

JANUARY 2024



A canola field.

Sask. farmers produce some of the world's most sustainable crops: GIFS at USask study

BY DAN YATES

Saskatchewan farmers are producing some of the least carbon-intensive crops in Canada and the world, as highlighted in a carbon life cycle analysis commissioned by the Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask).

The two-part study commissioned in 2022 examined the carbon footprint from the production of five Canadian field crops – canola, non-durum wheat, field peas, durum wheat, and lentils. It compared these footprints, including their supply chain emissions, to some globally competitive regions across the world that export the same products, including Australia, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States. The results demonstrate that Canadian producers, particularly in Saskatchewan and Western Canada, are producing crops with the least amount of greenhouse gas emissions or carbon dioxide equivalents among regions compared.

"These impressive results are driven by the widespread adoption in Saskatchewan of agricultural innovations and sustainable farming practices that have significantly reduced the amount of inputs and emissions needed to farm each acre of land," said GIFS Chief Executive Officer Dr. Steve Webb (PhD). "The sustainable practices include reduced tillage, the adoption of herbicide-tolerant canola, the variable-rate application of fertilizer, a robust crop rotation system, and the production of nitrogen-fixing pulse crops."

The study, conducted in partnership with the Food Systems PRISM Lab in the University of British Columbia, followed established protocol for measuring the carbon life cycle of agricultural production. It compiled

and reviewed data on the carbon dioxide equivalent emissions for the various activities that go into crop production including transportation, seed, fertilizer and manure inputs, crop inputs, field activities, energy emissions, and post-harvest work.

The carbon life cycle analysis also considered and reviewed important data about the ability of the agricultural landscape to support soil-based carbon sequestration and showed Saskatchewan has the smallest carbon footprint across all crop types and regions studied – when soil carbon sequestration is accounted for.

Some highlights of the study's results show that Saskatchewan's carbon footprint to produce one tonne of canola is 67 per cent lower than the global weighted average. As well, Canadian growers, led by Saskatchewan farmers, are shown to be the most sustainable producers of non-durum wheat. The results of the carbon life cycle analysis also show that no-till farming and reduced fertilizer applications in Saskatchewan field peas result in a carbon footprint that is more than 95 per cent lower than any other region studied. For lentils, the carbon footprint is 130 per cent lower.

"We are not surprised by the results of this study as we have always known Saskatchewan is one of the most sustainable producers of the safe and nutritious food the world needs," said Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture David Marit. "The world-leading agronomic and sustainable farming practices being adopted by our world-class producers are the driving force behind these results."

USask, founded as an agricultural university, has long been dedicated to developing crops, processes, and education to strengthen the province's agriculture and food

sectors. This study demonstrates how USask has been supporting ag producers through research and discovery for more than a century.

"USask has empowered Saskatchewan researchers and ag producers for over 100 years through new science, technology, and policies that sustainably feed the world. We are very pleased with the results of this study, and I know our faculty, students, and researchers will continue to lead and create innovative solutions for the environmental and agricultural challenges the future will bring," said Baljit Singh, vice-president, research, at USask.

The extensive carbon life cycle analysis and comparison to regions across the world provide a detailed understanding of the contributions and impacts of agronomic practices and innovation to sustainable food production. By analyzing crop production, sequestration, and emissions, it helps provide a more holistic picture of the sustainability of Canadian agriculture. The data points can be used to inform the creation of science-based regulations for the sector.

"While these results are remarkable, there is always room for growth and to scale sustainable farming practices even further. However, it's important to understand that one size does not fit all, and regenerative farming practices must always be suited to regions," said Webb. "Our regulatory landscape should also recognize differences at the regional level. We hope that the insights gleaned from this study, which are a win for Canada, will inform science-based decisions at the national and international level for Canadian agriculture and the producers involved."

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USask researcher awarded \$4.2 million to battle root rot

BY DANIEL HALLEN
USASK MEDIA RELATIONS

Root rot in pulse crops has grown to be a devastating issue for growers across Saskatchewan and Western Canada, so a team of University of Saskatchewan (USask) researchers and colleagues at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the National Research Council (NRC) led by Dr. Sabine Banniza (PhD) of USask's Crop Development Centre (CDC) is comprehensively searching for ways to beat it.

"We try to have a good balance with solutions that farmers can use now, but then also by generating knowledge feeding into future solutions," Banniza said.

Banniza, a professor with the College of Agriculture and Bioresources and the CDC, and the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Strategic Research Program Chair in Pulse Crop Pathology, received more than \$4.2 million from the Strategic Research Initiative (SRI) to uncover solutions for root rot in pea and lentil crops.

The funding from the SRI includes about \$2.5 million contributed through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) and around \$1.7 million from industry partners. The Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, the Western Grains Research Foundation, the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission, Results Driven Agriculture Research, and the Manitoba Pulse and Soybean Growers all contributed to the project.

As Banniza puts it, root rot in pea and lentil has become so prevalent in Western Canada it has caused growers to stop planting the crops in some areas. Because of the importance of pea and lentil crops as a food source, as a nitrogen-fixing plant in crop rotations, and a cash crop for farmers, Banniza said tackling the root rot disease is of paramount importance.

"If you talk to growers and ask what is your biggest disease problem in pulse crops, they will almost all say root rot," she said. "The longer and more often you grow a crop, the more these crops then se-



USask Crop Development Centre researcher Dr. Sabine Banniza crouches between her research crops.

Photo by Christina Weese

lect inadvertently for pathogens, and that is what we are witnessing here with the root rots."

Banniza and her research team will be using the funding from the SRI to investigate solutions to root rot disease at every level – from genetics and breeding in the lab and in field nurseries, studying pathogen biology and host-pathogen interactions, to management strategies for growers in the field.

One of the cutting-edge strategies for in-field management of root rots that will be explored is called RNA interference – a method which involves directly targeting the root rot pathogens themselves at the genetic level to interfere with their ability to infect and spread in the plants.

Breeding peas and lentils for root rot resistance will be a cornerstone of this project, and use of such root rot resistant varieties will be an important and the least

expensive tool for farmers. However, it takes time to develop new crop varieties with good disease resistance, so Banniza said RNA interference has the potential to be a powerful solution in the meantime.

"RNA interference is a novel approach to in-field disease management, which makes it very exciting and promising," she said. "It could be a very, very potent method, but it's very novel so we have to see how it works ... I'm quite excited about it because that is really thinking outside the box."

Banniza and her team are highly appreciative of the funding provided by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and the industry groups for such a large, focused and critical venture, and of the confidence they have put into the team and their home institutions with the CDC, USask, AAFC, and NRC to bring this collaborative project to fruition.

She said the strength of the SRI was how it encouraged and supported a multidisciplinary approach to the problem of root rot, allowing researchers to tackle this pervasive issue on so many fronts.

"Output from one sub-project feeds into another. There is certainly much, much more communication," she said. "As you develop the proposal, sometimes lightbulbs go on and people say, 'I hadn't thought about it that way,' and so I think that makes a project like this SRI much more productive and creative."

The SRI and the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) are supported through the Sustainable CAP, an investment of \$3.5 billion over five years from federal, provincial and territorial governments, with the goal of supporting the agri-food and agri-product sectors across Canada. The Sustainable CAP includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment for programs designed by provinces and territories that is cost-shared 60 per cent by the federal government and 40 per cent by provincial/territorial governments.

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FCC launches program to incentivize adoption of 4R Nutrient Stewardship

BY JILL McALISTER
FCC CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is excited to announce a new Sustainability Incentive Program that will support crop producers who follow Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship program using AgExpert. The program encourages producers to adopt 4R best management practices to help protect the environment without compromising their competitiveness.

The program was announced today at the Western Canadian Crop Production Show in Saskatoon, giving producers time to participate in the program as soon as the 2024 crop year.

"This program brings together the innovation, science, and expertise growers can leverage to meet the growing demand for food produced in a profitable and sustainable way," said Justine Hendricks, FCC president and CEO. "We see an opportunity to reward FCC customers who follow Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship Program. Streamlining the data management and verification process through AgExpert creates a simple way for producers to implement climate smart agricultural practices and create the best outcomes for their operations."

To be eligible for the Sustainability Incentive Program an FCC customer with active lending must:

- Have a 4R Nutrient Stewardship plan in place
- During the crop year record production activities, such as fertilizer applications in AgExpert Field
- Have 4R best management practices verified by a 4R designated agronomist within AgExpert Field by the end of the growing season

"Before planting, producers will work with their 4R designated agronomist to plan their crop year and then follow the practices outlined by Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship program throughout the crop cycle," said Curtis Grainger, FCC director of sustainability programs. "Using AgExpert, agronomists can verify producers have followed the 4R plan, then following the crop year, producers can use that verification to apply for the Sustainability Incentive Program."



FCC continues to work with different sectors to support the long-term health of the agriculture and food industry by encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices.

Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship is a framework of best management practices that follow the right source of fertilizer at the right rate, right time, and right place. Using these practices help producers increase production, farmer profitability, and enhance environmental protection.

"Fertilizer is vital to food security and is the most important input for maximizing crop yields. 4R Nutrient Stewardship gives growers the tools to reduce environmental impacts while continuing to grow healthy, nutritious crops," said Karen Proud, president and CEO, Fertilizer Canada. "We are thrilled to have worked with the FCC team to integrate the 4Rs into AgExpert. By including these practices in FCC's incentive program, producers will be further encouraged to adopt these sustainable best management practices."

Canada's strength in food production relies on its adoption of digital agriculture tools and innovative sustainable solutions. This announcement showcases the progress that can be made when different groups bring their expertise together in a shared vision.

"AgExpert connects farmers with trusted tools and solutions that allow them to centralize their information, increase efficiencies on the farm and get the most out of their data. Integrating programs such as 4R Nutrient Stewardship into AgExpert with the FCC Sustainability Incentive Program reflects our commitment to providing meaningful tools to advance the Canadian agriculture and food industry," said Hendricks.

Producers who are interested in the 4R Sustainability Incentive Program should connect with a 4R agronomist and prepare ahead of the program's official opening in May 2024.

FCC is Canada's leading agriculture and food lender, dedicated to the industry that feeds the world. FCC employees are committed to the long-standing success of those who produce and process Canadian food by providing flexible financing, AgExpert business management software, information and knowledge. FCC provides a complement of expertise and services designed to support the complex and evolving needs of food businesses. As a financial Crown corporation, FCC is a stable partner that reinvests profits back into the industry and communities it serves.

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How can generations bridge the gap to prepare for transition?

BY DR. TOM DEANS AND MARK FOURNIER

Silence can put a family farm in jeopardy.

It must be disconcerting to be in your seventies or eighties and not have a farm succession plan in place. However, conversations and family meetings will help you realize the best path forward, particularly with the rising generation.

Many farmers struggle to relinquish control. Some think that post succession, they must simply sit down on the couch and start watching afternoon TV. That's simply not the case. This idea that one must stop farming after retirement is a misconception.

Farm operators often live with extraordinary financial risk for decades. It can be liberating for them to fully realize that they can continue to have employment income after they transition their farm ownership.

The senior generation can let go of the ownership, and truly start to engage the next generation and encourage them to risk their capital to purchase the family farm. This doesn't have to be overnight, nor should it be. Successful farm operations share fi-



ancial information with the next generation, teaching them about financing early and those conversations are held often. A perfect time to start is when the next generation is in their late teens.

Ideally, you want to bridge the gap incrementally, though. Attempting an overnight transition is ill-advised and seldom works well. Start with the most obvious area - the physical work. From there, if the rising generation is successful, gradually add additional responsibility to their job description. Even though you will have to adjust your plan as time unfolds, the reality is that getting ready for a farm transition can feel satisfying. A major burden will be lifted off the shoulders of the senior generation, who have often carried the

stress of providing for their family for decades.

It would be unrealistic for the outgoing generation to expect the incoming generation to do the same thing they did on the farm. It's just not going to happen. The first thing both generations need to do is discuss where the similarities and differences lie. For younger farmers, there is commonly some fear, frustration and confusion about farm succession.

Many young people I know would like to take over the family farm, but grandma and grandpa are still farming, and they don't know if the farm will go to an aunt, uncle or their parents. This ultimately drives young people to be confused. In this case, I encourage them to take action.

Too often, a transition

happens when something happens to mom or dad and they're physically unable to farm. That's not a proactive solution. To get around the disillusionment of being an adult child with zero input into farming operations, you must cultivate options for yourself. They could be on-farm options or they could be off-farm options, value-added or otherwise.

Create your own experience and create your own life because taking over the farm may or may not

work out. Farmland is expensive, and margins are tighter. Sometimes the only choice is to go out and create off-farm careers in addition to farming. If things don't work out as planned, then there is less pressure on you and different avenues you can take.

It's not bad for the next generation to look at other, more attractive options, especially if a situation becomes unhealthy and starts to tear at family unity.

I would say by the time somebody in the incom-

ing generation is 30, they should have a plan in place, almost to the year, when the outgoing generation will hand over the operation. That doesn't mean the outgoing generation won't be involved in the farm anymore. It just means they don't necessarily own the farm any longer.

Dr. Tom Deans is and Intergenerational wealth expert from Hockley Valley, Ont. and Mark Fournier is an Instructor at the Werklund School of Agriculture & Technology, Olds College, Olds, Alta.



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Top economic charts to monitor in 2024

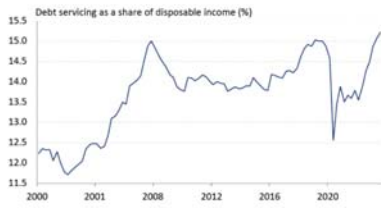
BY LEIGH ANDERSON, FCC SENIOR ECONOMIST
 GRAEME CROSBIE, FCC SENIOR ECONOMIST
 JUSTIN SHEPHERD, FCC SENIOR ECONOMIST

As we start the new year amid elevated inflation and major headwinds facing the economy, here are our top charts to help make sense of the economic environment for farm operations, agribusinesses and food processors.

Economy: Consumption slowdown, inflation downtrend and interest rate implications

A second consecutive year of weak growth is in the cards as the impacts of earlier interest rate increases are felt more acutely throughout the Canadian economy in 2024. Consumption spending, which accounts for nearly 60% of GDP, should see a marked deceleration as households struggle under the weight of record high debt servicing (Figure 1), elevated shelter costs and a more challenging labour market.

The economic slowdown will reinforce the downtrend in inflation, causing long bond yields, and ultimately longer-term rates on fixed rate loans, to drop further in 2024. In contrast, short yields should be anchored by the Bank of Canada's decision to keep its overnight rate unchanged for another few months. But once the central bank is convinced that the inflation downtrend is sustainable, which we're expecting to happen around mid-year, look for it to start cutting its overnight rate to boost a flagging economy.

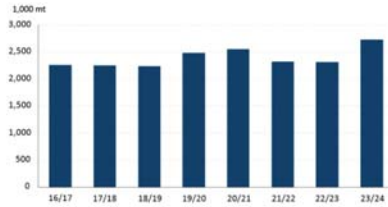


Source: Statistics Canada

Figure 1: Canadian consumers under pressure.

Crops: Canola crushing set a first quarter record

Canada's canola crushers set a record in the first quarter of the 2023/24 marketing year as new capacity came online (Figure 2). Canadian canola crush expansion was initially slated to add 4.5 million metric tonnes in 2024 however, rising construction costs, higher interest rates, and tight canola supplies the last several years have led to delays in projects. Increased canola crush may help swing acres to the crop, although the soybean to corn futures ratio will still be the global bellwether to understand trends in seeded acres. U.S. producers will have incentives to plant more soybeans at the expense of corn acres if the ratio stays at today's level.

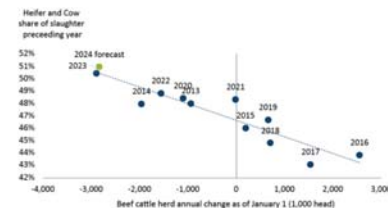


Source: Statistics Canada

Figure 2: Canola crush in first quarter of marketing year (Aug-Sep-Oct).

Cattle: North American cattle herd continues to shrink

The North American beef herd is going to be smaller on January 1, 2024, compared to a year earlier. Even strong prices have not been able to stem herd reductions as producers have dealt with droughts in 2 out of the last 3 summers, with heifers and cows accounting for 51% of slaughter in 2023 (Figure 3). Provided 2024 provides bountiful rain for hay and pasture, rebuilding the herd will be a multiyear process as when looking back through time the high prices during 2015 and 2016 only resulted in herds staying flat.

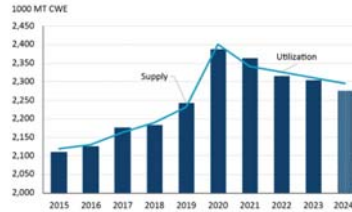


Source: Statistics Canada, USDA, FCC Calculations

Figure 3: North American heifer and cow slaughter near decade high.

Hogs: Canadian slaughter capacity in 2024

The USDA is expecting Canadian pork production to decline a further -1.2% in 2024 as the world faces a current oversupply of pork. Producers around the world continue to be pressured on margins leading to herd reductions, including the world's largest producer, China. Canadian producers are going to face tight margins until at least the summer although there has been increased demand for pork domestically as consumers are shifting consumption patterns to lower priced protein options.

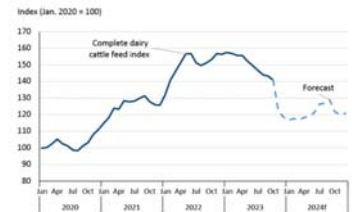


Source: USDA PSD

Figure 4: Canadian pork production will be under pressure again in 2024.

Dairy: Lower feed costs to provide boost to profitability

With input costs stabilizing, dairy margins in 2024 should improve compared to the last few years with current estimates comparable to margins in 2019. Feed availability and pricing – which have been extremely volatile in the last three years – will be the ultimate determinant of profitability. A bountiful U.S. crop in 2023 sent corn futures tumbling to a three-year low. With corn being the market-maker in other feed grain markets, this put downward pressure on feed wheat and feed barley costs as well, even in western Canada where drought limited production. A +/- 10% change in purchased feed costs can swing overall profitability by +/- 40%. To get a sense where the price of corn is headed in 2024, producers will want to keep an eye on corn production estimates from South America and on prospective plantings of corn in the US this upcoming growing season.



Source: Statistics Canada, USDA

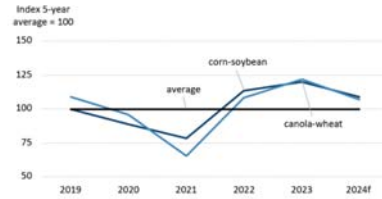
Figure 5: Dairy feed cost index declined in latter half of 2023 as US corn prices retreated.

Crop inputs: Fertilizer affordability to improve

Declining crop prices and elevated farm input prices notably fertilizer have been on the minds of Canadian farmers. Our fertilizer affordability index is a top chart to monitor. The ratio between fertilizer and crop prices is an indication for fertilizer affordability, calculated by the price of fertilizer divided by the crop price. It highlights the relationship between fertilizer prices and crop prices, or simply inputs and outputs.

Our fertilizer affordability index based upon the major crop rotations has improved for both canola-wheat and corn-soybeans due to weaker global fertilizer prices relative to crop prices. The lower the ratio, the more affordable fertilizer becomes relative to the crop. Overall, the fertilizer affordability trends indicate optimistic 2024-25 crop profitability. Nitrogen has shown improved affordability across most major crop commodities. Spring wheat and canola prices have held up the most relative to nitrogen prices contrasted to corn. The ratio of commodity prices relative to the price of phosphate is also expected to improve despite more upside potential for global phosphate prices in 2024. We will continue to monitor fertilizer af-

fordability as spring planting approaches.



Source: Alberta farm input prices, Statistics Canada, and FCC calculations

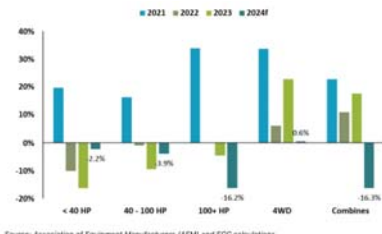
Figure 6: Fertilizer affordability index.

Farm equipment: High borrowing costs expected to weigh on sales

The farm equipment industry has faced supply chain issues for several years which impacted delivery of equipment from manufacturers. Reduced deliveries coupled with strong demand for farm equipment reduced inventory levels of both new and used farm equipment in 2022 and into 2023.

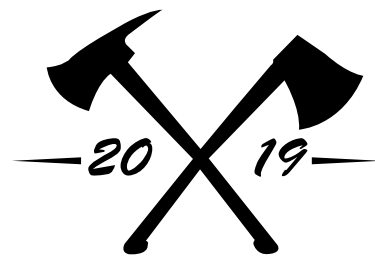
Supply chain issues are largely behind us and deliveries from manufacturers continue to arrive. As such, inventory levels are expected to increase in 2024. Rising inventory levels of new equipment will spill over to the used equipment market.

Inflationary pressures on new equipment prices along with higher borrowing costs are expected to slow farm equipment sales. Elevated interest rates have resulted in more caution as producers delay purchase decisions until interest rates stabilize or fall. Operations place a large focus on the cost per acre of equipment in relation to overall total costs on the farm.



Source: Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) and FCC calculations

Figure 7: Farm equipment sales are projected to slow in 2024.



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2024 Grains, oilseeds and pulses sector outlook: Falling commodity prices will pressure margins

BY MARTHA ROBERTS
FCC ECONOMICS EDITOR

Falling input prices feature in the 2023-24 and the 2024-25 crop years, partially offsetting lower prices for many ag commodities. There'll be more margin pressure, especially for Western crops, than the sector has seen recently. This year, we'll be watching global stocks-to-use ratios, global weather forecasts and equipment costs as three significant influences on crop profitability.

Commodity prices for the 2023-24 marketing year (MY) have fallen year-over-year (YoY), but for corn, spring wheat, and feed barley, they may already have bottomed out (Table 1). Canadian feed barley prices have been pressured by the availability of relatively cheap U.S. corn and lack of export demand and Canada's barley carryout is expected to be in line with the five-year average. However, low supplies due to drought-related yield reductions on the prairies will help to boost prices for the new MY and keep them well above the five-year average.

Cash crop	2023-24 MY (US\$/bu)	2023-24 MY (US\$/cwt)	2024-25 MY (US\$/bu)	5-year average
Corn (US)	522	253	470	264
Soybeans (US)	775	348	590	340
Canola (US)	612	602	602	540
Peas (yellow - US)	600	450	430	540
Lentils red - US)	915	710	600	540
Spring wheat - (US)	475	335	330	310
Feed barley (US)	375	200	210	200
Durum (US)	465	435	435	340

Sources: Statistics Canada and FCC calculations
Marketing Year for corn and soybeans: September 1 - August 31
Marketing Year for wheat, canola, barley, peas and lentils: August 1 - July 31

Table 1: Crop prices (\$/tonne) for new MY expected to still be higher than five-year averages.

Larger global and U.S. corn supplies will continue to weigh on Canadian prices, as will increases in 2023-2024 production and imports. Despite this pressure, prices should remain above the five-year average as carryout supplies are expected to be 11% below the five-year average. Canadian non-durum wheat supplies are better than expected given 2023 prairie growing conditions, but this year's carryout stocks are expected to be 14% below the five-year average. With export strength continuing amid low global wheat supplies and domestic use forecast in line with historical trends, 2024-2025 prices will be roughly in line to slightly higher YoY.

The 2024-25 MY shows soybean, canola, yellow pea, and lentil prices falling YoY again. Soybean and canola prices will be pressured by ample global soybean supplies going to the vegetable oil and biodiesel markets, and a possible increase in U.S. soy acres in 2024. Brazil's soybean production is a wildcard to monitor. Peas are likely to continue falling or stabilize at lower levels, despite the recent removal of tariffs on Canadian yellow peas applied by the Indian government, as the move is temporary. Durum is expected to stabilize at last year's prices but remain above the five-year average.

On the expense side, all fertilizer prices are expected to be lower YoY as input costs continue to stabilize. Although commodity prices are dropping, fertilizer prices are dropping more quickly, easing some margin pressure. Eastern profitability (winter wheat, corn and soybeans) will be tight but close to break-even over the three-month outlook period. Western margins will face considerably

more pressure. Downside risk will come from increasing equipment and interest expenses as the sector grapples with rising costs per acre.

Trends to monitor

The top economic trends likely to impact crop operations in 2024 include:

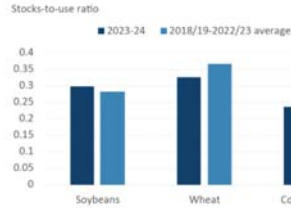
Global stocks-to-use ratios

Prairie moisture levels

Equipment costs per acre

Global stocks-to-use ratios for wheat, canola, soybeans, and coarse grains

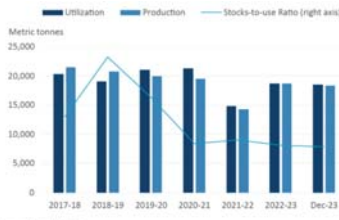
Global wheat stocks are expected to be low throughout the 23-24 MY, with a stocks-to-use ratio lower than the five-year average. That will support prices in 2024 (Figure 1). Current forecasts show high corn, coarse grains and soybean supplies, softening their prices.



Source: United States Department of Agriculture

Figure 1: Global stocks-to-use ratios.

Canada's canola stocks are tight now, down 36% YoY and 60% compared to the five-year average. Of note: domestic demand will likely increase this year as a new biodiesel plant comes online. Canada set a record for canola crush for Q1 2023-24 and it will grow with additional expansion planned. (For more, see our Top Trends post.) With the added demand, Canada's stocks-to-use ratio could be pressured further downward (Figure 2).



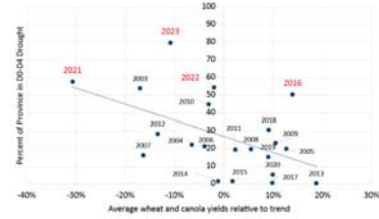
Source: Statistics Canada

Figure 2: Low canola stocks to be pressured further in 2024.

An El Nino year

While Western cropland is expected to be dry heading into the winter, the AAFCC drought monitor shows some relatively higher soil moisture reserves YoY. Nonetheless, the dry conditions could be exacerbated by the El Nino weather pattern, which typically means a warmer, drier winter.

The Canadian Drought Monitor showed 100% of Saskatchewan was in some degree of drought at October 31. Historical drought data (2003 - 2023) as of February each year illustrates the impact of dry conditions on Saskatchewan's subsequent canola and wheat yields (Figure 3).



Source: Canadian Drought Monitor and FCC calculations

Figure 3: Saskatchewan's level of drought in February can determine next year's crop yields relative to trend.

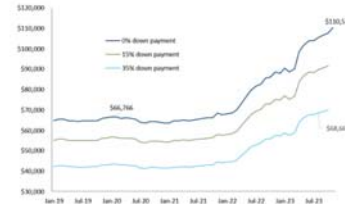
Yields were hit particularly hard in 2021 when over half of the province experienced some degree of drought as of February 28. The 2023 drought was the largest of the last 20 years, but yield impacts weren't as severe. But 2022 and 2016 show that rains during the growing season can abate early season dryness. These yields were close to, or well above, their respective five-year trends.

Equipment costs per acre

Supply chain logjams and inflationary pressures have boosted equipment manufacturing costs on raw materials and labour. As equipment prices rose in response, interest rate hikes added more expense to the cost of upgrading equipment. Commodity prices have also risen since 2020, helping to ease the burden, but with projected declines in crop prices this year, there may be extra per acre financial strain on grain and oilseed operations needing to upgrade equipment.

For example, a new class 8 combine with no header was listed at \$800,000 in November 2023. Using a standard loan payment calculation for a five-year loan fixed at 6.4%, and with 0% down, the combine semi-annual payment would be over \$110,000. That's climbed 65.6% since January 2020 (Figure 4).

On a per acre basis, the combine alone would cost \$60 per acre (assumes 250 annual hours doing 15 acres/hour), up from \$35 per acre in 2020 (assuming the throughput of the older equipment is the same as the newer model over the five-year period).



Source: Alberta Farm Input Prices and Statistics Canada

Figure 4: New combine semi-annual payments, 2019-2023.



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USask livestock and forage research receives nearly \$6 million

Livestock-focused research projects spearheaded by researchers at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) and USask-affiliated centres received almost \$6 million from the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) and are supported by industry co-funders.

Nineteen USask-led and four VIDO-led projects were provided funding by the ADF, which receives support from both the federal and provincial governments. Two additional projects at USask's Prairie Swine Centre (PSC) also received funding.

The ADF is supported through the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership (CAP), an investment of \$3.5 billion over five years from federal, provincial and territorial governments with the goal of supporting the agri-food and agri-product sectors across Canada. The Sustainable CAP includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment for programs designed by provinces and territories that is cost-shared 60 per cent by the federal government and 40 per cent by provincial/territorial governments.

Projects supported by this round of ADF feature research in areas including livestock management strategies, innovative animal vaccination and disease prevention techniques, behavioural analyses, genomic development of feed, and more.

"The cutting-edge research conducted at USask, VIDO and our affiliated centres is changing the way the world approaches agriculture," said USask's Vice-President Research Dr. Baljit Singh (PhD). "Our skilled and accomplished researchers continue to create formidable change; exploring new techniques and technologies so we can continue to be what the world needs in our critical agricultural industry."

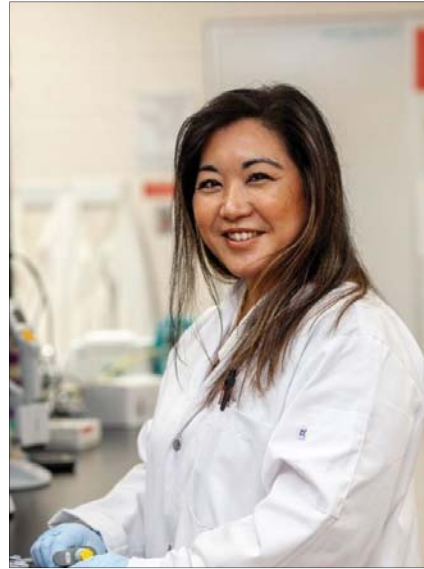
Industry co-funders for this round of ADF funding include the Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, the Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, and the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission.

Finding efficient cows

A USask researcher hopes to discover a genomic connection for what makes an "efficient" cow.

Dr. Mika Asai-Coakwell (PhD) with the College of Agriculture and Bioresources is using a newly developed ranking system to identify efficient cows from among large populations.

From there, Asai-Coakwell will look to identify genomic



USask researchers Dr. Mika Asai-Coakwell (PhD) and Dr. Nathan Erickson (DVM).

Christina Weese photo

ic regions that separate efficient cows from less efficient cows—and expressions that link efficient cows together.

As Asai-Coakwell puts it, an "efficient" animal is traditionally measured as one that reaches peak growth with least required supplementation, whether that be food or other inputs. For mature beef cows, the focus is not on growth, rather the cow's ability to carry and wean a healthy calf. Asai-Coakwell's new research will look at more specific traits to measure efficiency—and find genomic links between those traits.

"That end goal, really, is if we can identify the different genomic variations in these cattle that are associated with that trait, you can eventually select for that trait,"

she said. "That would be ideal for our cattle industry."

Asai-Coakwell received \$147,992 for this project, as well as co-funding from the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association.

She said her research is built off a previous ADF-funded project which developed a new ranking for determining efficient cows, focusing more on a cow's ability to reproduce while maintaining a healthy weight.

Continued on Page C9

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USask livestock and forage research receives nearly \$6 million

Continued on Page C8

Asai-Coakwell's new research will use the new ranking to identify efficient cows across a much larger population, and then single out genomic regions associated with traits that could be selected to continue raising more efficient cows.

"If we can identify portions of the genome involved, then you can start to breed for a more efficient cow, and at least you can select for the best cows genome-wise," she said. "The aim is to identify genes. We do want to associate areas of the genome (with efficient cows), and those can give us clues to discover which genes are involved."

The benefits of raising more efficient or productive cows extend to all levels of the farming process. Asai-Coakwell said more efficient cows mean less cost and less environmental impact as the industry moves more and more towards increased sustainable agriculture.

Asai-Coakwell praised the ADF and the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association for continuing to support cutting-edge genomic research and helping her establish herself as a researcher in this field.

"They have helped me and been really supportive ... it has been the backbone of building this research lab," she said.

Preventing disease in calves

New research spearheaded by Dr. Nathan Erickson (DVM) at USask's Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCV) with Dr. Nilusha Malmuthuge (PhD) with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Lethbridge, and Dr. John Ellis (PhD) of the WCV is looking to control bovine respiratory disease in calves.

As Erickson puts it, the beef industry is very "segmented." He said the goal of this project is to help maintain the health of calves as they transition from the earliest stage of birth and growth into the second stage, or the "feedlot" stage. The project is receiving \$157,672 from the ADF.

"That transition from cow-calf to feedlot is where we really see a large prevalence of respiratory disease," Erickson said. "There's a lot of different stresses that precipitate respiratory disease ... Our goal is to figure out the best (vaccination) priming and boosting of these animals to have robust immunity all the way out to that high-risk phase."

Erickson said this project is a continuation of research that has been ongoing since at least 2016. He praised the collaborative efforts of researchers throughout the WCV and industry partners in supporting ongoing research to protect calves from disease.

Erickson's team is working with vaccine protocols in which calves receive a vaccine delivered nasally through mucosal membranes, and then receive a booster further down the line. Because of high concentrations of maternal antibodies in newborn calves, Erickson said early injection vaccines aren't as effective because the maternal antibodies interfere with the vaccine response by partially neutralizing the vaccine antigen.

The new strategy involves priming calves with mucosal vaccines that can be given almost immediately after birth and bypass the maternal antibody issue. However, mucosal vaccines do not have the same duration as an injected vaccine, which means finding the optimal time

later provide a booster becomes critical.

Erickson and his team hope to develop the best immunization protocols for calves to ensure they are protected as long and as comprehensively as possible.

"It's really about creating memory in the immune response so when we get to the high-risk phase, they'll hopefully have that memory established," he said. "Previ-

ous to this prime-boost idea, we haven't had a good way of establishing memory well in young calves."

Erickson said their hope is to provide the most accurate information to veterinarians and the producers they are working for to vaccinate calves against a disease that is a rampant issue among feeder calves.

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2023 clubroot distribution in Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan released the 2023 Saskatchewan Clubroot Distribution Map outlining the rural municipalities (RMs) where clubroot has been identified since the province started its clubroot survey in 2018.

No new visible clubroot symptoms were recorded through the clubroot monitoring program in 2023, while the clubroot pathogen was detected in one new field through DNA-based testing. Adding these results to previous years, the total number of commercial fields with visible clubroot symptoms remains at 82. However, the number of commercial fields identified to have the clubroot pathogen through DNA testing rises from 42 to 43.

"This map is an important tool for producers and specialists alike, ensuring they have the information needed to make the best decisions for their operations," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "While clubroot remains present in Saskatchewan, we thank producers for allowing testing and utilizing the resources available to effectively manage clubroot."

In 2023, over 500 fields were examined with producers' permission. One component of the clubroot monitoring program is the soil testing bags available free to producers and industry agronomists. Sask-



Clubroot, a soil-borne disease, prevents plants from getting the nutrients they need by attacking their roots.

Canola, select RMs, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) helped distribute the soil testing bags, with SaskCanola paying for the tests.

"As we navigate the evergreen landscape of biosecurity, investing in clubroot testing continues to raise awareness and support mitigation," SaskCanola Chair Keith Fournier said. "SaskCanola remains dedicated to investing levy dollars into clubroot-related research to protect canola's sustainability as a core crop

into the future."

Clubroot, a soil-borne disease, prevents plants from getting the nutrients they need by attacking their roots. Being soil-borne, it is imperative to know where clubroot exists to limit its spread. By proactively monitoring clubroot in Saskatchewan, the Government of Saskatchewan is working with producers and other industry partners to minimize its impact, contributing to healthy plants, high yield crops, and a prosperous Saskatchewan.



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Infrastructure investment boosts Yorkton agricultural research capacity

New equipment is expanding the scope of crop research in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, where Suncrest College operates a research farm in partnership with the East Central Research Foundation (ECRF).

The college received \$60,400 from the Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF) Accelerating Capacity Initiative and used the funds to construct a sample dryer and purchase a truck and weigh wagon.

"The equipment has actually expanded the type and number of trials we can do," says Blair Cherneski, ECRF chairperson and Goodeve area farmer. "The funding is a major plus for the research farm and since it benefits research, it benefits local producers."

Mike Hall, ECRF research coordinator, explains that a shipping container was purchased to build the sample dryer. It was filled with perforated shelves and attached to a garden shed that houses an electric furnace. The dryer works when the furnace blows air through tubing that is installed under the shelves.

"It's been a great addition because we now have the capacity to dry a lot of plant material," he says. "The dryer allows us to participate in a wider array of projects, including forage projects, and this year we have been using it to dry down tissue samples from grain crop projects as well."

Hall's team previously relied on dryers at other



Recent equipment funding has improved efficiency at Suncrest College and the ECRF. "We're a smaller research farm so any time we can get assistance, it's important to the area," says Blair Cherneski.

Agriculture Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) sites in Saskatchewan. Now, they can now dry samples in a timelier manner which has eliminated the risk of plant material starting to rot in transit.

The new truck is being used for hauling equipment and completing field work. The weigh wagon is making field-scale plot work more efficient.

In addition to the WGRF-funded equipment, the ECRF has obtained a new seed cleaning clipper and screens, dump trailer, custom-made bleachers for plot tours and video equipment.

The research team now produces videos to share findings and posts them on YouTube (@eastcentral-researchfoundat1520). The channel, which has attracted over 27,000 views so far, has increased speaking engagement requests and media coverage of research trials.

"We're a smaller research farm so any time we can get assistance, it's important to the area," says Cherneski. "Better infrastructure gives us an opportunity to provide better information to local producers and attract quality people."

The ECRF is a non-profit organization mandated to conduct crop production

research and extension activities in east central Saskatchewan. In 2013, the organization formed a partnership with Parkland College to share resources. Parkland College merged with Cumberland College to become Suncrest College in 2023.

The WGRF is a farmer-funded and farmer-directed non-profit organization investing in agricultural research that benefits western Canadian producers. To date, more than \$240 million has been invested to support diverse crop re-



A new weigh wagon, truck and sample dryer have been purchased by Suncrest College and the ECRF thanks to WGRF Accelerating Capacity Initiative funding.



A shipping container converted to a sample dryer has increased the ECRF's capacity to complete more trials and dry grains and forages in a timely manner.

search projects.

The WGRF has committed \$32 million to the Accelerating Capacity Initiative

to expand crop research capacity.

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Crown land grazing rates frozen for 2024

The Government of Saskatchewan is freezing the 2024 Crown land grazing rate at 2022 levels, as the industry continues to deal with the effects of several years of dry conditions. Producers who must reduce their stocking rates on leased Crown land due to drought will also again be eligible for a rent reduction. "The beef cattle sector continues to experience challenges with tight margins and ongoing concerns related to multiple years of dry conditions," Agriculture

Minister David Marit said. "Producers are valuable stewards of Saskatchewan's grasslands. Maintaining rates at the existing level, and offering a reduction in some scenarios, will help producers plan for 2024." Crown grazing rates are set annually using a formula based on fall cattle prices and the long-term stocking rate of each parcel of land. The rate freeze applies to all grazing leases in Saskatchewan. This is the second consecutive year that rates



that land, due to the dry conditions. This program helps to protect and maintain the sustainability of Crown land for the long term.

"SCA appreciates the government's recognition of the challenges our producers have faced through the ongoing drought," Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association Chair Keith Day said. "With the price of feed and freight continuing to increase, freezing the grazing rates for another year goes a long way to help producers manage their costs."

have been maintained at existing levels. The rate reduction will apply in situations where an individual lessee or pasture association must reduce the number of animals grazing Crown leases by 20 per cent or more, compared to the approved long-term carrying capacity of

the grazing rates for another year goes a long way to help producers manage their costs." Saskatchewan has approximately 6 million acres of Crown land under grazing leases.

\$1.5 million invested in FarmSafe Manitoba

The Canada and Manitoba governments through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) are investing over \$1.5 million over the next five years to the Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) for the FarmSafe Manitoba program to promote safe and healthy farm operations in Manitoba, federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lawrence MacAulay and Manitoba Agriculture Minister Ron Kostyshyn announced today.

"As equipment and practices evolve and change the day-to-day realities on Canadian farms, it's vitally important that we take steps to protect our agricultural workers and their families," said MacAulay. "This important investment will help farmers access essential tools and information to manage risks effectively and keep farming operations in Manitoba safe, sustainable, and productive."

With the agriculture industry facing evolving challenges, this KAP-led program provides a set of strategies and initiatives that meet the growing demand for farm safety education and support. FarmSafe Manitoba provides farm-specific resources, safety assessments, hazard identification, risk management guidance, and training sessions, the ministers noted.

"As the owners and operators of their farming operations, farmers and ranchers need to be supported in the efforts they take to protect themselves, their families and their workers," said Kostyshyn. "FarmSafe Manitoba is an invaluable resource that gives producers the ability to use their knowledge and experience to foster a safety culture that promotes physical and mental well-being."

The FarmSafe Manitoba program provides resources that cover various as-

pects of farm safety including machinery operation, livestock handling, chemical handling, and emergency preparedness. FarmSafe Manitoba aims to reduce workplace injuries and fatalities, and promote a culture of safety in the agricultural community. The project also seeks to raise awareness about the importance of workplace safety in the Manitoba agri-food sector and improve the overall well-being of farmers and farm workers.

"This funding provides KAP with the ability to deliver the FarmSafe Manitoba program, which provides Manitoba producers with a suite of resources, tools and services to help them manage safety on their farms," said Jill Verwey, president, KAP. "With an increased demand for these tools and services, KAP will be able to support Manitoba producers in their efforts to be safer in their operations and continue to promote what they have available at their disposal."

KAP is Manitoba's general farm policy organization, representing farmers and commodity organizations from across the province. For more information about KAP, visit www.kap.ca.

Sustainable CAP is a five-year, \$3.5-billion investment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments that supports Canada's agri-food and agri-products sectors. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5-billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially-territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

For more information about FarmSafe Manitoba, visit <https://farmsafemanitoba.ca/>

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More than \$10 million awarded to USask crop research projects

BY DANIEL HALLEN
USASK MEDIA RELATIONS

Twenty-nine crop science projects from researchers at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) have received a total of close to \$7.5 million from the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan and more than \$2.5 million in co-funding from industry partners.

The USask crop research projects received support from Saskatchewan's Agriculture Development Fund (ADF), meant to aid the growth and advancement of the agricultural industry in the province through innovative work solving modern questions in agricultural science.

The ADF is supported through the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership (CAP), an investment of \$3.5 billion over five years from federal, provincial and territorial governments with the goal of supporting the agri-food and agri-product sectors across Canada. The Sustainable CAP includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment for programs designed by provinces and territories that is cost-shared 60 per cent by the federal government and 40 per cent by provincial/territorial governments.

Twenty-nine USask-led projects received nearly \$7.5 million from the ADF. Of those 29 projects, 12 received a total of more than \$2.5 million from key agricultural industry and research partners including Alberta Grains, the Manitoba Crop Alliance, the Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, and the Western Grains Research Foundation.

Research funded by the ADF ranges in scope from genomic analysis of crop species, to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through crop rotation, to methods for improving crop yields through changing climate conditions.

"USask has a long-standing tradition of excellence in agriculture research. This significant funding is reinforcement of our leadership in this field," said USask



Clockwise from left: Dr. Steve Shirliffe (PhD), Dr. Kate Congreves (PhD), Dr. Bunyamin Tar'an (PhD), Dr. Kirstin Bett (PhD) and Dr. Curtis Pozniak (PhD).

Vice-President Research Baljit Singh. "We appreciate the support from the provincial and federal government and our industry partners. Using state-of-the-art technologies and innovative methods, USask researchers will continue to sustainably feed a hungry world."

Using drones and spectral imaging to predict best crops

Dr. Steve Shirliffe (PhD), a professor in USask's College of Agriculture and Biore-sources, received \$315,353 from the ADF for his work using digital tools to identify the ideal traits in early generation wheat plants to help breeders accelerate their breeding and growing process.

He is collaborating with Dr. Adam Carter (PhD) of the Crop Development Centre (CDC). The project is co-funded by Alberta Grains, the Manitoba Crop Alliance, the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, and the Western Grains Research Foundation.

By utilizing drones armed with multi-

spectral imaging cameras, Shirliffe and his collaborators hope to identify the best phenotypes – representative physical characteristics – which signify superior genotypes of wheat for breeders to target.

Researchers can use digital imaging to more accurately estimate the harvest index, which is the ratio of seed to crop biomass. By targeting this in early-generation plants, breeders will be able to select the best-yielding crop varieties to breed superior strains of wheat.

"One of things we're trying to quantify using digital imagery is some estimate of crop yield and harvest index at very early generations of wheat, before it even goes into small plots," Shirliffe said. "We're going to explore methodologies to estimate the yield."

The research team will test various phenotyping techniques to identify the best tools for predicting future crop yields and how they relate to different phenotypes.

Shirliffe said he was grateful and excited to receive support from the ADF and

numerous other industry partners to push this project forward. Crop phenotyping, he said, didn't really exist as a discipline as recently as a few years ago, so to receive the funding to continue developing these new techniques is an exciting prospect.

"It keeps the University of Saskatchewan at the cutting edge of digital agriculture, and we have such strength in the CDC in crop breeding, it's such a symbiosis," he said. "The good thing is we've spent the last seven years figuring out how to do this work."

Shirliffe also received funding from the Western Grains Research Foundation for a separate project using satellite imaging to map spatial variation in crop yields across fields in Western Canada.

Analyzing and reducing crop greenhouse gas emissions

As considerations of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) grow in all industries, including agriculture, Dr. Kate Congreves (PhD) is developing new techniques for growers to reduce their emissions.

Congreves, an associate professor in the Department of Plant Sciences in the College of Agriculture and Biore-sources, received \$421,246 from the ADF to research how different crop rotations affect GHGs released by soils. The project was co-funded by the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers.

By using micrometeorological techniques on a 12-hectare field, Congreves and her team can measure the GHG dynamics consistently over prolonged periods of time.

"Soils are by far the main anthropogenic source of nitrous oxide. We can get measurements of nitrous oxide released from soils year-round," she said. "We can also get measurements of carbon dioxide, which captures both soil respiration as well as plant sequestration. So, we can see the whole picture."

Congreves said the goal is to build a better understanding of soil ecosystem services in relation to different crop rotations. Pulse crops help to fix nitrogen into the soil and can reduce the reliance on nitrogen-based fertilizer in the long term, when considering the full rotation.

Continued on page C17

FOR SALE BY TENDER

Sealed, written tenders to purchase the pasture land in the Municipality of Grassland and described below will be received by:

MEIGHEN HADDAD LLP
P.O. Box 485
Deloraine, MB R0M 0M0
Attention: Warren G. Barber, Q.C.

LAND DESCRIPTION:

PARCEL ONE: SW ¼ 20-5-25 WPM * 154.25 acres
PARCEL TWO: NW ¼ 20-5-25 WPM * 160.00 acres
PARCEL THREE: SE ¼ 20-5-25 WPM * 79.09 acres

*all acreages taken from the most recent Manitoba Property Assessment Reports

CONDITIONS OF TENDER:

- Interested parties must rely on their own inspection and knowledge of the property and not on the above or any other particulars or representations made by or on behalf of the Seller.
- Tenders must be received at or before noon on February 21, 2024.
- Each tender must be accompanied by a \$5,000.00 deposit cheque payable to Meighen Haddad LLP. Deposits accompanying unacceptable bids will be refunded.
- Tenders may be submitted for one or more parcels.
- Highest or any tender not necessarily accepted.
- Any gravel stockpiled on Parcel Three is excluded from the sale and will be removed by the vendor not later than June 30, 2024.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SALE:

- The bidder whose tender is accepted will be required to complete an agreement covering terms and conditions of sale.
- In addition to the deposit, the balance of the accepted tender must be paid within thirty (30) days from the date of notification of tender acceptance, or evidence provided that the purchase funds will be available under conditions acceptable to the Vendor. If the balance of the accepted tender is not paid within the set time limit the deposit paid may be forfeited as liquidated damages and not as a penalty.
- Possession is not authorized until acceptable arrangements for full payment are made following acceptance of tender.
- All mines and minerals will be reserved from any transfer.
- Land is in the Torren's Title system.
- Successful bidders will be responsible for real property taxes commencing January 1, 2024.

For further information or an appointment to view, contact Municipality of Grassland, Hartney, MB. Telephone No. (204) 858-2590
Attention: Kristy Wells.



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FCC launches program to incentivize adoption of 4R Nutrient Stewardship

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is excited to announce a new Sustainability Incentive Program that will support crop producers who follow Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship program using AgExpert. The program encourages producers to adopt 4R best management practices to help protect the environment without compromising their competitiveness.

The program was announced today at the Western Canadian Crop Production Show in Saskatoon, giving producers time to participate in the program as soon as the 2024 crop year.

"This program brings together the innovation, science, and expertise growers can leverage to meet the growing demand for food produced in a profitable and sustainable way," said Justine Hendricks, FCC president and CEO. "We see an opportunity to reward FCC customers who follow Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship Program. Streamlining the data management and verification process through AgExpert creates a simple way for producers to implement climate smart agricultural practices and create the best outcomes for their operations."

To be eligible for the Sustainability Incentive



Program an FCC customer with active lending must:

Have a 4R Nutrient Stewardship plan in place

During the crop year record production activities, such as fertilizer applications in AgExpert Field

Have 4R best management practices verified by a 4R designated agronomist within AgExpert Field by the end of the growing season

"Before planting, producers will work with their 4R designated agronomist to plan their crop year and then follow the practices outlined by Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship program throughout the crop cycle," said Curtis Grainger, FCC director of

sustainability programs. "Using AgExpert, agronomists can verify producers have followed the 4R plan, then following the crop year, producers can use that verification to apply for the Sustainability Incentive Program."

FCC continues to work with different sectors to support the long-term health of the agriculture and food industry by encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices.

Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship is a framework of best management practices that follow the right source of fertilizer at the right rate, right time, and right place. Using these practices help producers increase production, farmer profit-

ability, and enhance environmental protection.

"Fertilizer is vital to food security and is the most important input for maximizing crop yields. 4R Nutrient Stewardship gives growers the tools to reduce environmental impacts while continuing to grow healthy, nutritious crops," said Karen Proud, president and CEO, Fertilizer Canada. "We are thrilled to have worked with the FCC team to integrate the 4Rs into AgExpert. By including these practices in FCC's incentive program, producers will be further encouraged to adopt these sustainable best management practices."

Canada's strength in food production relies

on its adoption of digital agriculture tools and innovative sustainable solutions. This announcement showcases the progress that can be made when different groups bring their expertise together in a shared vision.

"AgExpert connects farmers with trusted tools and solutions that allow them to centralize their information, increase efficiencies on the farm and get the most out of their data. Integrating pro-

grams such as 4R Nutrient Stewardship into AgExpert with the FCC Sustainability Incentive Program reflects our commitment to providing meaningful tools to advance the Canadian agriculture and food industry," said Hendricks.

Producers who are interested in the 4R Sustainability Incentive Program should connect with a 4R agronomist and prepare ahead of the program's official opening in May 2024.

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More than \$10 million awarded to USask crop research projects

Continued from page C15

By introducing a nitrogen-fixing pulse crop such as peas into a wheat-canola rotation, Congreves believes less nitrogen (as nitrous oxide) will be released into the atmosphere.

The USask micrometeorological site is one of only a few in Canada and was established in Saskatoon with the assistance of University of Guelph researchers in 2018, as well as colleagues in the Department of Soil Science at USask. Congreves said the support received not only provides her project the funding to continue innovative agricultural research, but also furthers opportunities for USask to train future researchers on these advanced technologies.

"This funding provides an amazing platform for training students," she said. "It's a really rich resource for training the next generation to be able to not only understand GHG dynamics, but to be competent in measurement, using the technology, synthesizing the data, and in interpreting what the data means."

Creating efficient, climate-resilient and high-yield chickpea and flax strains

USask's Dr. Bunyamin Tar'an (PhD), a professor with the College of Agriculture and Bioresources and a plant breeder with the CDC, received more than \$800,000 from the ADF for projects looking to create superior strains of two crucial crops.

Tar'an received \$489,613 for a project to use genetics to create a hardier type of chickpea that will still produce strong yields with fewer resources contributed – a "more efficient" strain. He also received \$317,371 to develop more genetic variability in flax strains that will resist changes in weather and climate. The flax project is co-funded by the Manitoba Crop Alliance, the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission, and the Western Grains Research Foundation.

"What we want is to make the new varieties in the future have increased nutrient use efficiency – nutrient meaning the nutrition that plants need from the soil and the environment – how we can breed new lines in the future that can afford a minimum input for the plant yet still deliver the yield we are expecting to have," Tar'an said.

Tar'an said crop breeders wouldn't have the same concerns around genetically selecting for hardier, high temperature-resistant crop strains as recently as 10 or 15 years ago. But with some of the extreme weather conditions of the past few years, that has now become a necessity for producers.

"As we go through this kind of a year, you see erratic climate conditions, dry climate conditions ... we noted plants need the ability to withstand more erratic conditions," he said. "We need to add into the mainstream breeding program these additional factors."

As Tar'an puts it, USask and the CDC are "unique" in that research can be carried through from the laboratory stage with plant breeders directly into the applied research of creating viable strains for growers.

Tar'an leads both the flax and the chickpea breeding programs at the CDC, and there are many opportunities to share results and for research opportunities with students.

"That's what I'm really enjoying here – we do the research, we deliver to the farmers, and we do the training of future scientists, future breeders," he said.

Breeding mutually supportive wheat and lentils

While it is a commonly accepted practice to rotate crops in a field, Dr. Kirstin Bett (PhD) with USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources believes more can be done at the crop breeding level to give scientists and growers an advantage.

Bett is working with Dr. Curtis Pozniak (PhD), a professor in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources and director of the CDC, and with Congreves on a project which will examine the advantages of breeding lentils

and wheat with the targeted purpose of assisting each other in a crop rotation. The project received \$625,000 in funding from the ADF.

"We want to develop lentils that will work well in rotation, and wheats that will respond well to lentils in rotation, while at the same time still breeding for high yield in both," she said. "So, a farmer would be able to plant a high-yielding lentil that will also leave behind something good ... to make them feel like they've made the most of growing the crop in rotation."

Unlike other crops, pulse crops like lentils have the ability to fix nitrogen, and Bett said some of that nitrogen can be left behind for the subsequent cereal crops – which could lead to less synthetic nitrogen use and more environmentally conscious growing.

Bett said there is evidence that different varieties of lentils grown in a crop rotation will affect the yields of the rotated-in wheat crop. The goal of this ADF-funded research is to interconnect the lentil-breeding and wheat-breeding program at USask to identify at the genomic level how to best select and breed lentil and wheat plants that will more directly support each other.

A second target is to develop wheat crops that more efficiently utilize the nitrogen applied or left behind.

"An exciting objective of our work is to characterize a novel DNA segment in wheat that has been shown to reduce nitrogen losses from wheat production. The funding provided by ADF will support our collaborative efforts to maximize producer profitability," Pozniak said.

This ADF-funded project is an additional facet of a larger project funded by Genome Canada's Climate-Smart Agriculture and Food Systems initiative spearheaded by Bett and Pozniak. With the support of the ADF, matching funds for the Genome Canada project are also coming from the Western Grains Research Foundation, the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, the Manitoba Crop Alliance, and Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR).

The full list of USask's January 2024 ADF funding recipients in crop research:

- Dr. Bishnu Acharya (PhD), College of Engineering - Valorization of oat hulls for materials, chemicals and functional food ingredients - \$292,500
- Dr. Sabine Banniza (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Development of a rapid screening technique for Aphanomyces root rot in pea and lentil - \$65,733 - Co-funded by the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers and the Western Grains Research Foundation
- Banniza - Development of advanced lentil lines with partially resistance against race 0 of Colletotrichum lentis causing anthracnose - \$316,494 - Co-funded by the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers
- Dr. Kirstin Bett (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Crop rotation: Using selection targets to improve lentil and wheat performance in a changing climate - \$625,000
- Dr. Rosalind Bueckert (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Temperature, soybean protein and seed filling - \$20,125
- Bueckert - Soybean leaf area and leaf nitrogen - \$165,485
- Bueckert - Building a better nitrogen pantry in pea - \$195,385
- Dr. Kate Congreves (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Crops with benefits: using rotations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - \$421,246 - Co-funded by the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers
- Dr. Ajay Dalai (PhD), College of Engineering - Production of fuel pellets from agricultural residues as bio-coal for conversion to biofuels using gasification and combustion - \$385,000
- Dr. Supratim Ghosh (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Improving food application of prairie crop-based oleosomes by modifying their structure and functionality - \$235,000
- Dr. Randy Kutcher (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Assessing seed to seedling transmission

of Xanthomonas translucens causing BLS of cereals to establish inoculum thresholds - \$179,457 - Co-funded by Alberta Grains, the Manitoba Crop Alliance, the Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, and the Western Grains Research Foundation

- Dr. Patrick Lloyd-Smith (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Developing irrigation economic models to improve producer outcomes and sustainable agricultural water management in Saskatchewan - \$200,000
- Dr. Venkatesh Meda (PhD), College of Engineering - Sustainable agricultural waste management through the development of fire-resistant ducts using natural fibers - \$150,000
- Dr. Rex Newkirk (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Total utilization of canola by-products after oil extraction - \$225,000
- Dr. Michael Nickerson (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Development of a commercial wet fractionation process for producing novel oat protein ingredients - \$244,000
- Nickerson - Development of faba bean and oat-based texturized vegetable proteins as meat analogues - \$210,000
- Dr. Curtis Pozniak (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Improving accessibility of FHB resistance in wheat - \$242,501 - Co-funded by the Manitoba Crop Alliance, the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, and the Western Grains Research Foundation
- Pozniak (PhD) - Genomic assisted breeding for heat and drought tolerance in wheat - \$355,000 - Co-funded by the Manitoba Crop Alliance, the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, and the Western Grains Research Foundation
- Dr. Randall Purves (PhD), College of Pharmacy and Nutrition - Exploring biochemical diversity in faba beans and their seed coats for added value potential - \$209,000
- Dr. Martin Reaney (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Total utilization of oilseed hull: Canola, flaxseed, and borage - \$360,000
- Dr. Jeff Schoenau (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Land application of spent filtration earth from canola oil production to improve soil properties - \$118,200 - Co-funded by the Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission
- Schoenau - Effect of calcium containing soil amendments on soil conditions, plant growth and greenhouse gas emissions - \$55,500 - Co-funded by the Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission and the Western Grains Research Foundation
- Dr. Steve Shirliff (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Digital phenotyping to accelerate wheat breeding - \$315,353 - Co-funded by the Alberta Grains, the Manitoba Crop Alliance, the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, and the Western Grains Research Foundation
- Dr. Bunyamin Tar'an (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Improvement of phosphorus use efficiency and abiotic stress tolerance in chickpea - \$489,613
- Tar'an (PhD) - Enhancing genetic gain for yield, biotic and abiotic stress tolerance in flax - \$317,371 - Co-funded by the Manitoba Crop Alliance, the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission, and the Western Grains Research Foundation
- Dr. Tom Warkentin (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - PeaTILL - A TILLING population for improvement of yield, seed protein concentration and resistance to root rots in pea - \$294,113 - Co-funded by the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers
- James Wasserman, Canadian Centre for Rural and Agricultural Health - Implementing a low-cost ROPS program to reduce Saskatchewan farm fatalities - \$50,800
- Dr. Christian Willenborg (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources - Improving weed management for Saskatchewan growers - \$492,683
- Dr. Lifeng Zhang (PhD), College of Engineering - Develop a green, non-thermal and sustainable process for improving functionalities of pulse proteins - \$217,500 - Co-funded by the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers

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Governments invest \$14.7 million in crop research

Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lawrence MacAulay and Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit announced a total of \$14.7 million to support crop-related research in 2024.

Invested through Saskatchewan's Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) and the Strategic Research Initiative (SRI) under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP), the commitment includes \$12.2 million for 56 ADF research projects and \$2.5 million to support an SRI project identifying solutions to manage root rot in pea and lentils.

"Investments like these are vitally important to the future of our agriculture sector," MacAulay said. "These research projects will help our farmers adopt more sustainable practices and new methods to counter the effects of drought, diseases and other environmental challenges they face."

"Funding agriculture research is the first step to helping our producers stay competitive and profitable," Marit said. "Our growth targets for the end of this decade rely heavily on agriculture and agri-food products. Our commitment to projects like those being funded today, with strong support again this year from our industry partners, is an investment in Saskatchewan's innovative, export-based economy."

The ADF provides support annually and on a competitive basis to research projects with the potential to create growth opportunities and enhance the agriculture industry's sustainability and competitiveness. This year's successful ADF projects cover a range of research topics, including enhancing flax abiotic stress tolerance; determining the impact of agronomic products containing calcium on soil conditions, plant growth and greenhouse gas emissions; understanding, mitigating and managing Group 14 resistant kochia; and, developing a wet fractionation process for novel oat protein ingredients.

The Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan work closely with industry partners to leverage funding to support research that aligns with industry priorities. An additional \$4.2 million was contributed by the following industry partners to support this year's ADF research projects: Alberta Grains; Manitoba Canola Growers; Manitoba Crop Alliance; Prairie Oat Growers Association; Results Driven Agriculture Research; Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission; Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission; Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission; Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission; Saskatchewan Pulse Growers; Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission; Western Grains Research Foundation.

The SRI provides targeting funding to address complex challenges facing the agriculture sector. Through the SRI, Dr. Sabine Banniza at the University of Saskatchewan will accelerate the discovery of root rot solutions for pea and lentil crops in Saskatchewan. This project will develop new options to manage root rot and will contribute to preserving and expanding the pea and lentil acres in our province. It represents a \$4.2 million research investment, with \$2.5 million in government funding through Sustainable CAP and \$1.7 million coming from Saskatchewan Pulse Growers (SPG), Western Grains Research Foundation, Alberta Pulse Growers Commission, Results Driven Agriculture Research and Manitoba Pulse and Soybean Growers.

"The continued support from federal and provincial governments of the ADF is greatly appreciated," SPG Board Chair Winston van Staveren said. "The funding supports SPG's highest priorities in research like root

disease, weed management and more. These investments will work to address growers' top concerns and work to improve profitability and competitiveness."

The ADF and SRI are supported through Sustainable CAP, a five-year, \$3.5-billion investment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments that

supports Canada's agri-food and agri-product sectors. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

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Down-time during the post Christmas season

Well now that we have all made it through the season of too many chocolates, too many butter tarts and any number of other 'too many's,' we can work at lessening the calories in anticipation of the next season of indulgence! What a wonderful season it was to 1) look back over the past year's highlights; 2) our oh so many blessings; and 3) to spend time together with family and friends.

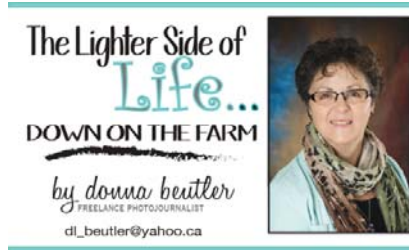
We survived calving season last winter (well, I always survive calving season without any problem so little do I have to do with that) without a hitch. We survived driving in Phoenix last February without incident and enjoyed some sights we had never seen before.

In June we returned to my childhood home in beautiful NW Ontario, something I just 'needed' (can't really explain) to do. We safely got through seeding and harvesting and took it all in stride (that's what grain farming for 46 consecutive years does to a person—we mellow; don't sweat even the 'big' things so much). And we oh so enjoyed the Christmas season as we celebrated His birth! The food, the friends, the family, the games, the gatherings.

At Christmas this year, our seven and nine-year-old grands each had eight themed gifts to open in consecutively numbered packages. Swim suit, sunscreen, flip flops, blow-up palm tree, Disney key chains and necklaces (catching the theme?) and a plane ticket to California. Woo-hoo! What excitement. So, along with a 'countdown the days' calendar to departure date, the littles are anticipating not only their first ever flight, but their first trip to that magical place!

Later that day, our grandson (9) asked what his Grandpa and I had bought for each other. I told him that we had gotten each other a trip to California (at the same time he was going). "You bought each other the same thing?" he said rather incredulously. "Yup, exactly the same thing. Same place, same time, same everything." He never said another thing, but his face kind of told it all: that's just weird that Grandpa would buy you a trip to California and you would buy him a trip to California. What he won't likely understand is that the highlight for us will be seeing his and his sister's excitement when they see Disneyland for the first time.

During our family get-together at Christmas we enjoyed some Dice Poker and Mexican Train games as well as some time roasting weiners over the fire at the creek during the 'warm' spell before the 'cold' spell. We will fondly remember some of the 'odd' gifts for our 'gag' gift exchange with little gifts purchased by none other than moi, mostly all of which were nabbed during the post-camping-season sales. From beach cups to campfire poker and bear bells, it was fun to see which were the most popular items from the varied age groups. One of the twins seemed to lose his gift every time which meant he



had to keep opening a new one, none of which particularly interested him, if the look on his face meant anything. He was definitely more excited when someone actually took what he had! As for the team games complete with trivia, marshmallow games, and name-that-song, I think we can say we enjoyed it all. Some of us perhaps need to learn to draw a bit better for next year's team events!

As for the post-Christmas season, there's some work ahead for our cattle farmers who are or will soon be in the middle of calving time. I was just barely 12 when my family left NW Ontario to start farming in Saskatchewan, both cattle and grain.

Our first calf was born prematurely on a very cold night and I was heartbroken to think that the poor little thing wouldn't have a chance. That was probably my first introduction in seeing what farmers will and can do for their livestock. I was brand new to all things 'farm' but my parents had been down the 'livestock road' before their move to Ontario. When I saw that poor little calf on death's door I never imagined the efforts that would go into warming her up in the old, unlivable farmhouse with the wood stove and how some bottle and tube feeding would bring her around. Eventually she was carried outside on occasion so she could bond with her mama. It was the first time in seeing our brand-new-to-the-farm family so dedicated to saving a calf but it wasn't the last time!

Over the years we made every effort to save any animal in distress, though not always with the success of that very first one who became the favorite barnyard animal of all time.

In today's world, calving barns and cattle set-ups are much more sophisticated than our late '60s set-up when my family first started in the cattle business. I remember the days when it was my turn to check cows in calving season: heavy socks on? Yes. Ski pants on? Yes. Scarf

wrapped three times around neck? Yes. Toque? Yes. Old heavy, seen-better-days coat? Yes. Heavy, warm, manure-ridden barn boots? Yes. And then out into the bitter cold you went, flashlight in hand if it was a night. Three times a night, more times during the day. If there were problems you raced from the corrals to the house to round up the rest of the family and together you got that cow into the barn and I'm sure disrupted or at least extended the poor cow's labour time.

Today my grand-twins (12) check cows from the comfort of the farm kitchen via a camera and tv screen. And disruptions for momma cow are nil unless she ends up in trouble. And while technology makes for a more sophisticated ag industry whether in the field or in the corrals, so far sorting cattle and caring for a cow who is calving or newborn calf in distress, along with a myriad of other things, remains a very hands-on process.

In this particular season for those of us in the grain growing business, we have a bit of time on our hands. For me that means...projects! I never get tired of planning and executing a project even though I am often reminded (by I won't say who) that our home is new and there is no renovating required. Oh what the heck, I can still find a project to do. Actually, I have come to believe it's really more about procrastination than anything but I'll say this—those year-end farm books are nearly done, so maybe I am doing better on the procrastination problem! Hubby on the other hand has been moving some grain and watching those grain prices fluctuate. That word may give the impression that the prices are going up and down but methinks that would give the wrong impression because down seems to more accurately describe the present trend. He watches markets, I watch HGTV and try to spend the money he isn't making.

The best part of our 'downtime' right now though is to be able to watch some figure skating, curling, ringette and hockey courtesy of the grands who love their winter sports. And in their down time, they are just enjoying life, time with friends and time in the great outdoors.

We got a text one day from the twins asking if we wanted to meet up at the creek for hotdogs. We arrived to the sight of a snowmobile sitting at the edge of the creek, cushions set out on the old patio furniture pieces, fire roaring and two boys sitting there, ready for supper. It was a reminder that they are growing up and becoming very capable and very independent young fellows. And then they asked, "You bring any food?" Yup, that's my boys! And yup, we brought food.

And now as I close off, here's hoping you are enjoying life 'down on the farm'—or wherever you are. I know you have things to do and places to go but I sure appreciate you spending a few moments with me today. Until next month...

Get Farm Ready

<p>ST# 3P248</p> <p>2020 Ford F250</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> XLT, 4WD 63,000 KMS <p>\$257 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$60,900</p>	<p>ST# 3T209</p> <p>2023 Ford F250</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lariat, 7.3L, V8 2,200 KMS <p>\$399 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$103,900</p>	<p>ST# 3P250</p> <p>2021 Ford F250</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> XL, 4WD 45,000 KMS <p>\$265 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$62,900</p>	<p>ST# 4P033</p> <p>2021 Ford F350</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flat deck, 4WD 50,000 KMS <p>\$268 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$63,900</p>		
<p>ST# 4T019A</p> <p>2017 Ford F350</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platinum, Diesel 120,000 KMS <p>\$295 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$69,900</p>	<p>ST# 3T237A</p> <p>2022 Ford F350</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4X4, Diesel 69,000 KMS <p>\$351 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$91,900</p>	<p>ST# 3T239A</p> <p>2022 Ford F350</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> King Ranch, Diesel 12,000 KMS <p>\$407 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$106,900</p>	<p>ST# 4P032</p> <p>2022 Ford E-Series</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cube Van, READY FOR WORK 64,000 KMS <p>\$341 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$62,900</p>	<p>ST# 3T166A</p> <p>2017 Ford F150</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebration Certified, Lariat, 6 pass <p>\$234 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$41,900</p>	<p>ST# 3T242A</p> <p>2019 Ford F150</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 TONE AND CLASSY, 3.5L ECOBOOST 92,000 KMS <p>\$183 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$41,900</p>
<p>ST# 4S023A</p> <p>2020 Ford Expedition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAX, Limited 99,000 KMS <p>\$269 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$60,900</p>	<p>ST# 4S026A</p> <p>2017 GMC Acadia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AWD, Local Trade 79,000 KMS <p>\$174 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$31,900</p>	<p>ST# 3T245</p> <p>2023 Ford Transit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEW STOCK, Cargo Van 3.5L ECO BOOST <p>\$332 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$72,590</p>	<p>ST# 3T223</p> <p>2023 Ford F350</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEW STOCK, Lariat 6.7L HIGH OUTPUT <p>\$441 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$115,819</p>	<p>ST# 4T024</p> <p>2024 Ford F350</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEW STOCK, Lariat 6.7L HIGH OUTPUT <p>\$469 PER WEEK</p> <p>\$118,319</p>	

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