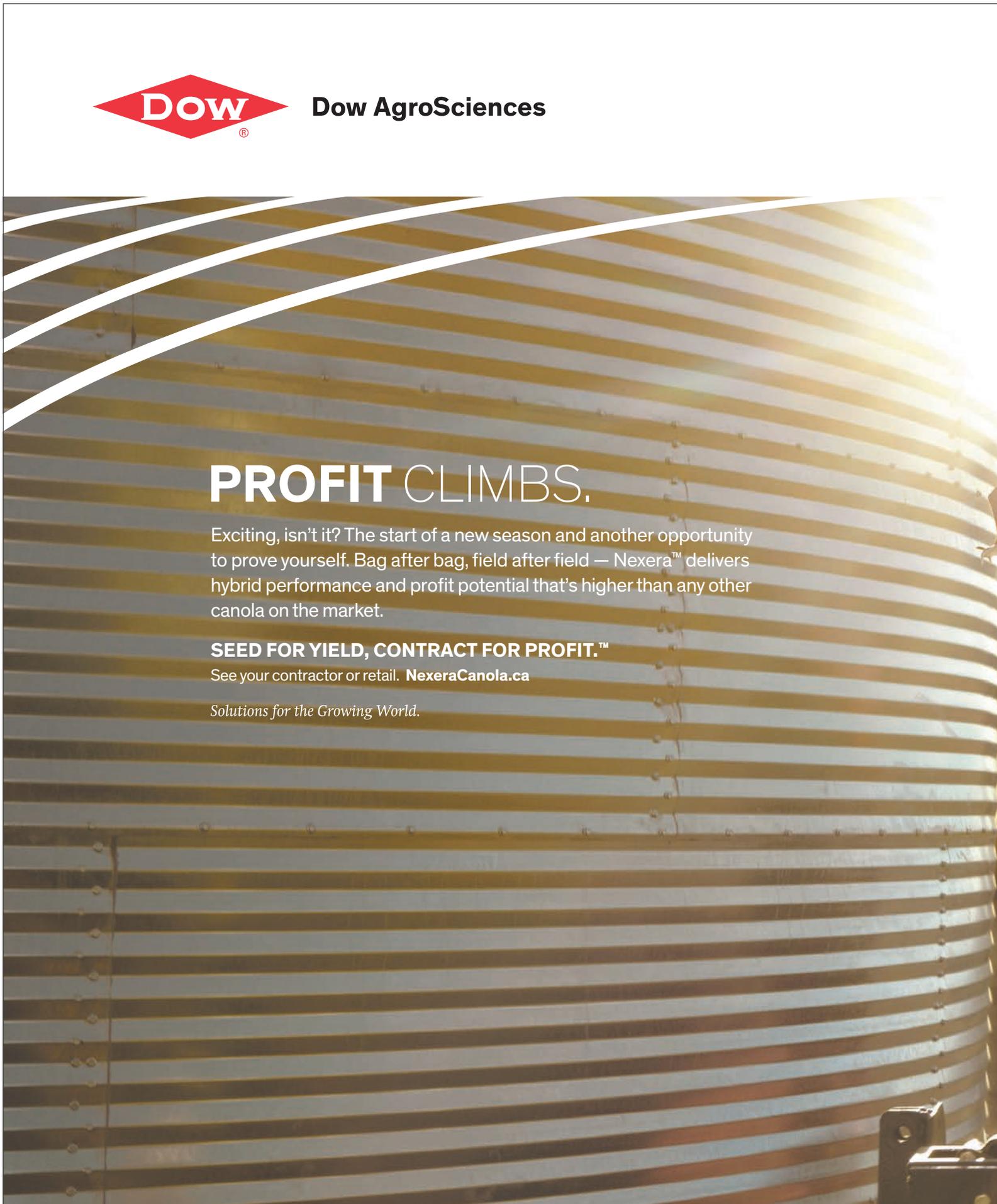
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ENTREPRENEUR RECOGNIZED

Pulse official gets prestigious award

BY SEAN PRATT
SASKATOON NEWSROOM

The president of AGT Food and Ingredients has received the prestigious Oslo Business for Peace Award.

"I guess I'm the first ever Canadian winner," said Murad Al-Katib.

Past recipients include Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group, David MacLennan, chief executive officer of Cargill, and Jeffrey Immelt, chair of GE.

"Some cool people have received it," said Al-Katib.

The Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce nominated him for the award.

"We are thrilled to see Mr. Al-Katib receive the prestigious recognition from the Business for

Peace Foundation," chamber executive director Kent Smith-Windsor said in a news release.

Al-Katib is one of four recipients of the 2017 award. A committee consisting of Nobel Laureates in peace and economic sciences picked the winners.

He is being recognized for the Regina company's work with the United Nations World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

AGT has helped optimize the procurement, consolidation and distribution process for getting 4.5 million family ration packages to international agencies for Syrian refugees. It has saved the partner organizations millions of dollars.

Al-Katib estimates the rations have provided 700 million refugee

meals. There are 62 million refugees around the world, 60 percent of which are women and children.

"It's not something we only did for philanthropy, it's something we did for business," he said.

A "big concentration" of those rations are filled with Canadian peas, lentils and chickpeas.

Al-Katib said he is proud to be recognized with the international award.

"I want to be a champion of compassionate entrepreneurship, a world in which entrepreneurs harness their energies to help society solve some of its problems."

Al-Katib will fly to Oslo, Norway, to receive the award May 16. He will be meeting with the Crown Prince of Norway.

sean.pratt@producer.com

OTTAWA SUPPORT

Farmers welcome federal budget's ag recognition

Support for innovation to increase food exports

BY KAREN BRIERE
REGINA BUREAU

Canadian farmers say last week's federal budget indicates that the government recognizes the economic growth the sector can drive.

The budget was short on details

but set a goal of increasing agri-food exports to \$75 billion annually by 2025.

It proposes to invest \$70 million over six years to support "agricultural discovery science and innovation," focusing on climate change and soil and water conservation.

As well, the agriculture department will receive a share of a \$200 million fund designed to develop clean technology.

Canadian Federation of Agriculture president Ron Bonnett said the budget highlighted agriculture's role in the government's innovation agenda.

"Farmers have been saying for years that agriculture is a strategic sector for Canada, given our vast natural resources, our research and technology, and our skilled labour force," he said in a statement.

Finance Minister Bill Morneau said the sector is positioned for success as global food demand rises.

"That means more demand for prairie canola, Atlantic crab and lobster, and B.C. berries," he said during his budget address.

"It also means more jobs in the fields of southwestern Ontario and on the maple syrup farms of Quebec's Eastern Townships. We will help farmers, producers and processors build their businesses globally and do so sustainably."

Conservative agriculture critic David Anderson said the budget offered no help for Canadians, particularly farmers, to prepare for a carbon tax that will cost a 3,000-acre farm \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year.

"The Liberals claim to identify agri-food as one of their priorities, but the money they're putting into the agri-food 'super cluster' is money that is recycled from Budget 2016," Anderson said in a news release.

The budget proposes an investment of up to \$950 million over five years to support super clusters that have the greatest potential to generate economic growth.

The government defines the clusters as dense areas of business activity, containing both large and small companies, academia and other companies that act as economic engines.

Bonnett said that certain items weren't mentioned in the budget, including tax policy that supports farm transfer to family members and commitments on rural infrastructure spending.

The budget said that the next agricultural policy framework is a priority and details would be forthcoming over the next year. Agriculture ministers are expected to sign the five-year agreement in July.

karen.briere@producer.com

FOR SASKATCHEWAN BUDGET COVERAGE, SEE PAGES 14, 15 AND 19.

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C A N O L A



SASKATCHEWAN BUDGET

Rural Sask. hit with funding, bus transportation cuts

BY KAREN BRIERE
REGINA BUREAU

Rural residents will notice the loss of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, says the head of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

Ray Orb said the government's decision to close the provincial bus company to freight as of May 19 and passengers as of May 31 is a concern.

"It's still a fairly valuable service, especially to some of the smaller communities, especially for seniors who might have problems getting into the bigger centre," he said after the budget speech announcing the decision.

"Obviously it's been subsidized quite highly.... I wish there was some alternative way that we could still operate a publicly owned transportation system that I think

still should be viewed as an asset to rural Saskatchewan."

STC served 253 communities, but the only profitable route was Regina to Saskatoon and occasionally Saskatoon to Prince Albert, said Finance Minister Kevin Doherty.

The closure will leave 224 people out of work.

Doherty choked up when asked about people left without jobs as a result of the budget. Another 230 cleaners in government buildings already knew their positions would be cut, and 80 health region employees will be cut through the move to a provincial health authority.

"I take no comfort in this... those are tough decisions," he said.

However, STC last turned a profit in 1979, and the government spent \$112 million over the last 10 years subsidizing the company. It estimated \$85 million was needed for the next five years.

The subsidy was \$25 per passenger 10 years ago and is now \$94.

STC has tried a number of ways over the years to entice more passengers. It also cut routes and changed schedules to try to save money, yet the subsidy continued

SINCE 1990, THE
NUMBER OF PEOPLE
TAKING THE BUS IS
DOWN BY ABOUT

600,000

to grow and ridership dropped.

The corporation estimated 182,400 people would take the bus this year. In 1990, nearly 788,000 rode the bus.

Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan president

Todd Lewis said the loss will be felt in many communities.

"Certainly the STC (cut) is disproportionately a hit against rural Saskatchewan without doubt," he said. "Transit in the rest of Canada is pretty important, but we don't have it in rural Saskatchewan now in a lot of cases."

The government says the private sector could step in to provide both freight and passenger services to areas where there is demand.

Rural residents used the bus to get to medical appointments in larger centres, and many farmers used the freight service to get parts and supplies.

Funding for rural roads was also cut this year. SARM had wanted the Municipal Roads for the Economy Program budget to be reinstated to the \$25.5 million it used to be.

Last year, it was set at \$16 million and in this budget it is \$14 million.

Orb said the province had come back to the municipalities last year and cut it from the original amount, so the \$14 million isn't too far off where they already were.

"Obviously citing the economic state of our economy, we're going to work more efficiently," he said.

SARM works with the highways ministry and project management board on road projects, and Orb said they will share services where possible and "stretch that money as far we as we can."

Revenue sharing funding for municipalities is down this year as expected. The government provides revenue from one percentage point of the provincial sales tax to municipalities, but it is based on revenue from two years' prior.

Rural municipalities will receive \$72.8 million this year compared to nearly \$77 million last year.

karen.briere@producer.com

SASKATCHEWAN BUDGET

Short-line rail operators say cut to sustainability grant a hit to economy

Eliminating the \$900,000 grant, matched by shortlines, takes almost \$2 million from local economy

BY KAREN BRIERE
REGINA BUREAU

Saskatchewan short-line railways say the chance to buy provincially owned rail cars doesn't offset the loss of a \$900,000 annual sustainability grant they would no longer receive.

Perry Pellerin, president of the Western Canadian Short Line Railway Association, said the 13 short lines could use the cars but he doesn't know if they could afford them. As well, the cars have only 14 years of life left, according to the Association of American Railroads rules.

The province announced in its budget released last week that 900 provincial cars would be sold and short-line rail companies are first in line.

However, Pellerin expressed worry about other costs.

He said the revenue from the cars, which the province leased to railroads, paid for a sustainability grant offered on a cost-shared basis to shortlines. It paid for maintenance and track infrastructure upgrades.

"If you take their \$900,000 we used to have to match that, that's almost \$2 million that went back into the local economy and that's all gone now," he said.

According to the corporation's 2015-16 annual report, lease revenue from the cars was a record \$2.7 million. Slightly more than half the cars were leased to Canadian Pacific Railway and 46 percent were leased to Last Mountain Railway as of July 31, 2016.

Since the corporation purchased 1,000 cars in 1981 for \$55 million, it paid \$20.5 million in dividends to the general revenue fund. Hopper car total revenue was \$35.2 million.

One hundred cars were taken out of service after they were destroyed.

The government said the cost today to replace all 1,000 cars would be about \$100 million.

Highways Minister David Marit wouldn't say how much the remaining cars are worth. The book value in the annual report is \$6.3 million. He said short-line operators were aware in November that they would be offered the cars.



DAVID MARIT
HIGHWAYS MINISTER

"They were positive on that they were going to be able to do their financing and we did offer a mechanism for them to do that," Marit said.

The decision to cut the sustainability grant was difficult, he said, because it levered two-to-one dollars. The province has promised to help find money for the short lines through federal environmental programs that would reward moving traffic off roads and onto rail.

Pellerin said with only 14 years to use the cars, the government might as well have hung onto them.

He said short lines have significant expenses coming from new crossing and bridge regulations.

He also questioned how the government would reach a decision if bids for the cars from a short line and from another bidder are close.

"Would they take a little hit?" he asked. "They haven't told us."

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FOOD SAFETY

CFIA results on glyphosate testing apt to be controversial

The report may change how consumers view the safety of food in Canada

BY ROBERT ARNASON
BRANDON BUREAU

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is about to release a report that could change the public perception of glyphosate.

Since 2015, CFIA scientists have been testing food for residues of glyphosate, a product best known by the Roundup brand name, although other brands and generic exist. It is the most popular herbicide in the world.

In 2016, the CFIA said it was planning to test a long list of foods and commodities, including juices, grains, grain products, beans, peas, lentils, soybean products and barley.

Before these tests, the CFIA had not monitored food for residues of the herbicide.

In an email, the agency said it would release an executive summary of the report in a food safety testing bulletin in about a month.

"The executive summary will provide context to what that report means for the health and safety of consumers. An email notification will also be sent to subscribers of the CFIA's *Reports on Food Safety Testing*."

The report could generate a great deal of media attention in Canada because glyphosate is one of the most controversial agricultural chemicals in Europe and America.

Last year, the European Union came close to banning it because of a scientific report from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Health report

In March of 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a WHO division, concluded that glyphosate is "probably carcinogenic" to humans.

The IARC decision rocked the scientific status quo around glyphosate, as previous studies and most toxicologists had concluded that it's not carcinogenic.

The IARC report spawned countless lawsuits in the U.S., with environmental groups suing companies over glyphosate residues in foods like granola bars and honey.

California may soon require that glyphosate products carry a label saying it's a cancer threat because of the IARC ruling.

Environmental groups are waiting on the CFIA report because it could alter the public debate in Canada.

"Naturally, we welcome the Canadian Food Inspection Agency publishing data on glyphosate contamination levels in food. People have a right to know what risks they're taking when they go food shopping," said Eoin Dubsy, from SumOfUs, a global group dedicated to curbing the power of corporations.

"Publicly revealing glyphosate contamination levels in food could also help producers and brands think over their relationship to glyphosate and hopefully

we'll hear smarter food industry players committing to cut the toxic stuff and regain consumer trust."

The CFIA report comes at a time when IARC and the credibility of its study are under attack.

The European Food Safety Authority, WHO, Health Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have studied the risk and said the herbicide doesn't cause cancer.

In mid-March, the European

Chemicals Agency said direct contact can cause eye damage, and chronic exposure poses a risk to aquatic life, but it said glyphosate isn't carcinogenic to humans.

"The available scientific evidence did not meet the criteria ... to classify glyphosate for specific target organ toxicity, or as a carcinogen, as a mutagen or for reproductive toxicity."

robert.arnason@producer.com

PRODUCER COMPENSATION

Sask. to use AgriRecovery to fund TB quarantine costs

BY KAREN BRIERE
REGINA BUREAU

Saskatchewan has signed an agreement with Ottawa to try to recover funds it spent to help producers affected by bovine tuberculosis quarantines.

The AgriRecovery initiative was signed earlier this month after the province helped producers with the costs of keeping animals that should have gone to market.

Agriculture Minister Lyle Stewart had said in January that the government would compensate producers through the existing budget because the total wasn't expected to be more than \$100,000.

There are five affected producers

on four premises.

Under the terms of the agreement, Ottawa would pay 60 percent of the costs, or about \$60,000, and Saskatchewan would pay 40 percent.

Final costs aren't yet known.

However, costs eligible for payment include up to 90 percent of cleaning and disinfection and daily payments for feed, yardage and interest carrying costs.

Feed and yardage are reimbursed at 90 percent of \$3.49 per day per cull animal and bred heifer and \$2.28 per calf. Interest is also paid at 90 percent of 15 cents per cull animal and bred heifer and 14 cents per calf.

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LOOKING BACK

Racism an old issue with sad history

Few Canadians remember the horrific mistreatment of Japanese citizens during the Second World War

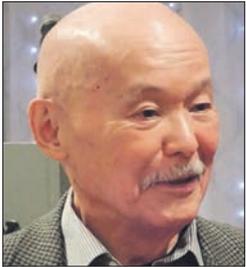
BY BARB GLEN
LETHBRIDGE BUREAU

Racism around the globe is getting a lot of attention these days.

Much of it relates to "Islamophobia" and U.S. political actions that affect immigrants.

But few Canadians consider the racism that was directly aimed at Japanese Canadians nearly 80 years ago that can serve as a warning today.

George Takashima, a retired educator, hospital chaplain and pastor, was a child when the Canadian government in February 1942 forced Japanese people to move away from the British Columbia coast to internment camps further inland.



GEORGE TAKASHIMA
RETIRED

It was a direct response to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour during the Second World War but more than half the approximately 23,000 Japanese living in Canada at that time were born here.

Nevertheless, while these Japanese Canadians were interned in camps or forced to live elsewhere in the country, their homes, farms, fishing boats and businesses were sold.

It is a chapter in Canadian history that is inadequately told, said Takashima.

"In this day and age, with Trumpism on the rise, we need to be aware of what can happen not only in the United States but here in Canada, and so we need to make sure that this kind of thing does not repeat itself again."

In recent years, Takashima has conducted bus tours of internment camp ghost towns in B.C.'s West Kootenays and is sharing stories about the Japanese Canadian wartime and post-war experience.

Not all Japanese Canadians welcome his activities, he said, during an address at the Southern Alberta Council on Public Affairs.

"Some of the Japanese would say, 'what's the purpose of telling your story?' And the purpose is it's a history that people need to know. It's a history that we need to learn from," Takashima said.

"It's only in recent years that there have been units of studies developed by groups of teachers across the land in high school, but it's never been part of the curriculum



and this is one of the aims that we wanted to pursue, was to get this story told through the curriculum."

That story would include the 1942 edict from government, telling Japanese Canadians to take only what they could carry and report for transport to places unknown. Some of those places proved to be hastily established camps near New Denver, Greenwood, Kaslo and the Slokan Valley of B.C.

Takashima said the larger shacks erected in New Denver were about four by eight metres and were shared by two families. In most cases, those two families had never met each other until forced to share a building.

Built of green lumber and initially without running water or electricity, the shacks soon developed cracks, subjecting inhabitants to weather and forcing them to take what steps they could to block the drafts and stay warm.

About 12,000 people went to the camps, and others were sent east of the Rockies into southern Alberta and Manitoba, where many worked in sugar beet fields.

Those who resisted internment were sent to prisoner of war camps in Ontario. History shows racism against Japanese Canadians existed long before the war and extended long afterward.

Caucasians in British Columbia

viewed the Japanese as "undesirables" and prevented them from voting and having meaningful citizenship, Takashima said.

Canada was also at war with Germany and Italy during the Second World War, but nothing happened to those citizens at the time.

"Those Germans and Italians living in Canada, and their offspring, were never rounded up. They never lost their property," said Takashima.

"Why the Japanese? That tells me that it was a kind of racism that really existed more in B.C. and that the federal government was only trying to appease the B.C. government and the politicians there."

Those who came to southern

Alberta also faced racism, as recounted in *The Homefront in Alberta*, a history of the province during the war years.

The government opposed the placement of Japanese Canadians in the province and demanded they be removed at the end of the war. Those who did come were promised decent housing and standards of living but many ended up living in granaries and chicken coops and restrictions were placed on where they could work, live and move.

History shows the internment addressed no threat to national security. As the *Canadian Encyclopedia* recounts: "The military threat cited to justify the evacuation of the



ABOVE: Amber Magnusson, left, receives coaching from Nancy Maurer about how to lean into a horse to relax and hear its heart beat.

LEFT: Magnusson and Maurer are surrounded by attention seeking animals, including Little Angel, a miniature horse. They visit nursing homes and birthday parties as part of the services offered by Discovery Ranch. | CHRISTALEE FROESE PHOTOS

ON THE FARM

Passions combined to help people with problems

Retired dairy farmer turns barns into meeting rooms and arena to provide equine-assisted psychotherapy for clients with mental illness

BY CHRISTALEE FROESE
FREELANCE WRITER

GRENFELL, Sask. — For four decades, Nancy Maurer has been in careers providing needed goods and services to people as a lab and X-ray technician and dairy farmer.

When she retired in 2011, she knew that helping people would

have to continue.

After she and her husband, Daryl, and Lavern and Jan Maurer sold the dairy herd and milk quota and rented the land, Maurer saw an opportunity to combine her passion for horses and people through an equine therapy service.

“I’ve always loved to help people, it didn’t matter if it was my kid or

someone else’s kid, or my dog, that’s just part of who I am,” said the mother of four adult children.

At age 60, Maurer took a leap of faith, travelling to the United States to take an EAGALA equine therapy course and converting the family’s barn and cow shed into a meeting room and indoor arena.

She established a non-profit cor-

poration and began seeking clients to work with her, social workers and 15 horses at Discovery Ranch.

The equine assisted psychotherapy and learning ranch offers a variety of services, including sessions for individuals, couples and families and workshops and camps dealing with specific ailments like post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.

Some clients are referred to Maurer by social workers or educators, while others find the ranch through word of mouth.

Maurer said the addition of horses to the therapy mix helps speed up both issue identification and healing.

“It’s the intuition that the horse has that makes them very special for therapy,” said Maurer, who works in tandem with a social worker or psychologist.

There’s no hiding your feelings from a horse because they already know what’s happening inside. The horses will mirror what is going on with the client.

NANCY MAURER
EQUINE THERAPIST

“There’s no hiding your feelings from a horse because they already know what’s happening inside. The horses will mirror what is going on with the client.”

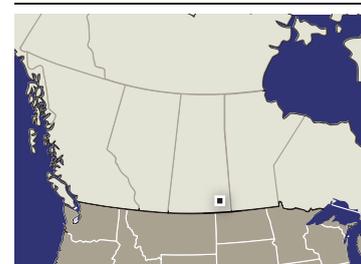
The quick identification of issues allows clients to learn to release their anxieties and fears.

“If I have someone who is having trouble opening up, I say, ‘take this horse for a walk and go to a quiet place and thank it for its attention and then tell it something you’ve never told anyone before,’” said Maurer, adding that the ability to tell troubles to a non-judgmental being often sets something in her clients free.

Maurer said she has observed complete turnarounds in clients after working with the horses.

“We had a young fellow come to

ON THE FARM



DISCOVERY RANCH
Grenfell, Sask.

us several years ago and he had cuts all the way up his arms from harming himself and he was into drugs and was hanging out with a bad crowd,” said Maurer, who has worked with the boy for the past two years on a weekly basis.

He is now 16 years old, drug free and has stopped harming himself.

“He’s really quite a wonderful fellow and he simply would not have done well in talk therapy because he has a hard time finding words,” said Maurer.

She points to one particular equine therapy exercise that was life changing for the youngman. He had to design a course for the horse to move through, adding four obstacles that were problems in his life. As he led the horse along the path, the final obstacle stopped the horse completely and caused it to protest strongly.

“That horse would back up or pull to the right or the left. It wasn’t going anywhere near that obstacle,” said Maurer.

The social worker subsequently took the boy outside for a talk and found out that the blockage was thoughts of suicide and the boy was finally able to discuss the issue openly, releasing some of the anxiety around it.

Amber Magnusson, an equine massage therapist who has been working with Maurer for more than a year, said the equine therapist has a special ability to communicate with clients.

“Nancy’s energy helps you, too, because she’s so laid back and always smiling and laughing and that makes you feel very welcome and you know she wants the best for you,” said Magnusson.



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TRAVEL

Nicaragua rich in natural and historic treasures

TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

The looming peak of Telica volcano gradually got closer as our Land Cruiser bumped along the rough trail. At road's end, we hiked up the steep hillside, huffing and puffing as steam belched from Telica's gaping crater.

We reached the top just before sunset, when the sun and clouds co-operated in a dazzling show, and it felt like we were on top of the world looking over peaks and volcano cones dotting the countryside. The real show came after dark.

Our guide led us slowly and carefully to the lip of the crater, flashlights in hand, and crawling on hands and knees the last few metres so as not to inadvertently step over the brink. Peering over the edge into the abyss, we could see the mesmerizing sight of molten-hot red lava swirling far below.

It was the lure of seeing volcanoes that first piqued our interest in Nicaragua but we found a lot more, including a mix of spectacular natural attractions and historic colonial treasures, combined with friendly people and moderate costs.

As a bonus, it's considered one of the safer countries in the region to visit.

The capital Managua is a sprawling urban jungle with no redeeming features. Like many visitors, we headed straight from the airport to the nearby pleasant historic city of Granada.

Founded in 1524 on the shores of Lake Nicaragua, it's considered the oldest European city on mainland America and is known for its many well-preserved colonial buildings.

The city of Leon is similarly endowed with colonial treasures, its centrepiece being the colossal 18th century cathedral. It's the largest in Central America and a UNESCO world heritage site.

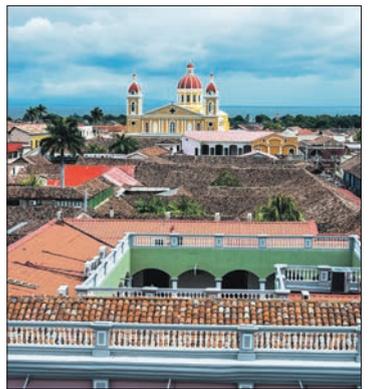
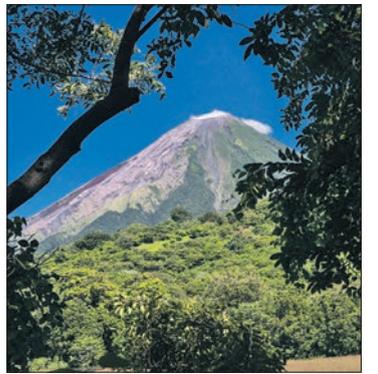
Revolutionary history is especially prevalent in Leon, where monuments galore celebrate the Sandinista overthrow of dictator Anastasio Somoza in the late 1970s.

Both cities make great bases for exploring the countryside. We did our Telica trip from Leon, while from Granada, we visited Momabacho volcano, almost perpetually encased in a moist cloud forest, and Masaya volcano, one of few active volcanoes in the world to have a road right up to the crater rim.

Just next to Masaya's parking lot, we peered over the edge into the massive boiling cauldron. When Spanish conquistadors first saw this sight, they dubbed it the mouth of hell.

Besides volcanoes, Nicaragua's defining natural feature is massive Lake Nicaragua. We took a ferry to the largest island, Ometepe, which is hour glass shaped and dominated by two towering volcanoes.

Lightly populated, the island is a Biosphere Reserve, its natural forests home to monkeys and other creatures, black sand beaches and the unique Eye of the Water Spring,



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Leon's massive cathedral is a popular tourist attraction.

Concepcion volcano is one of two volcanoes on the hour glass-shaped Ometepe Island.

Spider monkeys frolic in the trees near Lake Nicaragua.

A view of the colonial buildings of Granada, one of the oldest European cities in South America.

This is the lookout over Masaya volcano.

A fisherman casts his net early in the morning at Lake Nicaragua.

The beach resort of San Juan del Sur is close to a turtle sanctuary and offers late-night guided tours.

ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN PHOTOS

where crystal clear water forms a natural swimming pool, surrounded by jungle greenery.

Mostly, the island remains a pleasant getaway where life moves a bit slower.

One highlight of our visit wasn't planned. We heard reports that Olive Ridley turtles were coming ashore by the thousands to nest, so we headed to San Juan del Sur on the Pacific coast. Most famous as a beach resort, the town is also close

to a turtle sanctuary.

During nesting season, late-night guided tours are offered. We were only allowed flashlights with a dim red light that doesn't disturb the turtles.

As each wave washed up onto the beach, more turtles would suddenly appear in the moonlight. The narrow beach soon became crowded with turtles trying to find the ideal spot to dig their nest.

It wasn't unusual for a nearly

metre-long giant to silently appear at our feet, totally oblivious to us. Laboriously, she scooped away the sand with her hind flippers and started laying eggs. She then covered the eggs with sand and headed back to sea.

It was a privilege to be in the midst of one of nature's age-old rituals.

Arlene and Robin Karpan are well-travelled writers based in Saskatoon. Contact: travel@producer.com.

GREEN ENERGY

Alberta announces \$54,000 solar project for Lethbridge

BY BARB GLEN
LETHBRIDGE BUREAU

St. Patrick's day, with its signature colour of green, is an ideal time to make an announcement about greener energy, quipped Lethbridge Mayor Chris Spearman.

He was on hand March 17 to hear Alberta Environment Minister Shannon Phillips announce plans to erect solar panels at the Farm Stewardship Centre, which is a government building.

The centre will install a 15-kilowatt photovoltaic system on the building at a cost of \$54,000.

The money will come from funds generated through the provincial

climate leadership plan.

"The power of the sun is something that we can and should harness," said Phillips.

"It's especially true here in Lethbridge. We have one of the best solar resources on the North American continent here in southern Alberta and it's certainly something that if we take advantage of, we will reduce our costs and create jobs."

Phillips said the Farm Stewardship Centre, which conducts research on energy efficiency and environmental impacts and stewardship, will become more energy efficient itself with the solar installation.

"This investment is an example of when the government walks the walk. We end up delivering those benefits to the communities and to the taxpayers and the citizens of this province."

The government has implemented a municipal solar program, an on-farm energy management program and the Alberta indigenous solar program since taking office.

"There will be more to come over the course of this year," Phillips said. "It is part of the government's larger efforts to invest in infrastructure-related projects and programs that will lead to measurable greenhouse gas reductions."



Solar panels like these will become more common fixtures in Alberta as the province expands investment in green energy. | FILE PHOTO

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OPEN LETTER

The Co-op Refinery Complex (CRC) in Regina, which supplies fuel to Co-op members and customers across the West, has been negotiating a new agreement with union employees for more than a year.

Unfortunately, negotiations broke down. Last week, the union rejected CRC's final offer and we're preparing for the possibility of a labour disruption at the Refinery.

We expect that you will hear from the Toronto-based union about this situation, but we want you to hear the facts.

We value producers and are committed to getting fuel to their farms.

Farmers founded the CRC to fuel their farms. We understand that Western Canada's two biggest projects every year are seeding and harvest. We also know that the gasoline and diesel produced at the CRC fuels a significant portion of farm operations. With seeding about to get underway, we're committed to getting producers the fuel needed to put crops in the ground.

We reinvest profits in Co-op communities.

The union will tell you that Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL), which owns CRC, made a large profit last year. They paint us as a big corporation that's squeezing concessions from its workers to make larger profits.

What the Toronto-based union doesn't tell you is that we're not a publicly traded company sending away dividends to distant shareholders. We're a co-operative based in Saskatchewan. Because we're a co-operative, we share our profits. The majority of the profits from the CRC and FCL's other businesses are returned to the 196 local co-ops across Western Canada that own FCL.

We want a competitive Refinery that provides a return on Co-op members' investments.

Local co-ops pass along much of the money they receive from FCL's profits to their local members through annual equity cheques. Many of you will appreciate this fact because you're members of a local Co-op—along with 1.8 million others in Western Canada—and receive cash back from your farm purchases.

We're committed to getting a deal that helps the CRC stay competitive in the long-term so that it can continue to provide a return on the investments that Co-ops and their members have made.

So no matter what you hear, the fact is that Co-op has always been there to fuel farms and we will be there again this spring. We'll make sure that the Refinery keeps operating so that your local Co-op can supply fuel to producers across the West this spring.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Scott Banda".

D. Scott Banda
CEO, Federated Co-operatives Limited

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Farmers, journalists and academics: a clash of cultures

AGRICULTURE



ED WHITE

I recently tried to stand like a little bridge connecting two small and unusual subcultures, while straddling a third subculture.

It made me realize how odd journalists and farmers can seem to those who live outside their subcultures, and how difficult it can be for members of each to understand the other.

And I was pleased to see the third

subculture, the university, doing what it could to create a better connection between farmers and journalists, since there is a real danger of those professions and realities falling far out of touch with each other.

Four other journalists and I were brought in to the University of Manitoba's School of Agriculture to speak to agriculture diploma students about how to interact with the media.

It was their Advanced Communications course, and the existence of that class shows that the school understands how important it is for farmers to know how to talk about what they do.

I was brought in to give them my thoughts on how to deal with controversial issues brought to them

by urban reporters. For two sessions I conducted mock interviews in which the soon-to-be-back-farming students got a chance to feel what it might be like to be hit with questions about animal welfare, sustainability, supply management and the role of women in agriculture.

Those are all issues that drag farmers into the spotlight and these young farmer-students are likely to end up leading farm organizations, where they may have to address these sorts of questions.

There are unique elements of farmer and journalism culture that could lead to misunderstandings and I helped them prepare in order to avoid those misunderstandings.

It made me realize how odd it must be for the average person to

pick up the phone and suddenly have a reporter (like me) jabbering into their ear about some allegation, claim or suspicion that has been raised about what they do.

It's partly the nature of the reporter's job (working on deadlines, chasing after just-erupted controversies, needing to have a professional skepticism about everything) and partly the nature of the kind of people drawn to journalism (inveterate skeptics, enemies of vested interests, underdog champions) that I think often makes a lot of us seem aggressive and even hostile when dealing with controversial issues.

I tried to explain how that isn't a sign of bias, but just a professional demeanour that we don't neces-

sarily realize we have. Almost every journalist I have known is honest, open-minded and wants to get the story right, so farmers like these students need to know they can talk to reporters and probably be fairly treated.

However, farmers aren't always comfortable talking to media because of those twin hallmarks of farmer culture: humility and pride.

Farmers generally don't like drawing attention to themselves or their families. That's what I've found in two-and-a-half decades of covering them. They tend to shy away from talking about themselves because of a general "nothing special about me" attitude in many farm communities where nobody wants to be seen as thinking they're a hot shot.

But that might be what an urban reporter needs to understand an agricultural issue. Complex and controversial issues make more sense when they are seen through the lens of a real human situation, and that's what a farmer can provide when reached by a reporter.

I urged them to not get offended or defensive if hit with aggressive-seeming questions because whatever the reporter's assumptions are when they call, if they speak honestly with the reporter, they'll probably find the reporter will treat them pretty well.

But that's where the third subculture, the university, comes in, complicating things.

I found as I mock-interviewed the students that they continually shied away from talking about their own farms and instead seemed most comfortable discussing the complexities of the issue itself, rather than the ground-level reality in which they live.

That, of course, makes sense if you consider what these students have been doing for two years. At university they haven't been encouraged to be folksy, relaxed and pithy. They have been studying the complexities of agriculture, of farm business management, of regulatory issues.

Using the words "I," "me" or "my" is probably pretty rare in their discussions of farm issues. So they get what you could call "educated person syndrome" and talk in the abstract and general.

That's great at times, but what the reporter probably needs from a farmer is a snapshot of the reality of the issue as it applies to their farming family.

To provide some personal truth might take re-engineering from the abstracting norms of university culture, some getting over the humility of farming culture and patience when facing the aggression of reporter culture, but it's probably the best way to get true farming stories out to the public.

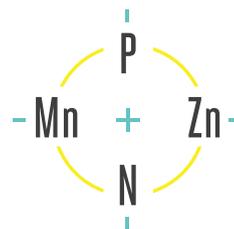


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25 YEARS AGO

Canadian grain exports in jeopardy

FROM THE ARCHIVES



BRUCE DYCK

The Western Producer takes a weekly look at some of the stories that made headlines in issues of the paper from 75, 50, 25 and 10 years ago.

75 YEARS AGO: MARCH 26, 1942

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool president J.H. Wesson added his voice to the chorus demanding that the initial wheat price be increased to \$1 a bushel. Wesson said this could be done without cost to the federal treasury.

Canadian National Railways had its most successful financial year in 1941 with a cash surplus of \$4.016 million. Net revenue was \$66.608 million, a \$21 million increase from the previous year.

50 YEARS AGO: MARCH 30, 1967

The basic buying price for a pound of butter increased to 63 cents a pound, while spray processed skim milk powder increased to 20 cents.

J.A. Hoes of the federal research station in Morden, Man., urged farmers to grow only rust-resistant flax varieties. He said it was the only way to control the disease in flax. Rust-resistant flax varieties included Bolley, Noralta, Nor-

land, Raja, Redwood, Redwood 65 and Rocket.

25 YEARS AGO: MARCH 26, 1992

Canadian grain exports to Russia were in jeopardy after the ships sent to pick up the grain were found to be infested with Asian gypsy moth eggs. The federal government had banned ships carrying the moth eggs because of concerns that an outbreak could damage Canadian forests and prompt a boycott of west coast ports by international shippers.

Canadian farmers intended to grow a record 36.5 million acres of wheat and 8.1 million acres of canola in 1992, according to Statistics Canada's March seeding intentions report. Summer fallow was expected to fall to 19.4 million acres, the lowest level since 1940.

10 YEARS AGO: MARCH 29, 2007

David Warner, a sound studio builder from California, bought the failed Parkland Strawboard plant in Kamsack, Sask., as part of his plan to build strawboard panels using technology developed by the Alberta Research Council. He had got the idea for the venture while building a studio for the Grateful Dead in San Francisco in the late 1990s.

The Canadian Wheat Board said it might not have any choice but to stop selling barley if the federal government put the crop on the open market. And the wheat board wars raged on.

bruce.dyck@producer.com

INPUT COSTS

U.S. duty, infrastructure plans key to keeping diesel prices down

BY DAVE SIMS
COMMODITY NEWS SERVICE CANADA

WINNIPEG — Sinking prices for crude oil and a softer Canadian dollar have kept diesel prices relatively low for Canadian farmers this year, and they could be heading lower, as long as U.S. President Donald Trump's infrastructure plan doesn't get in the way.

"I would probably say in Canada you're going to see numbers trickle lower here in the next month," said Tom Kloza of the Oil Price Information Service in New Jersey.

As of March 21, diesel prices across the Prairies were about \$1 a litre. Kloza said North America is "sort of scraping bottom" when it comes to prices for oil, gas and diesel.

One reason was the mild winter across much of North America.

However, he said the long-term bias is pointed higher, and a few months from now today's diesel prices in Western Canada may look cheap.

He said farmers will likely be paying more for diesel during harvesting than seeding. But there is much uncertainty in the market.

The Organization of the Petro-

leum Exporting Countries decided late last year to reduce oil production. That lifted crude prices early in 2017, but more recently rising crude stocks in the U.S. pushed crude back below \$50 per barrel.

"The problem with the OPEC cuts is they only run through the first six months of the year, and there are a lot of things in the second six months of the year that might send prices lower," he said.

On the other hand, Trump's pledge to put in place policies that would lead to \$1 trillion of private and public money spent on U.S. infrastructure over 10 years could lead to new fuel demand that would lift diesel prices.

"Money for infrastructure usually enhances demand for diesel."

There is another possibility as well, Kloza said.

"There is a small chance, though, that Mr. Trump and the Republican Congress might try to put through an import duty on everything, including oil prices," he said.

That would have a drastic effect on the market, he added.

"That would raise the price of gasoline, diesel and jet fuel by 35 or 40 cents immediately."



Co-op products were demonstrated at a Saskatchewan Co-operatives Women's Guild course at an unknown location in June 1958. | FILE PHOTO

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AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Survey finds trade, market access top priorities in Sask.

Tapping export opportunities ranked number one, followed by expansion of the value-added and food processing sector

BY KAREN BRIERE
REGINA BUREAU

Saskatchewan producers say trade and market access are top priorities for the next agriculture policy framework.

According to the provincial government, 887 people, three-quarters of them producers, responded to a recent online survey on the non-business risk management components of the framework.

Other respondents were consumers, organizations, processors, researchers and business.

Of the producer participants, half were grain growers and a quarter were livestock producers, while 18

percent were mixed operations. Vegetable growers, dairy, honey and poultry and egg producers also participated.

Nearly half of all respondents selected trade and new market access as the greatest opportunity for the province's agriculture industry in the next five to 10 years. The growing value-added and processing sector came in at 39 percent, followed by innovative crop and livestock production and management at 33 percent.

Respondents said new innovations in crop and livestock breeding and genetics, increased use of farm business management practices and technology to manage

production were also opportunities.

The survey also asked about risks. Consumer perception of agriculture was identified as the greatest risk at 23 percent, followed by changes to market access at 15 percent and environment and climate change at 14 percent.

Plant and animal disease threats, farm succession, transportation and storage, food safety and security, the implementation of a carbon tax, high input costs, low prices, small profit margins and increasing farm sizes were all also mentioned.

Asked specifically about the six priorities from the Calgary State-

ment signed by agriculture ministers last July, respondents again said markets and trade would have the greatest impact on the industry, followed by science and innovation, public trust, value-added agriculture and processing, risk management and environment and climate change.

However, the report notes responses differed when producers were separated from other respondents.

"All demographic groups frequently indicated that markets and trade, and science, research and innovation will have a great impact on agriculture," the report said.

"Producers tend to place more

emphasis on public trust, while other groups tend to emphasize environmental sustainability and climate change."

In terms of funding, respondents were asked to allocate a budget to the six priority areas.

Science, research and innovation was allocated 22 percent, followed by markets and trade at 21 percent, risk management at 16 percent, value added and processing at 15 percent, environment and climate change at 14 percent and public trust at 12 percent.

Full survey results can be found at www.saskatchewan.ca/Growing-Forward2.

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