



This harvest photo was submitted by Rylar Hutchinson as part of the World-Spectator's Harvest Photo Contest

## Farmers say harvest going okay after a worrying year

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local farmers are a bit more than half done this year's harvest. Despite the late start to seeding and the worries that brought with it, most farmers say this year's harvest has been better than feared.

"I'm not sure if we're 50 per cent done, but lots of cereals have been harvested," said Wendy Schatz Leeds, Agronomy Lead of Sharpe's Crop Services.

"Producers are just waiting on their canola. Because we straight cut canola, we have to desiccate it. With the temperatures we've been having, that would extend desicca-

tion because it would take more days for the chemical to work, they're just waiting for it to work to cut the canola straw. I was hoping this week we would be in the field for canola, but as you look outside you can see the rain."

Schatz Leeds said the rain has delayed the harvesting of canola. "There may have been some people who tried for canola this past weekend before the rain, but if it was sunny and warm on Monday, people would have started," she said. "It often takes 14 to 21 days after you spray it to cut the canola and we have people who are at that stage right now."

"All our crops now have reached physiological maturity

so if frost comes now it's not going to harm them."

Normally producers aim to get all their harvesting done before frost hits, as cold weather would impact the crops. However for products such as canola, Schatz Leeds said cold temperatures may be an advantage.

"Sometimes frost can actually help us at this stage, if there's some weeds in there frost might help kill them which may make it easier to combine," she said.

"Thank goodness Mother Nature worked with us this year because we're over the point where frost would hurt us."

*Continued on page B12*

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# New project has big impact on bison genome biobank's development at USask

Researchers' aim of developing the world's first bison genome biobank at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) received a critical boost on July 14 with Genome Canada's funding announcement of \$5.1 million for the Bison Integrated Genomics (BIG) project.

The BIG project will apply new genomics solutions to better protect and conserve the wood bison population in Canada. It's directly connected with the massive \$17-million-dollar research initiative called "Integrated omics for sustainable animal agriculture and environmental stewardship" (IntegrOmics) that's based at the USask Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence (LFCE).

Funding for IntegrOmics was made possible by the Canada Foundation for Innovation's Innovation Fund and included contributions from federal, provincial and private agencies. USask veterinarian and reproductive biologist Dr. Gregg Adams leads IntegrOmics' multi-agency research team.

"IntegrOmics will provide the infrastructure and equipment that our research team needs to broaden our research capabilities, while this new funding from Genome Canada will supply our team with the operating funds we need to actually do the research," said Adams, a professor in the Department of Veterinary Biomedical Sciences at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM).

"The BIG project provides a vehicle for us to in-



Bison at the USask Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence's Native Hoofstock Research and Teaching Unit.

Christina Weese photo

teract with scientists with expertise in other fields such as microbiology, epidemiology, reproductive technologies, genomics, microbiomics and bioinformatics. It's very exciting."

Adams is the academic lead for the BIG project while Parks Canada veterinarian and WCVM adjunct professor Dr. Todd Shury is the receptor lead for the Genome Canada-funded

initiative. Together, they spearheaded the BIG proposal and shared the project's planning and composition with eight other co-investigators from the Toronto Zoo, Agriculture

and Agri-Food Canada, Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO), University of Alberta and University of California-Santa Cruz.

"A major facet of Inte-

grOmics is upgrading the Native Hoofstock Centre at the LFCE where our bison are maintained, and this will form the headquarters of our bison genome biobank," said Adams.

Genome biobanks are used to store and redistribute genetic material to preserve genetic diversity. Researchers will use genomic tools for disease surveillance and vaccine development. They will also use the biobank resources to restore the natural genetic composition and genetic diversity of Canada's plains bison and wood bison populations—ensuring that the species will survive for future generations. Their work has the support of the Assembly of First Nations and other Indigenous groups.

Research findings gained through the team's work will also play a key role in improving the productivity, efficiency and sustainability of Canada's beef cattle industry. One of IntegrOmics' primary goals is to make it easier for cattle producers to identify and breed animals with better meat quality, stronger disease immunity, good maternal behaviour and other desired traits.

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This harvest photo was submitted by RJ Game Farms of their herd of 1,800 bison just south of Fairlight.

## Cool, damp weather slows harvest for some

In Southeast Saskatchewan, some producers were able to continue their harvest operations without issue last week while others were slowed down due to cool, damp weather. Harvest progress for the region was at 65 per cent, up from 57 per cent the previous week, but well behind the five-year average of 78 per cent. Many producers in the western half of the region have wrapped while those on the eastern half are still struggling with crop that won't dry down. Canola has been especially troublesome with some producers still applying desiccants.

There was not much widespread precipitation in the region last week. Most areas saw between one to 10 mm. However, the Moosomin area received 30 mm and the Glenavon area 15 mm. While the rain may not be ideal for harvesting, it has helped lower the fire risk in fields as well as help pasture grasses recover before the freeze up.

Cropland topsoil moisture is rated as two per cent surplus, 63 per cent adequate, 33 per cent short and two per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as three per cent surplus, 49 per cent adequate, 34 per cent short and 10 per cent very short. Once harvest has concluded, a good soaking rain would be very beneficial for the soils and pasture grasses in the region.

Pasture conditions are rated as seven per cent excellent, 49 per cent good, 33 per cent fair, nine per cent poor and two per cent very poor. Rainfall early in the season allowed for some pastures to grow quickly and improve

their ability to support cattle grazing; now they are beginning to dry down again and more rain will be needed before winter to help the grass recover.

The majority of crop damage last week was due to wind and frost. Most crops have been well beyond the

threat of damage due to being harvested or are too far matured. There was also damage caused by wildlife and waterfowl.

Producers were busy combining, harrowing, spraying, hauling bales and grain and moving cattle.

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# Klippenstein says it's a 'fairly decent' harvest

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
Andy Klippenstein of Parrish and Heimbecker Virden said that after a lot of fears of how the crop would come in after a very late harvest, the harvest has been better than expected.

"It's been a fairly decent harvest. We got a really good run during the hot dry weather on cereal grain," said Klippenstein.

"A high percentage, about 85 per cent, of the cereal grains are harvested. The biggest concern on the cereal grains is a little bit of quality issues in some of the earlier harvested wheat with ergot.

"Ergot is a contaminant that comes from when grass pollinates with wheat, it's a timing issue. Of the ergot that cannot be cleaned out of the sample, the tolerance that we can take is 0.4 per cent that you're allowed for ergot, and we're seeing a lot of samples coming in 0.8 per cent.

"From a milling aspect, the maximum tolerance is 0.4 per cent and that's a specification that we have to hit when we're shipping. That may mean farmers will have to hold onto some grain on farm a bit longer.

"Obviously if there's product out there that has very little ergot in there, then there's a blending opportunity to blend that with some of the product that's over the limit.

"That would be the biggest concern on the spring wheat. Now after the rain, some of the later spring wheat that is still out there may have some downgrading con-

cerns because of the moisture, but it's too early to tell because we just got this rain. For the most part it should be blendable because there's such a large amount that came off in really good condition."

Klippenstein said yield is decent considering the type of year it's been.

"Yield wise has been very good considering the summer that we had," he said.

"I would say the average, at the low end, is 50 bushels per acre on wheat, and at the high end, there's quite a bit in that 60 range.

"There's farmers that will argue that they had 80, but that depends on how big of a piece of land. I feel that 50s and low 60s was the average of where wheat bushels were at.

"The quality has come out dry, for the most part it's good quality. In this area, there has been hardly any concern with fusarium head blight, which is another common factor that can sometimes downgrade wheat, but we haven't seen much sign of that."

While most cereals are in the bin, the canola harvest was just getting started last week.

"I would say for the majority of farmers, the canola harvest has just nicely begun here," said Klippenstein.

"The majority of farmers have completed the vulnerable crops, the crops that are vulnerable to moisture, the wheat, the barley, the cereal crops.

"The moisture on canola can actually be welcomed.

"From a harvesting standpoint, it makes it harvest or thrashes better when it's wet and the straw starts to decompose a bit. The rain is beneficial for the canola for that reason, because it thrashes much easier.

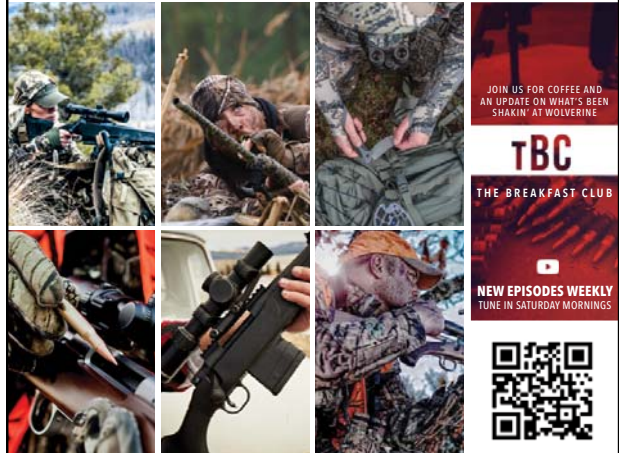
"For beans, we don't have a lot of soy beans in our area, but beans are always a late crop and this moisture wouldn't have

any negative impact on beans.

"It's been a fairly smooth harvest, and hopefully the weather can give us another week or 10 days.

"With good weather, it's amazing how much can come off, even a week to two weeks with good weather we should see this harvest be done."

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## Canada's unsung exports: A look at the trade performance of products we usually skip

BY MARTHA ROBERTS  
FCC ECONOMIC EDITOR

We spend most of our time discussing the most economically important ag commodities and food items for which data are readily available. But there's a whole raft of ag, food and manufactured goods we usually skip. This post addresses the oversight, because these bypassed commodities and products contribute significantly to Canada's strong overall export trade performance. In 2021, the Harmonized System (HS) codes we selected for this analysis accounted for over \$31 billion.

### Raw ag commodities

In 2021, Canada's single-largest ag commodity exports were wheat (HS1001) at \$8.3 billion and canola (HS1205) at \$6.4 bil-

lion. Total exports of ag commodities (includes HS01, 03, 06-08, 10, 12) summed to \$49.7 billion. Less-often reported ag products account for significant export revenues. All product categories show positive average growth between 2017-2021. The pace of exports in 2022 is impressive as YTD exports are 5.4% larger than at the same time last year. One notable exception is for exports of HS03 (seafood). The YTD pace shows a decline of 1.7%, opposite significant growth that averaged 7.3% annually between 2017-2021.

### Food products

Canada's food exports (HS02, 04, 05, 09, 11-13, 15-23, 41) totaled \$42.9 billion in 2021. Our largest food exports—fresh, frozen and chilled beef and pork—accounted for \$8 billion. *Continued on page B7*



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Harvest photo submitted by Jarvis Olsen of combining east of Rocanville

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Harvest photo submitted by RJ Game Farms, just south of Fairlight.

### Canada's unsung exports:

## A look at the trade performance of products we usually skip

Continued from page B5

Another \$4 billion came from exports of HS23 (Residues and waste of the food industries) and \$1.3 billion from offal and pig fat. The U.S., Japan and Mexico were the three largest markets for Canada's offal and pig fat, with the U.S. taking almost half of those exports. The U.S. and China account for \$3.3 billion of the \$4 billion HS23 exports.

Averaging over half a billion dollars between 2016 and 2020, annual dairy product exports grew yearly between 2016 and 2020, then dipped in 2021 with YoY -17.0% growth. But 2022 YTD pace of exports rebounded at 28.3%. Most other categories show strong YTD performance in 2022. HS23 also saw continuous growth between 2015 and 2021, yet growth in 2022 is smaller YTD than its 5-year average. Only the smaller categories "other meats" and "raw hides" lag 2021's pace, a trend observed for multiple years. Exports of other meats (lamb and horse) from HS02 and raw hides (HS41) declined significantly, with meat falling 64.9% in total from 2015 to 2021 and hides falling 42.6%.

#### Other manufactured agri-food exports

Canada is one of the world's largest exporters of fertilizers, with our potash exports (HS3104 worth \$7.1 billion, or 85.5% of total Canadian fertilizer exports in 2021) going to 47 countries. Canada is the world's largest potash exporter, supplying almost one-third of the world's

traded potash. Total Canadian fertilizer exports in 2021 accounted for \$8.3 billion, followed by a distant second-place category of farm machinery and equipment, worth \$2.5 billion.

Exports of farm machinery and equipment have grown yearly since 2016, averaging 10.1% per annum—the high-

est growth rate of all other manufactured goods exports—thanks to a 19.7% YoY bump in 2021 due to ongoing issues with unpredictable supply shortages. The pace of exports in 2022 is encouraging, with YTD exports 26.3% higher than last year. Fertilizer exports are more than 140% higher YTD as prices skyrocketed with the war in Ukraine.

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# Forecast improves for food and beverage processing: FCC report

The outlook for food and beverage manufacturers remains positive amid economic conditions that have shifted from the start of the year, according to the Food and Beverage Report Mid-Year update from Farm Credit Canada (FCC).

Year-over-year sales growth is expected to slow in the second half of the year to six per cent from 12 per cent in the first half, finishing the year at nine per cent.

"We expect slower growth in the second half of the year as inflation eases, global economic growth moderates and Canadian consumers pay attention to the price of food and their own limited savings compared to a year ago," said J.P. Gervais, FCC's Chief Economist, in detailing the mid-year report. "Food and beverage manufacturers are reckoning with high costs and shifting consumer food patterns, but profitability is

projected to improve in the months ahead."

Grain and oilseed milling led sales growth in the first half of the year, along with sugar and confectionery, and meat products. That trend is expected to continue for the latter half of 2022.

"Demand for chicken and pork continues to be strong, and we are still expecting consumers to get back to eating more beef," Gervais said. "Consumers have cut back on beef consumption domestically since the start of the pandemic, but that is offset by strong beef exports. We are seeing positive trends in red meat and expect sales to rise in 2023."

The seafood and alcohol processing sectors are feeling the impact of higher food costs as consumers cut purchases in the last six months due to inflation in other areas prompting them to reconsider their spending. Seafood, brewer-

ies and wineries are forecasted to see sales slip in the second half of 2022.

"Understanding these economic trends is critical for manufacturers to navigate the headwinds we are experiencing," Gervais explained. "For those figuring out how to best withstand a slowdown, it may be time to review performance to make possible adjustments in financial planning and or relationships with suppliers. This will help manufacturers set budgets, monitor and control costs, and decide pricing strategies."

Processing gross margins have been under pressure

with consumers focused on purchasing lower-margin basics in the face of higher retail prices. As input costs were elevated relative to selling prices, the gross margin index in food and beverage manufacturing fell nearly 10 per cent in the first half of 2022.

"We anticipate margins will start to improve as commodity prices decline," Gervais said. "Overall, the trends to watch are the decline of global economic growth, job vacancies in the food and beverage sectors, and domestic food consumption growth as inflation slows and consumers return to normal shopping

habits."

The FCC food report mid-year update features insights and analysis on grain and oilseed milling; dairy, meat, sugar, confectionery, bakery and tortilla products; seafood preparation; and fruit, vegetable and specialty foods, soft drinks, breweries, wineries and distilleries.

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# 3 factors to consider before incorporating your farm

Are you thinking about making your farm a corporation? Lance Stockbrugger, a chartered accountant who also farms with his siblings in Saskatchewan, says the move has pros and cons.

Here are three business factors to consider when determining whether going corporate is the right move for you.

## 1. Think long-term

Take a big picture look at your operation, and consider the impact of incorporation down the road and into transition.

Think about what incorporation will mean to the farm business when it comes time to sell, transition or rent the land—and work those answers into the decision-making process now. And, he adds, while it's easy to put land into a corporation, it's a hard and a long process to get it out, so taking the extra steps now to consider the big picture is a smart and cautious move.

## 2. Consider capital gains exemption

Corporations don't have a capital gains exemption, so if you're incorporated, there will be more taxes when it comes time to sell.

Stockbrugger says that means every dollar the land appreciates will be taxed. With personal land, the owner will pay little to no tax on the appreciation.

He adds that if a corporation rents a piece of land, it will be taxed at a rate of around 50%, but if the land is personally owned, that rate drops to close to 40%.

## 3. Analyze the impact on transition

There are multiple areas to consider with incorporated versus unincorporated land in the transition process, Stockbrugger says.

If you're the landowner of an unincorporated farm, when it comes time to transition, you can give pieces of land individually to the next generation without any tax implications.

Stockbrugger says owners of unincorporated farms have special rules available to them, not available to many other industries. Farmers can buy at the adjusted cost base but need to pass that information along because

that now becomes the adjusted cost base for the next generation when they want to sell it.

On the other hand, the whole corporation must go to the individuals involved in the transition before the farm can be passed on.

## Land title navigation

If you want a piece of land to go to a specific child, put their name on the title. Avoid having all the kids on each piece of land for probate or estate purposes.

Stockbrugger says all the names on all the pieces of land can cause complications if there are divorces, bankruptcies or if someone wants to borrow against that piece of land. For example, if one of your children wants to borrow against a piece of land, everyone who has their name on that piece of land must sign off on the loan.

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Greg Albert and Allan Brown from Virden helping out members of the Elkhorn Restoration Club with harvest. The harvested sheaves will be stored for the winter and used in the threshing demonstration at the Elkhorn Antique Auto Museum on Canada Day next year.



Former McAuley resident, Sid Warkentin, now of Virden, loads fresh-cut sheaves onto the Elkhorn Auto Museum's hay rack.

# Antique equipment used in Elkhorn harvest

BY ED JAMES

All across Western Canada farmers are very busy taking off their crops. Despite a late spring start, the crops of 2022 are looking good with a promise of a good yield per acre.

For the most part these crops are being harvested with modern combines and other modern equipment. Some of the more recent combines have all the comforts of home, such floating seats, air conditioning, sound systems and GPS guidance systems. In fact, several have sound proof cabs and an extra cab seat if some one wants to ride along!

However a harvest at Elkhorn on September 18 was very different and can best be referred to as an old-time harvest. It was a bright, warm, fall day with just a hint of an autumn breeze in the air when a half dozen or so people gathered on a section of unharvested land north of Elkhorn belonging to Ivan Soder.

Most of the people were members of the Elkhorn Museum Restoration Club, a group of museum helpers who help make things happen at events and help with

many parts of the museum's collection. This day they gathered to harvest a field of grain using some of the antique equipment from the museum's collection.

The harvest equipment this year included a '50s vintage Minneapolis/Moline tractor model U.

The binder was a '40s era John Deere machine. A binder is a machine that cuts the stocks of the dry, tall, yellow grain with rotating, hard, flat boards. Once the grain is cut, it is scooped up by fingers on the machine and rolled out the other side, then tied up in to sheaves. From there the sheaves are either put into stocks to help them dry or are gathered up by a hard-working crew with pitch forks onto the hay rack.

Everyone who wants to try the old farm gear is welcome to, and after a brief lesson, they are off around the field, with the amount of standing crop getting smaller.

In our patch that day there was a very large, grey and white rabbit who popped out of its burrow and headed south at high speed!

Given the age, condition and mechanical workings of the machines, you can count

on a few breakdowns in the field.

While the farm mechanics work on the gear, it's nice to sit in the shade of the hay wagon and enjoy the warm, fall weather.

In another story, I made mention that to make field repairs to older machinery, the main tools you would need were a strong crescent wrench, a tough pry bar and a good strong hammer. Of course it's all different now that the main tool is a computer technician who is sent out from the dealership!

After a fair amount of work on the tractor engine, it still would not start, at which time Lynn Tutthill came back with a big hammer, and after a few good whacks it started up!

There is an interesting story that goes with the old John Deere binder. The story goes that it was the property of Claude Rookes, of the Manson area, who bought it brand new and used it only one season.

Apparently the next year, the first of the "modern" combines came out and it was goodbye binder—until it was donated to the Elkhorn Antique Auto Museum collection.

The binder has had a second life at the Elkhorn museum where its operation is an amazing feat of farming engineering to many young people!

At the end of the day the whole field was cut down and stacked on three hay racks. The rabbit never did come back as we headed back to the museum and stored the hay wagons away until next year's Canada Day, where more antique farm equipment will be brought out of the large storage shed and set up to give a demonstration of old time threshing.

This is where the Museum Restoration Club members and the general public have a chance to grasp hold of a pitch fork and throw today's sheaves into the rattling machine with a pipe on the end that pours out the golden grain to a vintage grain wagon.

As a point of interest I asked what will happen to the grain and was told that the club tries to sell it off as feed grain. The money earned is used for future club and museum projects. The crew that day in the grain field had a chance to relive old farming practices and the younger ones learned about how it was done in the old days.



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A group of volunteers harvesting and bringing in the sheaves on a bright, fall, prairie afternoon. From left is Greg Albert on the hay rack, Lynn Tutthill on the '50s Minneapolis/Moline Tractor and Rick Tesselaar on the binder.



**Left:** Out in the field loading the hay racks.

**Right:** Volunteers help load the hay rack. On the rack is Greg Albert. On the ground from left: Allan Brown, Rick Tesselaar, Sid Warkentin, and Lynn Tutthill.

**Below:** Rick Tesselaar on the vintage tractor and Allan Brown on the vintage, John Deere binder.



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# Farmers are satisfied with this year's harvest

Continued from front

"Now we just have to work with the day lengths and the temperatures to try and get into the field," said Schatz Leeds.

"As we move further into September and the days are shorter, that usually means there's a smaller window to harvest because it gets damp quicker every day."

She said this year's yield looks average.

"So far, we're hearing average numbers, average yield," said Schatz Leeds.

"The commodity prices are good. As always, input prices seem to be increasing a little bit. It will be a good year, but as anything, it would have been nice if yields were above average and prices were above average, and inputs didn't go up.

"Obviously that's every farmer's dream, but it doesn't seem to happen."

Schatz Leeds spoke about some of the issues that occurred during this year's growing season.

"Our late seeding (was an issue), the spring didn't really cooperate with us this year so producers began a bit later," she said.

"We were fortunate that we didn't have heat at flowering time. When you seed later that's always a risk, that your crops are flowering or pollinating at the hottest part of the summer, and we luckily were good with that.

"We are seeing in canola that didn't get fungicide some higher sclerotinia levels which just cooperates with the humid weather that we had in July. Sclerotinia likes wet and humidity and we had that, so we're seeing some of that developing more than usual.

"Other than that, I would say our crops did have a bit of stress this year. We're seeing average yields and a bit of drowned out spots or some stress related physiological issues.

"I'd say we were in a pretty good area where things looked decent. For example, peas are really prone to disease and I thought our peas did really well this year, they seemed to slip through the weather really well."



Harvesting on a farm between Moosomin and Rocanville recently.

Schatz Leeds was asked if there was an impact on yields as a result from seeding starting later this year.

"Yes and no. I think Mother Nature was also a month behind, typically you want to seed earlier for the crops to be past flowering before it gets too hot," she said.

"But, Mother Nature was also a month behind so the weather sort of followed each month, like May temperatures were like April, and June temperatures were sort of like May, and July never got really hot.

"I don't think we saw the issues with that—with the lateness in seeding—it was more about the conditions being too wet.

"Plus when we got rain it was like three inches of rain, not just an inch. There would have been anaerobic conditions in the soil and the roots maybe didn't get access to nutrients.

"That's the stress we got, I believe. If we even got an inch of rain instead of three inches it would've been better, but every time it

rained it was a dump.

"We're hopeful and excited to see what the canola might bring us. I'm glad we got to where we're at, now it's just dealing with the shorter days to get the rest of the harvest off."

Compared to last year's drought, Schatz Leeds said this year's moisture was great for producers.

"You always want to take the moisture when it comes because you never know what the next year's going to bring, but it's looking like we're good for now," she said.

### Green says yield average to above

Trevor Green, farmer and Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) Representative, said he is at the half way mark for harvest on his farm.

"We've still got a little bit of cereals and all of the canola yet to do," Green said.

"The quality was pretty good, there was a bit of ergot in the

wheat, but it was mainly on the outside rounds of creeks and stuff, that's due to the later seeding because we don't normally see ergot.

"Usually we get our wheat in earlier so that the wheat is flowering before the brome grass is, then you don't see the ergot issues.

"That was one issue, but everything is all backlogged due to that lovely spring storm we had where it put everything behind.

"We probably need another few days for combining our cereals before we can get into the canola.

"By the looks of the rain we had on Monday, we're probably not going to get at it for another three days."

Green said because harvesting is all weather dependent, having wet weather conditions pushes back harvesting further.

"It definitely slows it down, plus it downgrades any of this crop that has been sitting out through this rain," he said.

"I'm guaranteed it's pretty much not going to be Number One now, some of it can even be down to feed if it had lots of rain on it. You're looking at lots of dollars lost there just because of the downgrading."

Compared to other years, Green said the yield from his farm this year is expected to be average.

"It will be a good year, I wouldn't say it's a home run year. It's looking average, definitely better than last year," he said.

"Probably per acre it was one of the most expensive crops that anyone ever put in, with the inputs being so high. We need some good yield and some good prices.

"The yields seem to be decent, I wouldn't say it's a bumper crop, but they're average to above average. Now that we've lost some grain here with the weather, that's going to cut into some bottom lines."

"The weather conditions knock back the quality a bit, when we get rain on the crops," he said.

"Sometimes you can lose up to a buck to two dollars a bushel if it downgrades enough."

Green spoke about the challenges he faced through this year's growing season.

"It was wet during spring. Late seeding is probably the biggest issue we had," he said.

"Generally this time of the year, around Moosomin, we're done harvesting. I would say this year we are 50 per cent on average, maybe 60 per cent done harvesting now.

"We're generally done now, we're going to need the weather to change to get the crops off before the snow starts flying.

"Every day in October is a gamble for combining.

"We went into seeding late, so your spraying is late, then your harvesting is late, and you're not going to get the fall work done that you need to get done.

"It gets scary when you have a lot of dollars sitting out in the field there. Your whole income is sitting there, it's a little nerve wracking for some guys."

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Harvest photo submitted by Jarvis Olsen of Liam Olsen taken east of Rocanville

# The right time for soil sampling

Soil testing indicates soil nutrient reserves available for crop uptake. This is useful any year, and especially after low-yielding or high-yielding years when reserves may be more difficult to predict.

Test results will help farms set fertilizer rates specific to the needs and yield potential of each field—a key step in implementing the right rate principle of 4R Nutrient Stewardship practices.

Soil sampling just prior to seeding provides the most accurate measure of nutrients available to the crop, but the springtime slot has practical limitations.

Fall soil sampling can be almost as accurate and has various advantages: less time pressure to get samples collected and analyzed, especially if done after harvest; more time for fertilizer planning, including variable rate prescription maps; and the opportunity to buy the right amount of fertilizer at a lower price. (Prices are often, but not always, lower in the fall.)

The best time for fall sampling is after soil has cooled to at least 10°C. Cool soils reduce the microbial activity that can mobilize nutrients.

Soil samples collected after this activity slows down will more closely reflect spring nitrate (NO<sub>3</sub>-) contents.

If farms plan to band fertilizer in the fall, sampling when soils

drop to 10°C (not too much lower) should allow for fall application before the ground freezes.

Sampling immediately after combining may show what nutrients, if any, were deficient for the current year's crop, but early fall sampling is not recommended for planning next year's fertilizer rates. Changes in nitrogen levels often occur after sampling due to moisture-fueled mineralization and losses to leaching, denitrification and immobilization.

**Cost.** Custom sampling in two parts (0-6" and 6-24") and lab analysis of that two-part soil sample will cost around \$100. Cost per sample will be lower when a farm submits more samples. At \$1, or less, per acre, soil sampling will pay off if farmers use results to make more refined fertilizer rate decisions.

**Composite samples.** One composite sample per field can provide a general impression of soil nutrient levels. For the composite, take 15-20 sub-samples from the most productive areas—not hill tops, not low spots, not saline areas.

Divide each core into two or three soil depths and put them into separate pails. Suggested depths are 0-6" and 6-24", or a three-way split of 0-6", 6-12" and 12-24". With the 15-20 sub-samples separated by depth, blend those samples to create one com-

posite sample per depth. Submit each depth in its own sample bag.

With one composite sample per field, farmers can create fertilizer blends specific to the needs for each field. If field-specific fertilizer blends are not logistically possible, a compromise is to apply the same blend but at different rates to match the yield goal for each field.

**Zone samples.** For more precision, collect separate samples from common zones within the field.

Zones are generally based on productivity differences that can be fairly predictable based on soil characteristics, drainage or elevation.

Three zones could be hilltop, mid-slope and low-lying areas. Five zones would delineate the side slope positions.

For each zone, follow sampling methods similar to the composite sample technique.

This could mean six or more samples per field (two depths for three zones, for example), but this method can provide meaningful results for fields with higher levels of soil variability, and can point to the value of variable-rate fertilizer applications.

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# The adventures of a harvest season

"What the heck?!" one of the twins (11) shouted as we drove past my brother-in-law's field. "Uncle D is dropping?" The other, noticing the exact same thing at the exact same time, exclaimed, "WWW.hhhh...aaa...aaa...tttt?!" And so the conversation continued: "Why is he dropping?" one asks to which the other responds, "I dunno, he has no cows anymore." "Maybe he is gonna bale it," one concludes as the other thinks on that. "Or maybe he is selling it to someone! Yup, could be."

This conversation was one between the boys shortly after harvest in our area began after they noticed their great uncle had combined oats and was dropping (versus spreading) the straw. It was hilarious to listen to their conversation and not once did they say 'dropping oats straw.' No, it was just 'dropping' and they both were somewhat astonished that Uncle D was 'dropping!'

While every grain farmer is likely held up by rains right now and perhaps getting a wee bit antsy, there is one thing this farm family is grateful for—the first 13 days of September that we were able to get the combines out and rolling. Those two weeks almost felt like the hot, lazy days of summer, at least while it lasted. Even the nights, at first, were beautiful and warm. We opened our camper windows when we crawled into bed and just slept like babies in the fresh air. It reminded me of our tenting trips when we were newly married, except that the "tent" now has a comfy queen bed (that's not on the ground), a lovely bathroom and huge shower and a double fridge in the kitchen! How's that for roughing it at the farm!

When the combines started up this fall, I was still no further ahead in making my master meal list. Once I'd scrambled for 13 straight days with what to make for meals in the field, I decided to get with the program and get a "harvest cook book" made up. So, one rainy day, that's exactly what I did. Unfortunately the first three meals I tried from my google search were a bit of a disaster. The dessert was much too sweet, the chicken and stuffing casserole just didn't have much flavour and the other recipes I tried for the first time (you know, something new and exciting) were just plain not so good. I went home and put those recipes right through the shredder! And now, it's back to the drawing board. More than likely back to the good old spaghetti and meat sauce type meals!

In light of the fact that I still don't have a "meals truck," meaning a revamped handi-van type vehicle and am likely never to get one (I mean it's been 45 years without one so far so chances aren't good I'd say), I got "my" half-ton equipped for meals in the field. This simply means throwing three lawn chairs into the back and now we are "equipped!" Day after day for the first week or so, whenever I took a meal to the field, I put my coolers and baskets into the truck and away I went to serve my famous tail-gate meals to the men. Well, famous is a stretch. I am more of a one-dish casserole or burger-on-a-bun type meal-maker. Of course, every bite we took in the field was likely dust-covered not to mention that fine layer of dust that seemed to permeate the interior of the truck.

Finally, on day five or six perhaps, hubby says to me, "Why do you bring the 'new' truck to the field?" Hmmmm, that's because it's a truck and it can get through ditches and across bumpy fields is what I think, but not what I say. "What else would I drive?" I ask. "Bring the farm truck. It's usually in the yard. This one is getting awfully dusty," he says. In my mind, I think, yeah, well dust washes away but I say nothing, knowing that every meal I make in town will now need to be carted into one truck and driven out

to the farmyard, then transferred to the 'farm truck' for field delivery.

When I returned to the farmyard that night, I dutifully transferred the lawn chairs over to the farm truck and drove into town with a plan for the next morning—one that involved detailing the newer truck and washing it by hand. And so I have single-handedly made it impossible to even want to drive my truck into another field! Or even downtown for that matter.

The twins were quite adamant one beautiful, hot weekend day that we get down to the creek on our land and check for minnows. Off we went on the ATV, across the newly harvested fields and into the creek where some serious excitement ensued.

Not only did the boys see minnows in the teeny tiny little flow of water running through the lowest part of the creek but they spotted a crawfish. They jumped up and down with delight. It had to be the best day of their lives, I am sure. To see a real live crawfish in our little creek was the highlight of the day and they were literally vibrating with excitement. Frogs were plentiful and the boys decided they would put one in a five-gallon pail and take it home to their dugout. If you've ever travelled with two girls and two boys and their frog in an open-air ATV on a two-mile trek home, climbing valley hills, descending valley hills, crossing creeks, making hair-pin turns (all to say a two-mile trip takes half an hour), you would have to know that there was a lot of screaming coming from the female department every time that frog hopped out of that pail. I was not entirely enthusiastic about that slimy little thing jumping up on my bare legs. If you want to see a Grandma sporting two new hips move faster than you've seen in the previous four years, trust me, a frog on her lap will do the trick.

While the twins haven't gotten their fair share of time on the combine this year due to school starting on the same day harvest started, they have made the best of it. One day after school I told the boys to meet me at my RV by the shop and I would drive them out to the field a couple of miles away so they could combine with dad. When they arrived, I suggested they take water and a snack to dad. One boy lifts up a bottle of water and says, "Got the water, Grandma!" The other, unbeknownst to me, had grabbed a handful of Pringle chips out of a near empty container I had sitting on the counter. As he told me he had a snack for dad, he opened his hand to reveal a dozen potato chips there. Awwww, priceless I thought to myself before suggesting he put them back into the container and just take the container to the field.

I dropped the boys off several swaths away from the combine and they started hiking across the field with their snacks for dad in their hands. I sat and watched them for the two minutes it took them to get over to the combine, talking as they went, jumping the swaths and then finally, climbing up into the cab. That picture of those two chatting as they walked will forever be ingrained in my mind. And in my mind, they are talking yields, crop rotation, and weed control. In reality they were likely talking about catching frogs and spotting minnows in the creek, but hey, let a Grandma think what she will, right?

One day while the men were moving machinery from one field to the other (I was the chosen gopher that day, likely

The Lighter Side of  
Life...  
DOWN ON THE FARM  
by donna beutler  
FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST  
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because the choices were few and far between), the twins and I stopped to look at some canola. The boys opened a pod or two, rolling it in their hands and with a running commentary that went something like this: "Most of the seeds are black," said one. "A few are a little red," said the other. "Not sure it's ready," the first one continued. "Might be, but the straw needs to rot a bit." "Yup," said the other, "be easier to combine if it rots a bit." "Yup," said the first. "Just need a little rain." And the other concluded the conversation: "Hope we finish the wheat before it rains." It appears to me, that in just 11 years, they've amassed a wealth of information. Grandpa walks up to catch the tail end of their conversation. "Future agronomists," he says and off we go, each in different directions but with one thing on all of our minds: "Let's get the crop in the bin!"

And so the harvest days have gone by with the guys going full speed ahead, moving steadily from one field to the next and with the exception of a few acres of wheat and some late oats, those crops are mostly off and in the bin and the canola awaits our attention. There is no other time of year that hubby can consistently be reached on his old flip phone, the one he otherwise never carries on him. Normally our harvest conversations are pretty basic and go like this: Me: "Where are you?" Him: "Long quarter." Me: "Cya in ten." He did confuse me one day though when he said, "Can you get that tool out of the old grey truck?" I paused. "Old grey truck?" I asked. "Yeah, the old one." Now when you only have one grey truck (as in new-ish and not allowed in the field), that kind of statement

can really make you feel like you are losing your mind. My mind quickly thought about the old grain trucks. Nope, none are grey. The old fuel trucks. Nope, not grey. Our son's old trucks. Nope, none grey. Semis? Not remotely grey. My pause on the phone gave him pause as well. "Do you know which truck I mean?" he asked. "Not even remotely," I said. We were now in our longest phone conversation so far this harvest. "The fuel truck," he finally says, somewhat exasperated. "Awww, you mean the WHITE fuel truck?" I ask. "Yup," he says as he hangs up, clearly knowing all along exactly which truck he meant and there's not a hint of grey in it unless you count the dirt on the side. And such is the life of the farmer and his wife who survive at times with next to no meaningful communication.

On the other hand, my brother in law has clearly given up trying to contact his brother by cell phone. "You know," he said to me the other day, "I have a better chance of getting hit by lightning than getting a hold of Wayne on his phone." Yup, pretty much, I think... except in harvest! That man is glued to his combine and his phone is at his side.

So many nights this harvest season, as my daughter in law and I and the kids headed back in from the field to feed the guys, we have delighted in full moons, beautiful sunsets and clear, star-laden skies. And it's just so wonderful to be surrounded by the remarkable prairie skies in colours that can't be replicated. On nights like these, I am taken back to my parents' farm and especially those first harvests after moving from the Ontario forests to the Saskatchewan prairies. It may not have been love at first sight for me back then, but oh the harvest nights when the combines rolled through the fields under the starry sky were the best! There was something so magical about those times or so it seemed. Even the dust in the air seemed magical and was oh so welcome as it gave the promise of another great harvest day ahead.

And so it is that harvest 2022 is well underway and my wish to all of you who share in this thing called harvest, may it be a safe and successful one for you. The season pulls you wholeheartedly into what is the last harrah of the year and I love, love, love it. Here's hoping you do too!



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Merle Malin of Redvers recently decided to donate a hydraulic lift system to Levi Jamieson of Moosomin. The lift helps people in wheelchairs get onto tractors and combines when farming, it goes as high up as 11 feet. Malin had read in the World-Spectator about Levi, and decided to donate the piece of equipment that he said made farming much easier for him.

# Paraplegic farmer sees need, donates lift

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS  
 LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
 When Merle Malin of Redvers read in the World-Spectator about Moosomin's Levi Jamieson a few weeks ago, he knew he could help.

Malin became a paraplegic years ago, after an accident while driving a semi.

He farmed for years as a paraplegic, and had a specialized piece of equipment that he knew would make Levi's life easier, a hydraulic lift mounted in the back of a truck.

The lift is worth around \$50,000. It goes as high up as 11 feet.

Powered by a remote control, it can lift a person in a wheelchair up to the cab of a piece of farm machinery, allowing them to

access and use the equipment.

Levi is a high school student who was injured in an ATV accident and lost the use of his legs in 2020. After hearing about Levi through a story in the World-Spectator, Malin thought it would be a good idea to contact Levi and donate the hydraulic lift chair to him.

"From the paper I saw a photo of Levi with his calf in the Fairmede 4H," Malin said.

"I got in contact with Kevin Weedmark to get a hold of Levi, then I messaged Levi and the rest is history.

"Other than picking apples I don't have a lot of use for the lift anymore, but over the years when I used it, it was a life changer. It made it easier to farm. I thought why not

give it to Levi."

Levi's dad said the family was so excited to hear from Malin that they picked up the lift just a few days after his call.

"He called us on the Friday on the long weekend and we were going to the lake," said Darcy Jamieson.

"We came home on the Saturday and phoned Merle, then we were down there Monday on the long weekend. We couldn't get there quick enough."

The Jamieson's said they are really appreciative for Malin's donation.

"I haven't used it everyday yet, but when I get out more on the farm I will," said Levi.

"It's helped a lot already though. For getting into tractors, it's a lot easier than climbing up on the tractor like a monkey."

He said it has helped him do work around the farm and cut hay for the RM.

Levi's dad said they only make the hydraulic lift in the States now, and that the company who used to make it in Canada no longer sells them.

"MacDon Headers the big headers on the combines, the fella that invented those, invented this hydraulic chair," said Malin.

"He was selling them himself and was in Saskatoon. Through his work of MacDon he knew the people Atom-Jet Industries who thought they could take over after he died from a heart attack.

"Atom-Jet did sell them at one point, but eventually stopped making them."

Levi said he cannot wait to start using it on a regular basis when farming.



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A girl and her grandpa (Blayne Arnason and Wayne Arnason). Submitted by Tresley Arnason



Harvest photo submitted by Jarvis Olsen of Liam Olsen east of Rocanville.



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# USask researcher tackles issue of shrub encroachment in Saskatchewan grassland ecosystems

Expansive shrubs can impact quality and quantity of grass, reducing availability of food for cattle and other ruminants

BY SHANNON BOLASCHUK

A University of Saskatchewan (USask) researcher is exploring why shrubs are encroaching on grassland ecosystems in the province—an important issue that ranchers, scientists, rangeland managers and others are eager to better understand.

Irini Soubry, who is pursuing a doctoral degree in the Department of Geography and Planning in USask's College of Arts and Science, said shrub expansion into grasslands can cause numerous negative effects, such as a reduction in the quality and quantity of grass available for cattle to eat. This can result in ranchers struggling to provide enough food for their cattle as the world's population increases and demand for food rises, resulting in millions of dollars in financial loss for cattle producers worldwide.

"This is one of the important reasons to preserve existing grasslands," said Soubry.

Grasslands are herbaceous-dominated areas with at least 10 per cent trees and shrubs. Grassland ecosystems cover about one-quarter of the Earth's surface and are important for many reasons, such as supplying forage for grazing animals and supporting water flow, carbon sequestration and storage, erosion control and wildlife habitat.

Grassland ecosystems are at risk globally as humans plow them to plant crops, replacing wildlife and introducing invasive species in the process. The encroachment of native shrubs into grasslands further threatens these ecosystems, as grasslands typically fare poorly next to woody neighbours. Soubry said several global organizations have taken action to protect these important ecosystems, noting grassland restoration aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on land degradation neutrality.

"Since large parts of the grassland ecosystem are already lost, sustaining grassland health is important for preserving the multitude of ecosystem services that grass-



Irini Soubry is pursuing a doctoral degree in the Department of Geography and Planning in the College of Arts and Science.

lands provide," she said.

"The encroachment of shrubs into grasslands can alter their soil, climate and water supply and, as a consequence, affect animals, plants and bacteria. Shrub expansion can alter grassland biodiversity, its productivity, nutrient cycling, ecosystem structure and energy flow—all of which are important for it to function properly."

Soubry is writing a PhD thesis, titled "Monitoring shrub encroachment and its drivers in Canadian grasslands with remote sensing," under the supervision of Dr. Xulin Guo, a faculty member in the Department of Geography and Planning.

Soubry's research focuses on commercial rangelands, provincial parks and native pastures where shrub expansion has been identified in grassland areas. She has collected field data during the past two growing seasons in three study areas in the province: The University of Saskatchewan's Kernen Crop Research Farm, the grasslands

in the West Block of Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park and large commercial rangelands around Burstall, Sask., that have a fire history.

What Soubry has observed from her visits to the study sites is that the shrubs expanding into the Saskatchewan prairie grassland ecosystems are native shrubs that were already present, just in a lower abundance.

"However, local human-environment interactions and larger-scale factors, such as climate change, seem to be making shrubs expand beyond their historic or expected geographic range," she said.

Exactly why shrubs are encroaching on Saskatchewan grassland ecosystems is the core question Soubry is trying to determine with her research. She noted that shrub encroachment has affected the U.S. tallgrass prairies for more than 130 years; however, the driving mechanisms behind the phenomenon are less understood on the Canadian Plains, where the issue is more recent and may be induced by climate and land-use changes.

"We need to find the parts of grasslands that shrubs cover, when these shrubs expand, and how they relate to changes in climate and grassland management. We also need to know where shrubs will be in the future. There is no clear answer to these questions," said Soubry.

"I am trying to answer these with case studies in commercial grasslands and provincial parks of Saskatchewan that belong to different climate and soil regions of the province. I am figuring out the best way to create maps that show the location of grassland shrubs with images acquired from aircraft and satellites, and I am checking the accuracy of these maps by comparing them with data that I collected from the ground. Scientists could use my method in other global grassland regions that face shrub expansion."

Continued on page B22 ☞



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# APAS president says federal gov. needs to do more research on emission plan

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) recently submitted a response to the federal government addressing their concerns with the proposed 30 per cent fertilizer emissions target for 2030.

APAS President Ian Boxall said the federal government needs to do further research before putting a set target on emissions reductions.

"We heard back from farmers and I think there's a few main things that need to be remembered when it comes to this target that they put forward," Boxall said.

"First, the modelling on how they determine the reduction needs to be correct. If they want to have a reduction in nitrous oxide emissions, they need to measure nitrous oxide emissions.

"They cannot base the reductions in emissions off of sales, because yes I believe over the last number of years we have seen an increased use of nitrogen fertilizer, but all that really matters in that is what are the bushels produced per unit of nitrogen.

"If the modelling is focused on reducing emissions, the federal government needs to measure emissions and set a target on emissions. They cannot ask us to have an emissions reduction on nitrous oxide and base that off of sales, that isn't fair.

"We've seen an increase of fertilizer use, but there has been an increase of bushels of production as well. When you look at those units and measure it, that math works. If they want an emissions reductions then let's look at emissions and not at sales. The modeling around how they determine what the reduction is and what's required needs to be correct.

"The second part is the government needs to do that research to determine that. They need to do the research to show us where the emissions savings are."

## Farmers have already taken initiative for reducing emissions

Boxall said farmers in Saskatchewan have already been doing their part in being environmentally friendly.

"In Saskatchewan, I would say 50 per cent of farmers are on sectional control, deep banding fertilizer, at the time of seeding. We are already doing a lot of practices to reduce our emissions," he said.

"There isn't a whole lot of broadcasting of fertilizer, there is some, but there isn't a whole bunch. Our emissions are probably already at a fairly low rate just because the way we apply our fertilizer."



Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) President Ian Boxall.

He also stated that because nitrogen fertilizer comes at a high cost, farmers are mindful of how much they use.

"What the government also needs to understand is that nitrogen fertilizer is one of our biggest expenses on the farm," he said.

"We're not just going out there and putting it on where it's not required. Soil samples are done, there's targets set for how much nitrogen you need to achieve the yield and you know, too much nitrogen causes the crop to fall over.

"There's a balance there between what the crop can use and what we put on, we already do all that. It's not like we're going out and putting excess nitrogen fertilizer on because we want to, it's a huge expense.

"We are doing everything we can to mitigate that expense and reduce that expense, and ensure that we have the right amount of fertilizer in the right place, and they need to understand that."

To reduce emissions in Canada's agriculture sector, it is going to take more than just reducing fertilizer emissions, said Boxall.

"I don't think it's one thing that's going to give us a 30 per cent reduction," he said.

"Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has research on farms all over this country, they do the research by jurisdiction because land type, water, all of that is different in each area, which will affect emissions. The federal government needs to do the research and show us where the

savings are."

Boxall was asked if he thinks it is possible to meet the 30 per cent target goal by 2030.

"I don't know, I can't answer that. That's for the government to answer in my opinion," he said.

"They set a seven year target to achieve a 30 per cent reduction, they don't know how we're going to get there, and they don't have the modeling correct.

"I think it's a pretty tight timeline to do it honestly. By the time you start doing research to determine where these nitrous oxide savings are, seven years isn't very long and we know that when it comes to the research side of things.

"I know that it cannot affect production. With what's going on in the world geopolitically and food security being at the top of the mind for a lot of countries, that needs to be Canada's number one focus—production.

"Every production target that the government has ever set forward, whether it be production on or exports, we have exceeded.

"I think that's the main point that it cannot affect production, that they need to get the modelling correct and the modelling needs to be by jurisdiction because soil type, water volume, all that stuff is different across Canada. It can't be a blanket approach. Thirdly, they need to do the research to show us where the savings are."

## Concerns for food production from reduction emissions target

Boxall said the federal government's 30 per cent target for reducing emissions may impact Canada's overall production of food.

"At a time when Canada's looked at to provide safe, healthy, agriculture products, and not just food, but a bunch of other stuff that the world looks to us to provide, at no point should a policy affect production," Boxall said.

"There's a bunch of products that farmers provide that the world wants from Canada because we have been a reliable supplier.

"I think it's important for that to be the main focus on production, especially at this time."

"Don't get me wrong, we care about the environment, more than we ever get credit for," said Boxall.

"Farmers are the forefront of whether it be climate change, whether it be cyclical weather patterns that we're seeing, we're the forefront who see the changes everyday on our land and in what we grow.

*Continued on page B24*

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# USask researcher tackles issue of shrub encroachment in Saskatchewan grassland ecosystems

Continued from page B20

Soubry is also taking a historical perspective by looking back in time to see how shrubs expanded in the prairies in previous years. By looking to the past, she hopes to obtain a deeper understanding of the possible driving forces of shrub expansion in the future, such as climate, land use and management, landscape factors and moisture availability.

"I am hoping that these steps will allow me to build a model to estimate future shrub cover on grasslands, depending on various climatic and management scenarios," she said. "Then, scientists will be able to better understand the processes behind shrub expansion, while ranchers will know better where to apply shrub control efforts and how to manage their grasslands to prevent further shrub expansion. They will then have the ability to provide enough food for their cattle to better support global meat and milk demands."

Soubry and Guo have co-authored and published four articles in several academic journals, with two additional articles recently submitted for publication that are currently under review. As a USask PhD student,



Irina Soubry has examined commercial rangelands around Burstall, Sask. (left) and collected field data in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park (right).

Soubry has been awarded several scholarships and awards, including the prestigious Dean's Scholarship for three years.

"Being part of the University of Saskatchewan, with a strong geography and planning department and with Dr. Guo's

research focus on grassland studies through remote sensing, allows me to undertake this research project with success," said Soubry.

"The fieldwork experience in the research group has significantly helped my research,

along with the group's expertise in earth observation, climate change, grasslands and ecology. I am lucky to have interdisciplinary collaborations with the Department of Plant Sciences (in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources), the Sas-

katchewan Bison Association and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. I hope this can allow me to improve communication between research entities and stakeholders, and that it will help inform shrub management decisions."

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# APAS says govt. needs to do more research

**Continued from page B21**  
We're not opposed to any of that, but we just need to ensure that it's done correctly."

Boxall said he is concerned the change is being driven by Environment and Climate Change Canada, not Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

"I am (concerned), I truly am. If Environment and Climate Change of Canada is pushing this agenda because it isn't coming from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada," he said.

"The two entities need to get together and decide what is the goal for agriculture in Canada. I think there's a balance there between production and environment issues. It's about a balance.

"Don't get me wrong we care, and we will do what we can do, but there needs to be a balance and sometimes I wonder if those departments communicate well enough to understand that."

Boxall said he is unsure if the 30 per cent fertilizer emissions target by 2030 will stay as a voluntary target.

"I do have some fears about it, I do have some concerns. I hope they're willing to listen to producers and listen to groups like APAS from what we laid out in our submission, about what we face on the farm, especially in Saskatchewan.

"Because a lot of technology that's used here has been invented here, we've done it on our own because that's what is best for our

land, whether it be zero-till or how we apply fertilizer now."

"I think 50 per cent of producers are in the 4R program that was put out by Fertilizer Canada as well."

He spoke about what he was hearing from farmers regarding the emissions reductions in Canada's agriculture sector.

"I think there was some confusion around the whole concept because I think there was a lot of confusion that people read it as a reduction in fertilizer use," Boxall said.

"It's not that, it's a reduction in nitrous oxide emissions from nitrogen fertil-

izer.  
"Once we got that clarified and I think that was one issue. I think there was some poor communication on the government's part when they rolled this out, we got that straightened out."

## Discussion between APAS and Agri-food Canada

Boxall was asked if there will be any opportunities for discussions with the federal government about the target.

"We had a Zoom meeting with Agriculture and

Agri-Food Canada where I laid out these same points to them and they were taking pretty vigorous notes I noticed," he said.

"I'm hoping that we can get the messaging correct. I'm hoping that they are listening to what we are saying, to what we are facing on the ground everyday. I hope that resonates with them, but it just depends on the agenda. That's my fear. What's the end goal of the agenda?"

APAS plans to continue discussing their concerns about the target goal.

"I hope there is some continued discussion with everyone who has put in submissions," Boxall said.

"That the groups who put in submissions to the government can have a sit down to go over them in a little more detail, that way we can explain to them our side of it and come to some understanding on it."

"That's where the re-

search comes in because I don't think there's one thing that's going to give a 30 per cent reduction in emissions. It might be three or four things that farmers need to adapt or implement on their operations to achieve this goal."



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# Why HR audits needs to be a part of your farm business plan

BY HELEN LAMMERS-HELPS AND KIERAN BRETT  
Human resources experts say an evolving HR plan on the farm is effective.

Jade Reeve of the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council advocates for regular HR assessments. For many producers, the winter months are ideal as it gives them time to be prepared for spring seeding.

**Getting started**  
"We have an HR toolkit that has a lot of tools and templates, and beyond that, a lot of HR theory to help explain all of the areas that are relevant to an employer or HR manager," Reeve says. "If you've got a plan, you can revise it using those tools and conduct an audit yourself."

She encourages communicating with employees while conducting assessments and ensuring they have a chance to review changes to policy and the employee handbook. The toolkit can provide help navigating any difficult conversations, not just between employer and employee but among family workers as well.

CAHRC offers additional HR management training solutions through e-learning, workshops and webinars.

A self-assessment tool also exists, helping to identify strengths, where support or training may be needed, and access to information and tools that provide employers with training and developing employees.

HR management tools, like an HR audit, can help farmers focus on the areas of their human resource management in most need of attention. The audit can also work

towards the overall HR plan.

**Keeping the crew**  
One area of attention may be to address worker shortages. Reeve recommends employers demonstrate why somebody would want to work for them. That means the employer must sell themselves to prospective employees, highlighting the job and working experience.

"Photos work wonders to show happy smiling people, animals, the quality of life on the farm, that really speaks to job seekers," Reeve says.

Farmers may also wish to communicate potential rewards and recognition to job seekers.

Such a component in their HR plans might include:

- Structured compensation strategy
- Performance bonus program
- Health and safety program
- Recognition program that encourages and rewards high-performance workers

**Find the gaps**  
Michelle Painchaud, president and CEO of Painchaud Performance Group says the results of an HR audit become the basis of an HR plan that will position the farm's labour force and leadership.

Painchaud's top questions include:

- Does the farm business have a clearly defined and

well-communicated vision, mission, core values, goals and objectives? Is there an up-to-date organizational chart and current employee manual detailing policies and procedures?

- Regarding recruiting, are there defined competencies and job descriptions for every position and job-specific, behaviour-based interview questions?

- Is there a welcome package for new employees and scheduled new employee check-in meetings?

- Do the farm performance management goals include having an explicit workforce planning strategy linked to the organization's vision and strategy? Are expectations and performance measurements clearly defined? Is there a quarterly or annual formal feedback program to help employees become high performers?

- To develop employees, does the farm have a new and existing employee training program that can help build competencies to achieve the farm's goals? Is management and leadership training in place to help steer employees and the organization toward its vision and goals?

- To aid staff retention, does the farm business use surveys to measure levels of employee satisfaction and engagement and have ways to measure leadership effectiveness within the organization?



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Harvest photo submitted by Rylar Hutchinson

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# Farming is losing to misguided urban politics

Interest groups are weaponizing science to support a narrative that fits their biased view of what farmers should and shouldn't do

Most Canadians have never been on a farm, let alone lived on one, which makes more than 98 per cent of our population agriculturally illiterate.

For many Canadians, crop production is an unknown concept. Because of this, it's relatively easy to use fear to influence public opinion on any food-related issue involving agriculture. Activists know this well.

Our great rural-urban divide has always fuelled food politics, and that's not going to change anytime soon.

But now, agri-food policies are increasingly being urbanized by an agenda that's pushing the entire Western world toward the precipice of a food security catastrophe.

The Trudeau government wants a 30 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. Producers say that reducing nitrous oxide emissions can't be achieved without reducing fertilizer use.

Most common fertilizers contain nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

Nitrogen is the issue.

Surpluses of nitrogen in the atmosphere can produce pollutants such as ammonia and ozone.

Too much nitrogen will contaminate soils, and waterways and, of course, harm our health. Policy-makers have every right to be concerned.

But the federal government wants an absolute reduction in emissions, regardless of productivity or efficiency of fertilizer use. For many crops, Canadian farmers' ability to grow anything will be severely compromised.

This is all happening as food security concerns around the world are rampant. The Netherlands is witnessing massive protests from farmers as they face similar emission targets, even fertilizer bans, by 2030.

And make no mistake: Canada could be next to adopt outright fertilizer bans.

It's unclear how food prices would be impacted. But producing food on a large scale would likely become much less cost-effective. The correlation between commodity prices and food retail prices is typically not that strong, but a wide-reaching policy impacting an entire industry all at once could very well make it stronger.

Canada produces food for the world, not just for Canada. Aggressive emission targets will likely lead to more people, not fewer, experiencing famine worldwide, none of whom will be Canadian. Since we trade with the rest of the world, mainly with the United States, our crops would likely become less competitive. With lower supplies, input costs for food manufacturers and grocers would likely increase significantly, pushing food prices higher. This is one aspect of the emission reduction issue in farming.

The needs regarding food production vary widely from region to region and between crops. Supply-managed commodities like dairy, eggs and poultry will be spared, receiving more for their products no matter what. Most of these commodities are produced in Ontario and Quebec.

Grain production, on the other side, won't be so protected. Suggested emission targets will again transfer more wealth from some sectors to others by compromising the livelihood of many internationally-focused farming businesses. And those farmers come from across Canada. Free-market livestock sectors like cattle and hogs are also affected by all of this.

This is all happening for one reason, beyond the focus on emission targets. The government is already imposing a 35 per cent tariff on Russian fertilizer, even if tariffs aren't actually punishing the Russian regime. This only impacts our farmers as our government wants to discourage the use of fertilizers for its own convenience.

The Canadian fertilizer emission reduction plan also points to how farming is los-



Sylvain Charlebois

ing to urban politics. The signals have been there for a while, with "No Mow May," bees on cereal boxes and city councils ruling on pesticides. Activists are successfully using urban-centric artifacts to influence policy issues, which could spill over to agriculture. Cities essentially want farmers to treat fields like city lawns. But the stakes are much higher for farming.

This has been happening as activism has become institutionalized in recent years. Interest groups, even academics who have become advocates, will weaponize science to support a narrative that fits with a biased view of what farmers should and shouldn't do. This is beyond dangerous. It's a reckless way of dictating policy.

Virtue signalling—supporting ideals over fact—is practiced by those who likely see their quality of life being affected. They're also dead wrong. This goes for all issues, but food and energy policies are the ones that will be felt most acutely.

The federal government wants to make agriculture greener and more sustainable. There's nothing wrong with that; the sector can always do better. Many are speaking about regenerative agriculture and the circular economy. Those concepts have merit and can help our agri-food sector become more efficient.

But what is not appreciated is how farming has evolved in just the last five years, adopting more sustainable practices. Crop rotation schedules, biodiversity considerations and the no-till approach have all made agriculture more sustainable, helping farmers reduce emissions.

Farming is a business, and cutting costs is part of doing business. Farmers don't want to overspread expensive fertilizers since this would make their business less profitable. Most farmers hire soil scientists to ensure they can rely on reusing natural resources to make a living.

Farmers are the most responsible environmental stewards in the world. Incentivizing farmers using productivity-based metrics linked to fertilizer would be more appropriate—and less foolish.

The government can look at other sectors to hit targets but messing around with our food system can be quite perilous.

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

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# How to build a strong farm advisory team

A strong and diverse team of advisors can go a long way to ensuring annual profit margins and growth for a farm operation.

From veterinarians, agronomists, lenders, lawyers and accountants to equipment technicians, real estate agents, insurance brokers and more, they all play integral roles in helping you make and execute essential decisions.

Whether you're building your team from scratch or formalizing your current team into a more cohesive unit, consider these four points when building a successful team.

This is your operation, so it's paramount to know what you and the management team—whether that's your spouse, siblings, parents, or business partner—want.

Patti Durand is an FCC Business Advisor based in Humboldt, Sask. says farmers need to recognize they're the stars of their operation and structure relationships as such. If you're the owner/operator, you're not a spectator.

To truly shine, Durand recommends these steps:

- Know your operation goals to properly build on the farm's foundation.

- If there are multiple farm owners, all parties should have a defined role with responsibilities. This creates clarity in determining who oversees the maintenance of the relationship with each advisor.

- Know your farm business strengths. Understanding what you're good at helps you find the right advisors to do what they're good at.

"Taking time for a hard look at what is being done well and what needs improvement can be a very productive step," Durand says.

Many operations are family-run, which can come with challenges, such as keeping family and business separate. While this may seem straightforward on paper, it can be tricky.

Shawn Deyell, a tax partner at RLB Chartered Professional Accountants in Guelph, Ont., says it's important for farm advisors to realize how integral the family is to the growth of the farm business. Mixing family and farm business is intense in many scenarios, making communication paramount.

"There's just a lot of integration that creates a lot of great opportunities, as well as many potential pitfalls," Deyell says.

Regular conversations are important on issues like transition planning and the roles of operators within the farm. And when it comes to helping families set goals for their farm, an advisor's responsibility may be part facilitator in addition to their main role.

A long-lasting relationship with an advisor starts with a very important first step—the initial conversation.

Durand points out that the first sit down with an advisor is the most important meeting. It's the time set expectations about how you use their advice, how to prioritize advice in your operation and determine turn-around times for any reports or statements they prepare. Trust is built by setting expectations.

Relationships are about open and strong two-way communication. This means the farmer must provide accurate information on time, while the advisor must also make themselves available and endeavour to understand your goals.

The farmer must also commit to sharing farm information with the advisor as needed.

"Whether it's getting financial information to the accountant or bookkeeper or providing what was sprayed on what field and time to your agronomist," Durand says.

The more information the farmer provides to the advisor, the better they understand the operation and can create a tailor-made solution that leads to profitability and growth potential.

Building your team does not happen overnight. The key is finding an advisor who's the right fit for your operation and will work with the farm you've created.

Maggie Van Camp is a farmer and BDO Canada's National Agricultural Practice Development leader. She says asking questions is important to know if an advisor, such as an accountant, is the right fit.

Do they have a farming background? Do they know about and understand key issues in the ag sector? How many farm clients do they have?

Van Camp adds it's always a good idea to pick someone because of their expertise - not because they're nearby.

"It's becoming more important for farms to have a quality accountant who knows Canadian agriculture," Van Camp says.

Liz Robertson, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Farm Advisors, recommends getting references for all the advisors before they become part of your team.

"Word-of-mouth referrals are the litmus test - that's how I find good advice," echoes Elaine Froese, a farm family transition coach and farmer.

If you're missing a key advisor from your team and are unsure where to look, visit the Canadian Association of Farm Advisors' website or Bureau virtuel agricole et agroalimentaire and use the search function to identify the type of advisor you seek.

Overall, keep these points in mind when seeking an advisor for your farm:

- Know your farm operation inside and out before bringing someone in to advise you
- Get references and follow-up on them, from any advisors you're considering working with
- Build trust and a solid relationship with two-way communication with your advisors
- Don't be afraid to replace advisors if the relationship isn't working out



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