

SEPTEMBER 2023



Kevin Weedmark photo

Harvest 2023

A farmer south of Fairlight cuts through a field as Harvest 2023 continues. Many farmers say the crop is coming in better than expected after a challenging year.

Farmers wrap up harvest for the year

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

With fall being around the corner, most farmers across Southeast Saskatchewan are close to finishing harvest for the year.

"Harvest is going pretty good. The days are quite a bit shorter now, it's usually a bit wet and dew in the morning," said Murray Bruce who farms near Moosomin.

"Of course we've lost a bit of our daylight hours. There's not quite long of days as we used to have, it's taken a little bit longer.

"We have canola yield, as long as we can keep all of the

iron running things are going pretty good."

Bruce said he plans to finish harvest in the next few weeks, and is pleased with how his canola and wheat have done.

"We're likely two-thirds done, it all depends on mother nature," Bruce said laughing.

"The crops are looking surprisingly well with the little rain we had in July. We had a good reserve of moisture last fall so the crops must have rooted deep and did surprisingly well.

"We're going to need some recharge this fall, or early next spring, some rain to get the reserve moisture back up

again. The ground is pretty tapped out right now, it will need a little recharging between now and seeding time next year."

Bruce said the biggest challenge he faced during this year's season were the unexpected rainfalls.

"As soon as we pulled the combines out of the shed we started getting those little showers of rain so that stops us, usually, for a couple of days," he said.

"Every time it rains, it does downgrade the wheat a little bit, and takes a bit of weight away from the seed. That would likely be the biggest challenge."

Continued on page B9 ⁶³⁷

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Kids had a lot of fun at the Rocanville Museum's Annual Threshing Day

Above is Leif Craig in the hay pile. Below left and right are kids playing with the activities that were available at the Rocanville Museum's Annual Threshing Day that took place on September 16. See pages B16-17 for more photos!



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A first look at the 2024 crop input market

BY LEIGH ANDERSON
FCC SENIOR ECONOMIST

As the 2023 crop harvest is nearing the halfway point across Canada, attention has already turned to next year. This is FCC's preliminary estimate for the 2024 crop input market.

Fertilizer market outlook

Fertilizer prices reached record highs in 2022 as the world faced supply issues following Russia's war against Ukraine. This resulted in Europe curtailing production due to high natural gas prices. However, the global marketplace was resilient in increasing fertilizer supplies, and high prices resulted in demand contraction in many of the world's poorest agriculture regions. As a result, fertilizer prices have continued to soften over the past year (Figure 1).

European natural gas prices will continue to be on the radar for 2024, but there seems to be less uncertainty regarding global fertilizer nitrogen capacity. For one, China has re-entered the urea export market, and global potash prices remain soft.

Our preliminary assessment indicates that fertilizer prices are expected to remain under pressure into early 2024 but recover as seeding in North America approaches. Given current drought conditions in Western Canada and the U.S. mid-west, volume in the fall application period is expected to be weak.

The drought in western Canada and the excessive moisture levels in eastern Canada will impact fertilizer demand in 2024. Farm input retailers have an opportunity to continue growing their soil sampling business (e.g. 4R's) as they work with their customers to determine the optimal fertilizer application levels and any fertilizer residuals left in the soil from the drought.

Fuel

Slowing global economic growth is expected to result in diesel prices trending lower in 2024. Our preliminary estimate indicates that farm diesel prices will be 2.8% lower in 2024. However, continued global uncertainty, including Russia's war against Ukraine, OPEC+ supply cuts, and relatively low levels of U.S. distillate (e.g. diesel), could keep prices elevated.

Chemical and seed

Continued recovery in global production of agrochemicals and softer demand has led to increased global supplies. Overall, global prices have moderated for both glyphosate and glufosinate. The Canadian market will largely depend on domestic supplies and demand.

The commercial seed market uncertainty remains concerning the impact of the 2023 drought on seed for the 2024 growing season, including production costs. Particularly for canola seed, it will largely depend on the ability for growing seed supplies in South America during the off-season this winter.

We anticipate that the Canadian crop input market will grow modestly in 2024, and several factors might impact pricing and sales in 2024.

Issues to monitor

1. El Nino and drought monitor: El Nino is expected to

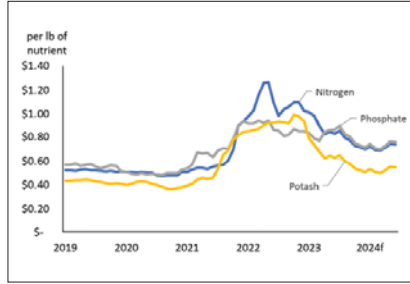


Figure 1: Canadian fertilizer price trend and forecast

continue into early 2024 and bring warmer temperatures. In anticipation of another year of dry and hot weather, Canadian producers may look to early maturing varieties if moisture issues persist for the 2024 growing season. Crop-input retailers promoting early maturing varieties may see an increased benefit from customers.

2. Farm revenue trends: Canadian crop receipts for the first half of 2023 were up 19.8%, driven by strong sales of canola and wheat. The drought is expected to reduce Canadian grain, oilseed and pulse production by 13%, which could weigh on year-end crop receipts for 2023 and into the first half of 2024, particularly in regions that experienced exceptional drought. Strong farm cash flow remains key to crop input sales. Pre-purchase trends for the remainder of 2023 may provide an early indication of what the sector can expect for 2024.

3. Economic slowdown and interest rates: Interest rates may have peaked already, as noted by the Bank of Canada's decision last week to hold their policy rate constant. We expect interest rates to decrease by the second half of 2024 as the global and Canadian economies weaken. Interest rate spreads between Canada and the U.S. will be important to monitor as it impacts the value of the Canadian dollar. See the Economic and Financial Market Update for continued monitoring of macro-economic issues.

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Bottom line

Preliminary estimates indicate that the 2023 drought in North America will negatively impact the crop input market in 2024. The biggest wild card for farm input providers is the demand for fall fertilizer application and pre-pay business for the upcoming growing season. Expectations that El Nino will last longer into 2024 will continue to drive business decisions on the farm, including soil testing, spray decisions and what varieties to plant.



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Public event about polycropping and climate change mitigation on Sept. 29

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

On Thursday, Sept. 29, an information session about polycropping and its role in climate change mitigation will be happening in the Moosomin area from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The event will be organized by the South of the Divide Conservation Action Program (SODCAP) and Living Lab - Central Prairies.

It will include a farm tour at the Adam Knutson Ranch in Wapella, followed by a presentation by Dr. Bart Lardner from the University of Saskatchewan, and an overview of producers' experiences using polycropping at the Moosomin Legion for the remainder of the day.

"The farm tours will go to Knutson Ranch where we'll look at some polycropping that he's swath grazing out there," said Trevor Green, one of the speakers at the event.

"Then we'll come back to the Moosomin Legion for a couple discussions on polycropping, and to hear about some of the different options, to talk to some of the people who have tried it to see what works and what doesn't work.

"Dr. Bart Lardner is going to speak about what they've done at the beef

farm in Lanigan.

"Cindy Green and myself are going to talk about some of the programming available, and about our experiences with polycropping."

Polycropping is the practice of growing more than one crop species in the same space, at the same time.

The purpose of the event is to showcase how environmental friendly polycropping is, and the role it plays in reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released in the atmosphere.

Green said he hopes to see people come out to the event to learn more about the benefits that come with polycropping.

"The biggest thing for us is polycropping has given us options for farming," he said.

"You put a polycrop in and if its dry like this year we ended up draining ours, but if it had been a good year, we could have used it for feed, or swathed it for swath grazing, but it gives you an option over just having a straight path."

Green spoke about the environmental impacts polycropping has on farmlands.

"If you look at a lot of conventional grain farmers, their crops are brown in the spring. They then grow

a crop, and now they're all brown and combining, but then they'll be brown (in winter) and nothing is growing and actively photosynthesing in that field," he said.

"Whereas if you have a polycrop field, we've had fields where you've dug under the snow in November and there's still green plants withering under that snow that's photosynthesing and sinking carbon into the soil."

The event will focus on the challenges and opportunities that come with polycropping, and provide a chance for farmers to ask any questions they might have. A few of the speakers that will be present at the event include Kelly Williamson of SODCAP, Trevor and Cindy Green, Dr. Bart Lardner of U of Sask., and Bridget Andrews, Executive Director at Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds.

People can register for the Polycropping's Role in Carbon Sequestration event by emailing info@saskwatersheds.ca, or calling (306) 541-9902.

Participants for the event will meet at the Wapella CDS Hall, to all travel to-gether for the farm tour. From there, participants will head to the Legion Hall in Moosomin for presentations and supper.

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Kyle Penner of Harvest of Hope (left) and Rick Block, Saskatchewan Regional Representative of Canadian Foodgrains Bank during last year's harvest.

Local projects help Canadian Foodgrains mission for ending world hunger



BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE
REPORTER

Growing projects in Saskatchewan play a major role in supporting the Canadian Foodgrains Bank mission of alleviating world hunger.

Rick Block, Regional Representative for Saskatchewan of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, said the province alone contributed \$2.7 million last year to the non-profit organization.

"In terms of this past fiscal year, the Foodgrains Bank brought in a total of just over \$21 million in donations," said Block.

"That's by individuals, that's by businesses, and also numerous growing projects and community events in Canada.

"There would be approximately 200 growing projects and community events across Canada.

"In Saskatchewan we have more of the community events, as well, we have somewhere just over 40 of these growing projects."

Funds raised from growing projects and community events are donated to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. The organization then provides food assistance for people in need around the world.

The federal government matches donations to the Foodgrains Bank, allowing the help to go further.

"Of that \$21 million of donations, Saskatchewan raised \$2.7 million of that total, and of that

\$2.7 million, about \$1.2 million came from growing projects and a few community events," Block said.

"We're definitely just about that 45 per cent mark, and we reflected that in Saskatchewan.

"It might go down to 40 per cent if you look nation wide, but really that is a significant bulk of our donation income that really comes from the concept of people working together saying, 'hey, we're better off working together to help alleviate hunger.'"

"That's really been a blueprint of the Foodgrains Bank since day one, you even see it in the structure throughout the organization. All of these organizations that say 'if we work together, we're able to accomplish a lot more than if we were each individual agency doing its own thing.' That's then reflected down to the community grass-roots level. Harvest of Hope is a great example of that."

Harvest of Hope, largest project in Sask.

One of the growing projects in the province that contribute to Canadians Foodgrains Bank locally, is Harvest of Hope in Moosomin.

Last year, Harvest of Hope brought in revenue of \$130,000 and after input costs, an estimated \$70,000 was donated to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

For this year, there are close to 35 growing projects in Saskatchewan.

"There's 33 registered projects, two of them are in limbo, but one of the projects, which is called Grow Hope Saskatchewan has six locations," said Block.

"It's a bit of a network of farm families that offer acres. There are 37 field sites that are part of Foodgrains projects.

"Harvest of Hope in Moosomin really represents all the pieces of a traditional growing project."

With Harvest of Hope being one of the largest growing projects in the province, Block was asked how it compares to other projects.

"It's typical in the way it's structured, in the way it's organized," he said.

"You see a great cross-section of people that are involved, businesses will step up. For example whenever we are going out there, the Credit Union will say let's provide lunch, Borderland Co-op will provide fuel, companies are saying we'll bring machines, along with individuals who are offering the use of their machines and their time.

"One of the things that's very unique with Harvest of Hope is its size. It is the largest growing project in Saskatchewan.

"There are a few larger across Canada, but only a few, my guess is it would be in the top five. Harvest of Hope is at 288 acres, farming two quarter sections.

"We talked a little bit about the risk in farming, there's even

risk in starting up a fundraising project. Particularly in those one or two first years when land was not being donated, and this group had to raise funds in order to essentially pay the rent on that first year. Obviously with the hopes there would be enough income in that first year to be able to afford rent for next year, and any necessary inputs that maybe weren't being covered.

"At 288 acres, that's a lot of input. Often we see projects that are 80 acres or 100 acres, they can get a lot of their inputs often covered, but at 288 acres, that's going to require a good amount of partnership building and also some financial management.

"I really credit the Moosomin Harvest of Hope for the way they've done that. They have done that very successfully."

Block said growing projects in Saskatchewan are all spread out across the province.

"If I did a formal count, perhaps we would see a little bit of a concentration in the southwest, maybe an hour or so centred around Swift Current," he said.

"Alongside growing projects, there are individual farms and farmers that continue on an annual basis, it might not officially be registered as a growing project, but they're providing grain donations on an annual basis, it almost acts like a growing project.

"There is a real concentration of growing projects around Yorkton, but there is also quite a few individuals who are an hour radius around Yorkton where there's lots of folks who support the Foodgrains Bank.

"The third area I would point out is north of Saskatoon, through the traditional Mennonites towns there is one large project that isn't a growing project, but it's a community event. There's lots of individuals who contribute as well to the Foodgrains Bank, but there's foodgrains supporters all over the province.

"We're in our 40th anniversary year, and there's always new people coming to the table to support our work, and there's people who have been doing it for 40 years."

Local projects help alleviate world hunger

With each initiative helping to contribute to Foodgrains Bank goal for alleviating world hunger, Block explained how many people the foundation has

helped world-wide. "The total grant money that came from Global Affairs (the Government of Canada) was approximately \$43 million," he said.

"They have a number of grants that match what donations are doing. When you combine the donations of Canadians, government grants, and there's even additional grants that are brought in, it means that on an annual basis last year we programmed about \$82 million of emergency food assistance and long term food security work internationally.

"That \$82 million reached just over a million of people in total this past year."

Block spoke about what he thinks motivates farmers across Canada to volunteer for projects like these.

"This is now my eighth harvest with the Foodgrains Bank. I've gone through a decent number of years and talked with lots of farmers," he said.

"Obviously my sample would be Saskatchewan, but I think it's representative of farmers across the country.

"There's a number of different motivations, some farmers are definitely responding because they see what some of their neighbors and friends are leading in their community. They understand the real importance of getting together and helping those that are less fortunate.

"That would be the motivation of some of the farmers. As it gets closer into the central mission of the Foodgrains Bank, there are many farmers who understand the risks of growing food, they understand the risks of their livelihood being tied to a larger market, so many forces beyond their control, let alone the weather.

"Intuitively, and in their own experience, they get the sense of what happens when these things don't co-operate and the possibilities of not being able to provide for your family.

"In Canada we have lots of risk mitigation tools, like crop insurance and whatnot, usually most farmers say at the end of the day, even if the whole year's a bust we're going to make it, and we'll get through until the next year, but they identify that's not the case for many small holder farmers around the world.

"Obviously, that pulls a lot of heartstrings and people want to be involved in that."

Continued on page B8

Local projects help Canadian Foodgrains mission for ending world hunger

Continued from page B7

"A little bit closer and more into the heart of the Foodgrains Bank identify and mission is that we're known as a Christian response to hunger. There is a faith motivation for a large cross-section of farmers as well.

"At its core, part of the Christian faith framework is that everyone's created in God's image and that everyone has the dignity of receiving food for today, a sense of food

security for the coming days, and so part of it is a desire to be able to respond both compassionately and generously, when and where, as possible to help those who don't have enough.

"I think connected to that, farmers and people in communities really enjoy that the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a Christian organization and I think people at the community level enjoy being able to say we're doing this.

"People from a variety of churches and people who are part of any church are simply working together under this mission to help the Foodgrains Bank do its work internationally. There's some motivation in that as well."

Sask Pulse Growers invests in genomics research focused on root rot resistance and stress tolerance

On September 7, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers (SPG) announced funding for two pulse-related genomics research projects, co-funded through Genome Canada's Climate-Smart Agriculture and Food Systems initiative (CSAFS). SPG's over \$1.4 million investment will be leveraged for a total pulse research and development investment of over \$12.8 million. These research projects are each four years in duration and aim to develop information and tools for breeding better combinations of wheat and lentil varieties in cropping systems and to enhance root rot resistance and drought tolerance in peas.

They include:

- **ACTIVATING** genomics to accelerate climate-smart crop delivery, Dr. Kirstin Bett and Dr. Curtis Pozniak, University of Saskatchewan - \$6 million
- **PEACE** (Pea Climate-Efficient): Developing climate-resilient, low carbon footprint field pea as a preferred rotation crop through the interdisciplinary integration of genomic technologies, Dr. Marcus Samuel, University of Calgary, and Dr. Sateesh Kagale, National Research Council, Saskatoon - \$6 million

"This research works towards developing tools for lentil breeding as part of Saskatchewan-based rotations and enhancing

the development of root rot resistance and stress tolerance in peas utilizing genomics technology. SPG is happy to support these research initiatives, as they closely align with our research and development strategy," says Trent Richards, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers Board Chair.

These projects will reduce the carbon footprint of Canada's food production systems by building their resiliency, environmental sustainability, and economic growth potential.

Other funders and supports of these projects include Genome Canada, Genome Alberta, Genome Prairie, Alberta Pulse Growers, Manitoba Pulse

& Soybean Growers, Saskatchewan's Agriculture Development Fund, Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, Western Grains Research Foundation, and Results Driven Agriculture Research (Alberta).

The Agriculture Development Fund is supported through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, 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% federally and 40% provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

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Farmers wrap up harvest for the year

Continued from front

"Farming is very much mother nature oriented, so if she's good to us we usually have a good year. Our business is very weather dependent."

Farmer in Esterhazy says harvest has been going well

Harvest is expected to be finished by early October, said Kevin Hruska, who farms in the Esterhazy, Gerald, Lagenburg, and Bredenbury areas.

"We're over the half way mark, we're well into our canola. There's been several rain delays, but we got our wheat done in pretty good time," said Hruska.

"The canola, we're rushing it. Canola is delayed a bit this year with the later rains and little showers, it's not too detrimental. We needed to by sometime anyways."

"We need seven working days of harvest and then we'll be done."

With the rainfalls at harvest, Hruska said the rain does not have the same impact on canola than it does on wheat.

"Moisture and drizzle on canola doesn't get damaged as much as grain does," he said.

"Canola is an oilseed, it doesn't deteriorate in drizzle or rainy events as much as cereal grain does. The pressure is sort of off because a few rains doesn't deteriorate your quality."

Given the dry weather conditions over the summer, Hruska said the crops are looking better than expected.

"I would say the yields are closer to average than a good, poor crop. I would say I'm speaking for everyone that the yields are slightly higher than expected with the amount of rain we got," he said.

"They're a little better than I thought, you need an ex-

cellent crop to make good money or a bumper crop. An average crop hardly makes you much money now with the expenses, but that's farming. That's been all my life like that.

"So far it's been a relatively smooth harvest, weather is the biggest challenge for harvest, I think, for most farmers, and this year, so far, the weather hasn't been too hard for us."

Crops are in good shape in the RM of Martin

A farmer in the RM of Martin, Steven Donald, said he is surprised with the condition his crops are in, based on the lack of rain in southeast Saskatchewan this summer.

"As far as combining, we're pleasantly surprised for the lack of moisture for what we have now," he said.

"For me, the biggest challenge all boiled down to the weather, but at the same time this year was stressful in a way, but it wasn't as stressful as last year, simply because we weren't getting the storms."

"The storm season is stressful and when we missed all of those, so it takes the stress off, in my opinion."

"Even worrying about if we should be spraying fungicide or not, it was one of those things that it was so dry, whether you did or didn't, I don't know if it made a difference."

"It's always weather related on our end of things that would be the most challenging."

Compared to last year's harvest season, Donald said his farmland received too much moisture last summer, whereas this year, it was the complete opposite.

"Last year we were unfortunate on our end of things because we just got hammered with storms," said Donald.

"This year we didn't get any of that, and we were lucky enough to get just a few rains at the right time. There was no real bad weather instances we had to worry about, no hail or the stuff we can't control, but it is nice to have some rain."

Donald said he should be finished harvest by the end of this week.

"We need about four to five good days to finish," he said.

"Harvest this year has been pretty uneventful. The weather did keep us from going when we wanted to go, but as far as getting the crop off in condition in deep condition we're very happy this year."

"We'll be getting some spraying done now, we're ready to get on with our fall jobs. All that fun stuff before the bails role and the cows come home from the pasture."



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Kevin Weedmark photo

Harvest 2023

A farmer south of Fairlight cuts through a field as Harvest 2023 continues. Many farmers say the crop is coming in better than expected after a challenging year with little rain.



Elize Steyn submitted this photo as part of The World-Spectator's 2023 Harvest Photo Contest. Her son, John-Ré Steyn, from Eastview Farms in the RM of Silverwood took it with his drone.

FCC partners with AGTECH ACCELERATOR through venture capital funding

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) has announced a new financial commitment in the development of agriculture startups through a partnership with Saskatchewan-based AGTECH ACCELERATOR, a venture-backed accelerator program founded by Cultivator powered by Conexus, Emmertech, and Economic Development Regina (EDR).

FCC is committed to supporting the innovative technology that will shape the future of the Canadian agriculture and food industry. Through AGTECH ACCELERATOR startups can receive the capital and mentorship to bring to market the systems, machines and data producers are looking for as they advance their own operations to meet the growing needs of sustainable food production.

"Providing financial support to AGTECH ACCELERATOR is a natural fit for FCC's venture capital program. Investing in our customers goes beyond day-to-day lending to include planning for a future that will fully realize the benefits of innovations in areas like digital agriculture and technology," said Rebecca Clarke, Vice-President of FCC's venture capital program.

"With support from AGTECH ACCELERATOR, Canadian entrepreneurs can grow and scale with greater strength."

The work of the AGTECH ACCELERATOR program highlights the value of investing in these early-stage innovations to foster the development of strong companies in Canadian agriculture and food.

"Partnerships are a key part of the success of AGTECH ACCELERATOR. We are very happy to have the support of FCC whose sole business is connected to supporting the agriculture and food industry," said Bre Walkeden, Cultivator powered by Conexus Community and Partners Manager.

"Together we can bring forward innovative projects that position Saskatchewan and Canada as a highly sought-after source of technology, tools and practices that will solve challenges and create opportunities for the agriculture and food industry."

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. For more information, visit fcc.ca.

Launched in 2021 and founded by Cultivator powered by Conexus (Cultivator), Economic Development Regina (EDR) and Emmertech (agtech focused venture capital fund), the AGTECH ACCELERATOR provides the resources, programming and funding agtech companies need to help them scale their companies.

The AGTECH ACCELERATOR is venture-capital-backed, meaning each Canadian company selected to participate in the yearly cohort will receive a \$100,000 equity investment at intake—a first for an accelerator in Saskatchewan and Canada. To learn more about the AGTECH ACCELERATOR, visit Cultivator.ca/agtech

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GIFS researcher supports international team effort to sequence earliest domesticated wheat genome



An initiative to sequence and characterize the genomes of wild and domesticated einkorn has found that about one per cent of modern bread wheat originates from the ancient grain.

A global team of scientists is looking to wheat's past to help it grow into the future.

More than two dozen scientists have contributed to a project that has sequenced and characterized genomes of wild and domesticated einkorn, the world's first domesticated wheat species.

Dr. Raju Datla (PhD), program lead, resilient agriculture, in the Global Institute for Food Security at the University of Saskatchewan is one of the contrib-

utors to the initiative, providing molecular genetics and genomics expertise to support the analysis.

Their findings were published in *Nature* in early August.

"Though significant advances have been made in wheat species genomics, the species *Triticum monococcum* (einkorn), representing the earliest domesticated wheat, was not defined yet," said Datla.

"The research advances and findings described in this article will open sev-

eral new opportunities for global and Canadian wheat improvement efforts."

Einkorn, which is still grown and consumed today, is a distant relative of modern bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*). In the *Nature* article, the researchers find that about one per cent of modern bread wheat originates from einkorn.

"The insights gained from genome sequencing wild and domesticated accessions allow us to reconstruct the origin and evolution of einkorn," said

Datla.

This research adds to a growing body of knowledge regarding wheat genetics that includes other significant findings from researchers at the University of Saskatchewan. In 2020, a team, led by USask's Dr. Curtis Pozniak (PhD), sequenced the genomes for 15 different wheat varieties. That initiative included contributions from GIFS' Dr. Andrew Sharpe (PhD) and its Omics and Precision Agriculture Laboratory (OPAL).

These, and other findings, help to improve the efficiency of wheat-breeding programs, allowing researchers and breeders to more quickly identify useful genes and traits that can enhance crop production and resiliency.

"Einkorn, the diploid wheat species, represents significant diversity and genetic reservoir for a number of useful traits for climate resiliency, disease resistance and nutritional quality for applications in wheat breeding," said Datla.

The international team of scientists includes researchers from the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, the UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y

Tecnología, the European Research Council and the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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GIFS researchers at USask identify protein that helps tell plants 'no' when nitrogen is low

Research led by a post-doctoral fellow at the Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) is shedding new light into how a protein helps plants acquire nitrogen and other important nutrients for growth.

Tokizawa's study shows an Arabidopsis plant root growing in nitrate-sufficient (left) and nitrate-deficient (right) media, with the latter having fewer lateral roots which are critical to help the plant acquire more nitrate in nitrate-rich growth media.

Tokizawa's study shows an Arabidopsis plant root growing in nitrate-sufficient (left) and nitrate-deficient (right) media, with the latter having fewer lateral roots which are critical to help the plant acquire more nitrate in nitrate-rich growth media.

Dr. Mutsutomo Tokizawa (PhD), a post-doctoral research fellow at GIFS, is the lead author of a new study with Dr. Leon Kochian (PhD), Canada Excellence Research Chair in Global Food Security at USask and research group lead at GIFS. The researchers have identified a novel regulatory mechanism that helps plant roots conserve resources in nitrogen-deficient soils and use them for enhanced growth of the tap root, which can grow deeper into the soil in search of areas with higher concentrations of the nutrient.

The findings support long-term initiatives to develop new crop varieties with root-related traits that help agricultural producers optimize fertilizer applications. "Nitrogen is the most important nutrient for plant growth, and acquisition of nitrate from roots has a big effect on crop productivity and quality," said Tokizawa.

"Root architecture is dramatically altered in accordance with changes in soil nitrate concentrations, and one of our goals at GIFS is to develop better roots in crops that contribute to global food security," said Tokizawa.

Plants absorb more nitrogen than any other nutrient, which is why nitrogen-based products represent the majority of the more than 200 million tons of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium fertilizers that are purchased by agricultural producers around the world every year.

Tokizawa's study, published recently in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), examines how plants respond when nitrate, the primary form in which plants acquire nitrogen-based fertilizers like ammonia or urea, isn't immediately available.

The project was born in the pandemic: Unable to conduct his expected laboratory work in early 2020, Tokizawa began revisiting data collected from his graduate work at Gifu University in Japan, where he worked in the laboratory that initially identified an interesting protein called STOP1 that had become associated with plant responses to phosphorous and potassium.

In the paper, Tokizawa worked with collaborators at Gifu University and other colleagues in Kochian's Root-Soil-Microbe Interaction research group at GIFS to conduct a series of experiments in Arabidopsis plants showing STOP1 inhibits the growth of lateral plant roots—which grow from the primary plant tap root—when there is a nitrate deficiency.

The study is the first to note that STOP1 is involved in plant responses to all three major fertilizer nutrients—nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium—that are required for plant growth.

"It was surprising to see that STOP1 is the protein involved in a number of these interactions, but as we learn more about plants, we are learning how complex they are, especially with regards to plant response to stress," said Tokizawa, who is to receive the Japanese Society of Soil Science



Dr. Mutsutomo Tokizawa (PhD).

The network of regulators that drive these interactions are extremely complicated and additional work is needed to understand exactly how plants sense an area is low in available nitrate, he explained.

Kochian's program at GIFS examines the interaction between and among roots, the soil and the microorganisms within the soil that have a substantial effect on soil fertility and crop health. Understanding these interactions is critical to increasing yields and promoting sustainable agricultural systems within challenging—and changing—environments.

"It is clear that roots are still relatively unexplored areas of plant breeding and crop improvement, but they have critical roles to play in improving crop responses to climate change, especially drought and flooding," said Kochian.

"Bigger roots can also sequester more carbon in the soil. From all of our work, we are finding that increasing root system size can be done without using too much plant carbon also needed for seed yield and this increases nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium acquisition efficiency. The result is optimized fertilizer inputs and costs to farmers, as well as reduced environmental impact and costs of remediated nitrogen and phosphorus runoff."

and Plant Nutrition's Outstanding Young Researcher Award in September.




Tokizawa said the team's discovery raises several questions for future research.






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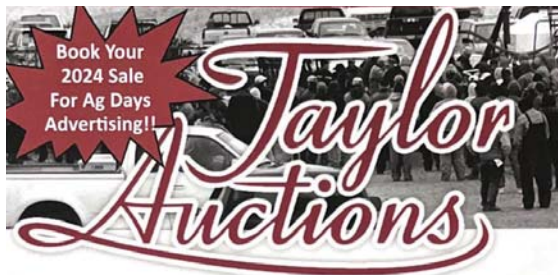
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Rocanville Museum Day 2023

Rocanville Museum's Annual Threshing Day took place on September 16. It was a beautiful day for demonstrating the antique machinery, live music, food and the Market at the Museum. In the afternoon a large crowd gathered to relive a bit of history during the harvest season with their afternoon threshing demonstration. All ages took part in the threshing demonstration pitching wheat sheaves onto the antique conveyor. The machine removes the seeds from the stalks and husks and the museum uses the grain to mill their own flour that they will sell at next year's event.

Kelsey Selby Photos



Logan, Leif and Mirena Craig working in the blacksmith shop.



Joe Cameron of Bredenburg, left, posing in front of his wooden creations with Cameron Duncan, right.



Vendors Dorothy Windsor (left) and Deenie Goulden (right) sold canned goods and pumpkins.



Left: Brenda and Dean Redman come from Moose Jaw to operate the steam engine for the threshing machine.

Right: Ron Hilgers and his helper pitching wheat sheaves.



Threshing demonstrations took place in front of the museum. Volunteers pitched sheaves of wheat for a large crowd into the threshing machine.



Lachlan Neville crooned for the crowd throughout the afternoon.



Remiscing on the days of neighbours in Tantallon who had snow planes.



Right: Daryl Roy and his son Logan demonstrating a 1920s John Deere tractor.

Left: Ray Behrns, drove the kids and their parents around town on the hay ride.



Father-daughter duo, Anthony and Olivia Kelly, entertained the crowd.



Volunteers operating the 1912 Case steam-powered tractor with 80 hp.



The kids zone was busy all day long with different Kids First events.



Over 90 per cent of insured forage rainfall insurance program acres in Saskatchewan receive payout for 2023

On Sept. 5, the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan announced a record-breaking level of payments under the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) Forage Rainfall Insurance Program.

"While producers face ongoing risks related to climate change and extreme weather events, the support of Business Risk Management programs provides some level of stability against income and production loss," said Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lawrence MacAulay. "This record high level of payments to producers is a testament to the need for, and value of, the AgriInsurance Program."

"There is additional support for our livestock producers, as over 90 per cent of insured acres enrolled in the Forage Rainfall Insurance Program received a payment," Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "This is additional cash flow to participating Crop Insurance customers, in reaction to the dry conditions. We are seeing this Program respond to producers needs where precipitation shortages result in feed and pasture shortfalls. I encourage producers to continually reassess options available through the full suite of Business Risk Management Programs."

Total 2023 Program indemnities paid are \$60.4 million, across SCIC's 17 forage risk zones. While conditions vary across the province with scattered distribution of moisture, the 2023 growing season realized generally drier than average conditions in several areas of the province. Payments are most heavily concentrated in the southwest and west central regions of the province.

Forage Rainfall Insurance Program payments were issued to participating producers on Friday, August 18, 2023. Crop Insurance customers do not have to register weather-based program claims with SCIC, as indemnities are calculated automatically, based on information from the weather stations. Claim payments are based strictly on the precipitation data gathered at the customer selected weather stations and the insurance selections of each individual producer. Given the dry

conditions, customers are reminded that Fire insurance remains in place for insured Forage Rainfall Insurance Program acres until March 31, 2024.

The Forage Rainfall In-

surance Program is available on native and tame acres for hay or grazing, protecting pasture and hayland in the event of below average seasonal rainfall at the producer's se-

lected weather station. For more information on the Forage Rainfall Insurance Program, visit <https://www.scic.ca/crop-insurance/program-overview/weather-based-coverage/>

forage-rainfall-insurance-program.

Crop Insurance is a federal-provincial-producer cost-shared Business Risk Management Program that helps producers manage

production and quality losses. Support for the program is provided by the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.



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USask project to advance plant pathogen research receives nearly \$800,000



The funding for Dr. Chris Todd (PhD) and other USask researchers was part of more than \$113 million awarded to almost 400 research infrastructure projects across the country.

A proposal led by Dr. Chris Todd (PhD) to take the Environmental Plant Pathogen Interaction Centre (EPPICentre) to its next phase was awarded \$796,910 in funding from the national John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF).

The fund, run through the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI), supports research and research infrastructure for innovative projects in Canada. The funding for Todd and other USask researchers was part of more than \$113

million awarded to almost 400 research infrastructure projects across the country.

USask is a consistent leader in agricultural science and biological research, with agriculture being one of the nine signature areas of research. For Todd—the head of the College of Arts and Science’s biology department—evolving the plant pathogen centre is the next step in advancing important research into crop and plant health in Canada.

“We’re really looking at

some fundamental questions of the plant-pathogen interaction,” Todd said. “It’s going to allow us to explore additional opportunities where a secure facility would be an advantage.”

The original EPPICentre was developed to explore clubroot disease in crop plants. Because clubroot is a serious soil-borne disease and particularly threatening to important prairie crops like canola, having somewhere to closely study clubroot in an envi-

ronment where it wouldn’t be a danger to other crop research was crucial.

“Having the capacity to quickly respond is going to be really important going forward,” Todd said.

Todd worked with a team of researchers, including co-applicants Drs. Yangdou Wei (PhD) and Randy Kutcher (PhD), to develop the proposal for the second phase of the EPPICentre, which would provide additional secure growth space for propa-

gating plant material to continue investigating clubroot disease and other pathogens as the need arises.

According to Todd, the research team’s needs “outgrew” the capacity of the first centre, which he considers a testament to the work being done at USask. The hope for the evolving facility is that it “outlasts” his career as a researcher.

He said USask’s support and the CFI-JELF funding

in looking to expanding the EPPICentre was an important sign of confidence in the cutting-edge work being conducted by USask researchers.

“It’s gratifying that the university is supporting a project like this. It’s going to generate a facility that the next generation of plant biologists can get trained on and use, and potentially expand into phase three or four or beyond over time,” he said.



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Soil health solutions:

USask hosts Canadian Senate Agriculture and Forestry Standing Committee



Students in the EVSC 380 Grassland Soils and Vegetation field course examine Orthic Dark Brown Chernozem soil at the Northeast Swale.

On Monday, August 28, the University of Saskatchewan (USask) hosted delegates from Canada's Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to inform the committee's study on soil health in Canada.

Soils provide many key ecosystem services, including food production, water filtration and carbon and nutrient cycling. Healthy soil is essential to the sustainability and growth of Canada's agriculture sector, which is why the Senate standing committee is taking a close look at the status of soil health in

Canada: to establish a baseline and to identify ways to maintain and improve soil health, ensuring Canadian agricultural producers are global sustainability leaders.

USask is an international leader in field-based, landscape-scale soil science research, with researchers actively involved in studies that focus on both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem health, linking basic microscale science to real world issues.

"Soil health research is crucial for the global issues we are facing," said Dr. Angela Bedard-Haughn

(PhD), dean of the College of Agriculture and Bioresearches. "USask researchers are conducting the soil health research needed to improve human health, food security, water quality, and mitigate climate change."

"Closely examining the status of soil health allows us to identify best practices that are already being used by innovative farmers, and to increase adoption of those practices that mitigate future risk."

During the visit, committee members participated in a roundtable discussion with USask researchers

and graduate students in the College of Agriculture and Bioresearches' soil science and plant sciences departments.

Following the roundtable discussion, the delegation visited a soil science field course at Kernen Research Farm where they had the opportunity to interact with students and learn about practical aspects of soil formation, classification, landform recognition, and soil management.

For Bedard-Haughn, collaboration on these issues is key and being able to host the committee was an impactful way to spread

the groundbreaking work being done at USask while deepening the delegation's understanding of the innovation being made in the area.

"The committee's study

will provide a more accurate picture of how soil health varies across Canada and a baseline against which we can measure future efforts," said Bedard-Haughn.



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Are plant-based proteins here to stay?

BY PETER CHAPMAN

The next generation of plant-based protein products needs to taste good and sell. There are opportunities for products that perform like those designed to replace. Plant-based is not enough anymore.

Consumers are changing faster than ever. People decided they wanted to reduce or eliminate animal protein from their diet. Consumers and the value chain jumped on board. These recent changes to the market could be a family eating plant-based protein 2-3 nights per week instead of trying to do it 7 nights per week.

Significant choice for consumers

The shift in shelf space to plant-based proteins has been swift. Perhaps too swift. Producers, processors and retailers reacted relatively quickly to get products into the market and on the shelf.

Even during the pandemic, we saw the linear footage of plant-based protein products expand rapidly. There were branded products and private labels. It was interesting because retailers often wait to see how products will sell before diving in with their brands. Some say retailers let the suppliers work hard to establish products and then swoop in with their brands. Regardless of perspective, we saw many new items in the market.

Great ideas need to translate into cases

Regardless of whether they buy for their health or the impact on the planet, consumers probably only buy again if the product tastes good.

It was apparent there was innovation in processing to develop some of these items, which excited people. We saw full bunkers devoted to Beyond Meat and other brands in the meat department.

Buying shelf space with listing fees is possible, but earning it with sales and margin is more desirable. We saw products getting shelf space with upfront investments and the belief from both retailers and suppliers that they would sell. Now we'll see which products are earning their space on the shelf with baseline sales performance.

Delivering sales with plant-based protein

It must start with the eating experience. It would be interesting to understand the repeat purchase of plant-based protein products. Consumers will often try something once, but it must taste good to buy it again.

Consumers will buy again only if the product tastes good.

As an industry, we must figure out how to better mer-




chandise these items. Some retailers consider it a category within a department, and others put them in natural food. Generating sales is difficult when consumers are confused about where to find the products. While we figure it out, suppliers of these items need to do a great job of helping consumers understand where to find their products in the stores.

One other opportunity is to reduce the processing and simplify the ingredients. Ironically, people choose to eat 'healthier' with these products, but they're more processed and contain more preservatives than their competitors. As processors learn more about the items and how to produce them, I hope we see less processed and more

natural products and ingredients.


Consumers, suppliers and retailers have been excited about these changes to the market. This year we will get a much better indication of which plant-based proteins will pay the rent and stay on the shelf.



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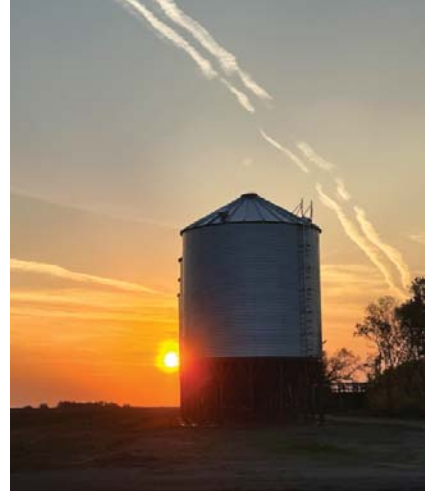
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Beautiful 2023 harvest photos submitted by Donna Beutler.



Counting the fields left to harvest

I love the feeling that washes over me at harvest time as the crew moves off one field and onto another because I love to mentally tick 'done' off after the completion of each field. At the start of harvest I never think about how much is left to do because that's much too stressful to contemplate, but once you hit a certain percentage, perhaps 70ish, counting down the last of the fields is so much easier to do. Nine fields left! Yes! Six quarter sections to go, yayyyy!!

Of course there are those standstill moments when your countdown for the day nets you zero—and sometimes that one day turns into three or four—canola too green—wheat too tough—breakdowns—high humidity levels that keeps you sitting until nearly noon—a tenth of rain—and a bit more rain. Nevertheless, we carry on, trying to forget we started this whole process on the 15th of August. It sure seems like a long, drawn-out season so far.

The rain that rolled in after a very dry summer (ironically just as we began the harvesting process) got a bit of green growing on the fields already harvested, a bit of throw-over no doubt. One too-wet-to-combine day saw us going over to the creek that runs along our land for a wiener roast and a bit of family down-time. The route to the spot at the edge of the creek where we have our firepit follows a trail across the field and as we drove across that particular field, Gramps made note to the twins (now 12) of how clean the field (no green growth) was in the back corner and asked the boys why that would be. We heard a tentative response from our back seat passengers that almost sounded like a question, "That's where you combined with the old 9600?" Grandpa's head nods up and down. Methinks Gramps is still a bit partial to the old machine.

Of course, the old machine has other issues, but the newer ones sometimes do too, so it's a catch-22 no matter what's running in the field. The farm kids, all three, have taken their turns combining with their dad, learning the tricks of the trade. And Grandma, from her perch on a lawn chair out back of a food-laden tailgate, sits back watching with pride as they keep on learning more and more about the ag industry that they live and breathe every day of their life.

One of the most special things about harvest and about being in the field, especially at supper time when I get there, is those incredible sunsets. Oh. My. Goodness. God's handiwork just seems to get more and more spectacular by the day (or night as the case may be). As for the Northern Lights a few nights ago, wow! What a show.

The Lighter Side of Life...
DOWN ON THE FARM

by donna beutler
FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST
dl_beutler@yahoo.ca



Our camper on the farm has become such a cozy little home away from home during this time of year. Hubby stays there because it's close to the never-ending workload and hence, very practical to be there at this time of year. I, on the other hand like to stay because it means some great times with the grandkids. ATV trips to the creek, campfires out behind the RV and unending card games make my post-supper-in-the-field stays at the farm oh so worth it.

One night, as the farm grands and I sat around the fire, we heard the dog start barking up a storm up by the house. I looked, wondering what on earth he was barking at. Is there a bear in the yard? What was going on? The kids on the other hand didn't even react, just kept their eyes on the fire. "Why is Max barking?" I asked them, a tad concerned about the whole thing. The twins' response is, not surprising knowing them, short and to the point: "Mom came out of the house with her work gloves on."

Pause. That's it. Nothing more from the boys. I am lost because yeah, that makes a lot of sense to me. "Huh?" I ask. "Max knows Mom isn't going to town or anywhere. That she is coming outside," they explain. The dog obviously gets quite overjoyed at the thought of the kids' mom being outside with him. And eventually, as the evening wears on, most everyone, two dogs and half a dozen cats, gather around the fire for a bit of after-the-sun-has-gone-down time to enjoy the Beutler tradition of strawberries and melted Toblerone and a bit of star gazing.

I have to admit I am feeling a wee bit off this harvest season. After what seems like a lifetime of running like crazy during August/September/October either running meals, running combine or running for parts, it would seem that now, just running an evening meal is all that

is required. Which means entire days for me to bake or work on some project or do whatever I want. Well, perhaps it's more of do whatever it is that needs doing that at one time never got done in the fall season.

And so, besides making bread or buns or cinnamon pull-aparts most every morning, I have the farm books done up to date (that has never happened during September—ever!). I have nearly finished stripping and sanding an antique table (also never been done in Septembers past) and I have started a gazebo roof project that will eventually mean not having to repeatedly store deck furniture cushions. It's definitely a bit of a different world for me this season but I am enjoying every moment of every day regardless of what I am up to.

There could be one caveat in there. That would be tomatoes. So I have never been a gardener. Oh I have done it on the farm but I absolutely do not like planting, weeding or harvesting a garden. Except potatoes because they are so yummy fresh from the garden. And since we moved to town more than half a dozen years ago, we really didn't have garden space. This year our neighbour allowed us not only the use of her greenhouse to start our tomato plants but her garden space too and so ... we are now inundated with zucchini, mashed potato squash and tomatoes. I can hardly keep up with picking the tomatoes let alone trying to find a purpose for them. How much tomato sauce and pasta sauce can one couple even use over winter?

With October not too far off in the distance, I feel like it is officially autumn and I am oh so enjoying these beautiful fall days! Wow—could the weather be any better? We have been enjoying so many days of clear blue skies, sunshine and some beautifully warm temperatures to boot. I know I will feel a bit of sadness when I do the final clean and packing away of the RV in a couple of weeks but when we can all shout "We're done!" it will be a happy day!

Here's hoping your "done" day is not too far off (or you've reached it already) and that this year's harvest is a safe and successful one. Hats off to all the combine operators, repair people, gophers, meal haulers and especially those truck drivers whose job I never envy. And to all those in the ag industry who help keep us doing what we do best—the parts' suppliers and grain buyers and all those in between. This may be one of the most stressful times of the year for our grain farmers, but I hope it's also a time to count the many blessings we enjoy in our great province. Take care, my farmer friends! Keep on doing what you do best!

Axe the tax on farms and food

The House of Commons overwhelmingly passed a bill to make food cheaper and help farmers.

In fact, the House passed the bill twice. But after two years, the bill still isn't law and that delay has cost families and farmers almost \$100 million.

What's stalling the democratic will of our elected representatives?

The Senate. The bill is simple. The feds gave farmers an exemption on the carbon tax for diesel and gasoline. That helps farmers keep food prices down and compete globally. But the feds forgot to exempt the propane and natural gas farmers need to dry their grain and heat their barns.

So Conservative member of Parliament Ben Lobb introduced Bill C-234 back in February 2022 to fix that and extend the exemption to farmers' natural gas and propane.

Bill C-234 would reduce the "financial burden the carbon tax places on all the necessary practices undertaken by farmers and ranchers like drying grain, irrigating crops, or heating and cooling livestock barns," explains MP John Barlow who is the vice-chair of Parliament's agriculture committee.

It may seem like a small change, but the carbon tax is a big cost for farmers, even with the existing exemptions.

The carbon tax cost Canadian farmers an average of \$14,000 in 2019, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Trudeau cranked up his carbon tax every year since. That means higher costs for farmers and higher grocery prices for Canadians.

The carbon tax on propane and natural gas will cost



Franco Terrazzano

farmers \$1 billion through 2030, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Here's the infuriating part: the problem should be fixed already.

This March, MPs passed Lobb's Bill C-234 to remove the carbon tax from these farm fuels. Conservatives, New Democrats, the Bloc Québécois, both Green Party members and a couple independents voted in favour of the bill. Liberals Kody Blois, Heath MacDonald and Robert Morrissey also voted in favour.

This legislation has the support of the majority in the House of Commons and MPs from every party voted for it.

The bad news is the bill has been held up in the Senate ever since.

With their \$169,600 base salary, maybe senators aren't too worried about the price of milk, hamburger meat or chicken? But many Canadians are.

In fact, six-in-10 worry their paycheque might not be enough to feed their families.

Farmers are working 20-hour days to get the harvest in.

You would think that might spur the Senate to more briskly shuffle this duly passed bill through the unelected Upper Chamber.

But the Senate doesn't care. It took a gander at the bill during second reading on June 13. Since then, the bill has been collecting dust in the agriculture committee, which is chaired by Senator Robert Black.

The Senate's fisheries committee thought it was important to meet during the summer break to "examine and report on Canada's seal populations and their effect on Canada's fisheries." So why wasn't Black willing to give up a couple summer vacation days to make sure farmers got relief during harvest?

This isn't the first time the Senate held up a bill to remove the carbon tax on farms.

Conservative MP Philip Lawrence introduced the original version of Bill C-234 back in September 2020. It made its way through the House of Commons to the Senate on June 23, 2021. The Senate failed to pass it.

Canadians have now been waiting for a law to remove the carbon tax from farm fuels for three years. The delay has already cost taxpayers almost \$100 million.

Canadians don't expect much from senators. But is it too much to ask that they pass this bill?

Talk is cheap. Especially in Ottawa.

Don't believe any politician, or senator, who claims they want to improve affordability unless they are willing to do one simple thing: scrap their carbon taxes.

Franco Terrazzano is the Federal Director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation



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Saskatchewan crop report: September 12-18

Southeast Saskatchewan

With limited rain, producers in the southeast were able to stay in the fields last week and harvest is now 79 per cent complete. This is ahead of the five-year average of 74 per cent.

Spring seeded cereals are nearing completion in the region, with durum being virtually complete, barley is 93 per cent, oats 92 per cent and spring wheat 89 per cent complete. Oilseeds are now the main focus for producers, with 77 per cent of mustard in the bin followed by 62 per cent of canola, 48 per cent of soybeans and 42 per cent of flax. Chickpeas are 87 per cent harvested and canary seed is 53 per cent complete. Harvest of fall cereals, peas and lentils is complete.

Minimal rain was received in the southeast last week, with the most, 10 mm, received in the Stoughton area. Topsoil moisture is becoming limited, with 30 per cent of cropland having adequate moisture, 43 per cent is short and 27 per cent is very short. Twenty-nine per cent of hay and pastures have adequate topsoil moisture, 43 per cent are short and 28 per cent are very short.

Pastures are showing the effect of a dry summer in the southeast. Nine per cent of pastures are in good condition, 29 per cent are in fair condition, 40 per cent are poor and 22 per cent are very poor.

Crop damage this past week is due to drought and grasshopper damage. Producers are busy combining, applying post-harvest herbicides and working harvested fields. Many producers are hauling bales, feed and water for animals.

All of Saskatchewan

Producers have made the most of another dry week in Saskatchewan with harvest now 82 per cent completed in the province. This is ahead of the five-year average of 64 per cent and the 10-year average of 62 per cent. Producers are hoping for timely rains once harvest is complete.

Harvest in the southwest is essentially complete with 97 per cent of the crop off. Only a few flax acres remain in the region. The west-central region continues to make great progress with 92 per cent of this year's crop harvested. The southeast has 79 per cent, followed by the northeast and northwest at 75 per cent and finally, the east-central region has 66 per cent harvested.

Producers mainly focused on harvesting oilseed crops last week and made substantial progress. Canola is now 65 per cent complete across the province, up by 23 per cent over last week. Mustard is 97 per cent complete, soybeans are 47 per cent and flax is 39 per cent. Oat harvest has also progressed rapidly, with 79 per cent of the crop harvested, an increase of 21 per cent from last week. Durum is 94 per cent complete, barley is 92 per cent and spring wheat is 88 per cent. Chickpea harvest progressed, with 87 per cent of the crop off. Harvest of fall cereals, canary seed, peas and lentils is complete for the year.

Minimal rain was seen last week, with the Stoughton area receiving the most rain at 10 mm. The lack of significant rain led to topsoil moisture once again decreasing. Twenty-five per cent of cropland has adequate topsoil moisture, 49 per cent is short and 26 per cent is very short. Twenty per cent of hay and pastures have adequate mois-

ture, 49 per cent is short and 31 per cent is very short.

Pasture conditions remain relatively unchanged. Twelve per cent of pastures are in good condition across the province, while 31 per cent are fair, 35 per cent are in poor condition and 22 per cent are in very poor condition.

Crop damage continues to be caused by drought conditions and grasshoppers. Last week crops were also damaged by light frosts, wind and wildlife. Producers are currently busy with harvest, spraying post-harvest weed applications, working their fields and hauling grain. Many are also hauling bales, preparing feed for winter and marketing cattle.

Harvest is a very busy and stressful time for producers. They are reminded to take safety precautions in all the work they do. This includes having fire mitigation resources at the ready and taking precautions when working around powerlines. The Farm Stress Line is available to provide support to producers toll free at 1-800-667-4442. The public is reminded to take extra caution, time and space when encountering machinery on the roads.



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Upcycling canola to increase cattle health

BY BROOKE KLEIBOER

Saskatchewan summer views wouldn't be complete without sunny yellow fields, but naturally, some canola produced can't be used for human consumption.

Instead of having discarded canola go to waste, University of Saskatchewan (USask) graduate student Erika Cornand is leading an investigation into if these leftovers can be used as a diet supplement for pregnant cows to improve their health and the health of their calves.

When packaged into a pellet form, canola seeds can be used as a fat supplement easily provided to cows in their diets. Cornand is determining if providing this canola seed-based pellet can improve the body condition and reproduction rates of cattle, and at what amounts this supplement is effective.

Cornand, a master's student in Animal and Poultry Science in the College of Agriculture and Bioreources, and her researcher supervisor Dr. Bart Lardner (PhD) are using the innovative research facilities located at the USask Livestock and Forage Excellence Centre (LFCE) in Clavet, Sask. The pastures and feeding facilities available at the LFCE have allowed the research team to monitor 72 cows during the past two years during their pregnancies.

Three groups of cattle were randomly chosen to receive differing amounts

of the canola supplement at the same stage in their pregnancies. One group received no extra fat supplement, while the other two groups received 150 and 300 grams of fat per day, respectively. Body weight of the cows and the quality and volume of milk produced after calving was recorded throughout the study to track the effects of the additional fat supplement.

"Cattle can typically be fed three to eight per cent fat in their total diet before any negative effects are commonly reported," said Cornand. "We're looking to determine if positive effects on cow and calf performance seen in previous research can be replicated here, and to determine if there is a specific level where the benefits [of a supplement] are maximized."

The cattle received the trial canola-based supplement for 150 days before being transitioned back to a regular diet.

"Our preliminary results suggest that providing the canola seed-based pellet during the second and third trimesters of pregnancy improved their body condition scores and the pregnancy rate of the cows," said Cornand.

USask graduate student Erika Cornand is helping to develop healthier cattle in Saskatchewan by studying the effects of a canola-based supplement on the health of cows and their calves.



USask graduate student Erika Cornand is helping to develop healthier cattle in Saskatchewan by studying the effects of a canola-based supplement on the health of cows and their calves.

She notes that the preliminary results of the study are good news for both beef producers with cattle to raise and grain farmers who may have canola to discard. "Rather than off-grade canola being sold at discounted rates, there is the possibility for grain producers to sell their product to cattle producers," said Cornand. "There are potential benefits for the cow and her offspring which may carry over into economic profitability."

The study is also planning to examine how the additional fat in the mother's diet may cause genetic differences in her offspring.

"We are wrapping up the second year of data collection for the cow portion of

this study," said Cornand, noting that the project will now move into a phase where calves are weaned from their mothers and raised in feedlots at the LFCE according to industry guidelines. "We've collected additional data from all calves born [during the study period] that will be analyzed for genetic differences due to prenatal fat supplementation."

Cornand is on track to finish her master's degree by December 2023, but the study will continue on with the calf portion of the trial and a genetic analysis to follow in the next few years. So far, Cornand has been invited to present her preliminary research results at the American Society of Animal Science Conference and the Cana-



dian Beef Industry Conference, with final results to be complete in 2026.

With previous experience working as a dairy technician and during her undergraduate studies at the University of Alberta, Cornand hopes her work helps beef producers leverage the findings of research that is ongoing to make their herds healthier.

"I want to be able to make a difference to the producer—whether in the cow-calf, dairy, or feedlot sector—so they can realize the benefits of various nutritional investigations being carried out here at the

University of Saskatchewan," said Cornand. "Part of my training in this program is preparing me to deal with challenges that producers face and working together to investigate the causes and address them by coming up with practical solutions."

The study has received funding support from the Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission, the Beef Cattle Research Council, Alberta Beef Producers, the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.

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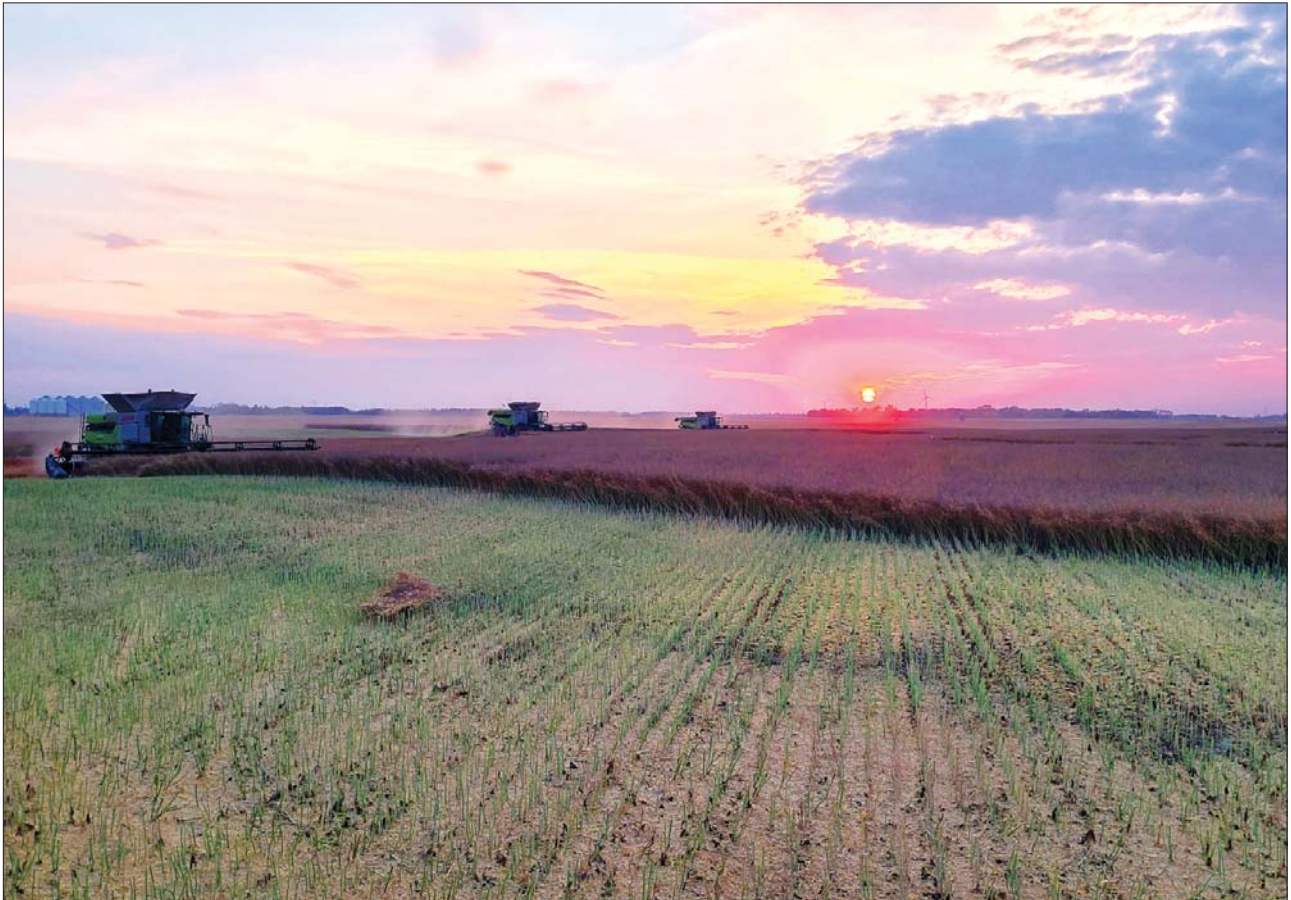
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Genome Canada supports innovative USask ag research



Dr. Jon Bennett (PhD), an associate professor in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources, is the co-lead of one of USask's projects.

Two research projects led by the University of Saskatchewan (USask) have received a total of close to \$12 million to enhance climate-forward research projects in the field of sustainable and resilient agriculture.

Nine Interdisciplinary Challenge Teams (ICTs), a part of Genome Canada's Climate-Smart Agriculture and Food Systems initiative (CSAFS), were announced on Wednesday, September 6. These projects from across Canada are meant to explore innovative and sustainable solutions for Canada's food chain and agricultural production.

Dr. Jon Bennett (PhD), an associate professor in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources, is the

co-lead of one of USask's projects, with the support of Dr. Sean Asselin (PhD) with the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Swift Current Research and Development Centre.

The multi-pronged project spearheaded by Bennett will examine the benefits of species and genetic diversity in Canadian grasslands—more specifically the non-market benefits of integrating native plant species into pastureland used by agricultural producers.

"The idea is that native plants are a much more diverse group of plants than we currently use in forage systems for livestock, and they've got a lot of features that aren't replicated in seeded pasture right now,"

Bennett said. "So, if we can find some populations or species that we can use to increase the ecological goods and services provided by these agroecosystems, that is the main thrust of the project."

Part of the research will also explore carbon sequestration in soils. As Bennett puts it, one of the greatest benefits of grassland systems is carbon storage, so the research team will measure levels of carbon in pastures and in grasslands housing native plant species.

"We're using a variety of genomic techniques to identify the microbes associated with high carbon or low carbon environments," he said.

Along with experts from AAFC and at the University of Manitoba, Bennett is working with researchers from across USask to further the project.

Dr. Patrick Lloyd-Smith (PhD) and Dr. Sean Prager (PhD) with the College of Agriculture and Bioresources are both involved with the project, with Prager's work focused on the habitation of beneficial insects in pasture-use grasslands and Lloyd-Smith helping develop economic models to measure the impacts and perceived value of bringing in native plant species.

Dr. Seok-Bum Ko (PhD) with the College of Engineering is also involved, developing artificial intelligence models to better predict carbon storage in soil using the data gathered during the course of the project.

Bennett lauded the diverse team assembled to further this research, and credited Genome Canada for helping provide the funding and support to advance this important area of agricultural research.

"(The funding) is fantastic," he said. "It's really let me bring in experts to work with us ... I'm looking forward to working with everyone on the team. There's no way we would have been able to put this

together without Genome Canada's support."

Other agencies supporting this project include the AAFC, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds, the Meevasin Valley Authority, the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF), and the Canadian Hub for Applied Research (CHASR).

The announcement of the ICTs represented a nearly \$70 million dollar research

investment, with approximately \$27 million coming from the Government of Canada and nearly \$42 million from other funding partners.

The second ICT at USask is noted below:

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Project leaders: Dr. Kirstin Bett (PhD) and Dr. Curtis Pozniak (PhD), College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

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AI being applied to standardize wheat observation

Weiping Zeng, the project lead for GeoAI Platform for Automating Manual Observation Associated with Wheat Production, grew up on a farm in China. He moved to Canada in 2002 to get his PhD from the University of Alberta. Following a three-year stint in Calgary working for a startup, he joined the faculty of the University of Saskatchewan.

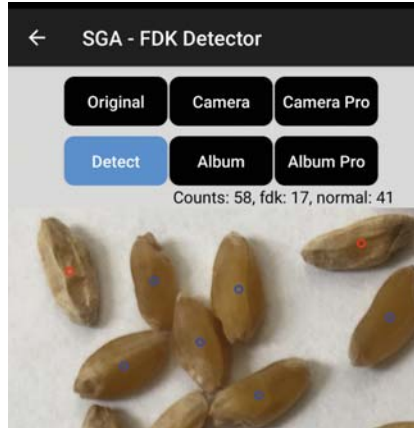
"The idea to found Super GeoAI Technology came from two places," he explains. "First, as I am from a farming family, I have personal experience with just how labour-intensive agriculture can be. Second, I was heavily influenced by a conversation I had near Saskatoon with a farmer who was counting and evaluating wheat kernels manually. It occurred to me that this was a place where artificial intelligence could add real value. Producers work very hard for uncertain returns, and any technological solutions we can develop to increase productivity and decrease workload is worth exploring."

The grain sector is a key Canadian economic driver, contributing over \$20 billion annually from wheat export sales alone. Product quality is a critical component of the value chain, impacting everyone from producer to consumer. Evaluation is the responsibility of grain inspectors, who must manually identify, separate, and analyze kernels to determine a sample's quality and grade. These subjective results can be unreliable and inaccurate, and may lead to conflict between the buyer and seller, damaging important commercial relationships. For many years, the industry has sought an affordable solution capable of delivering a quick and accurate end-use quality assessment based on representative samples.

"Our project team of agri-food companies and academic institutions is employing diverse technologies to develop a novel geospatial artificial intelligence (GeoAI) platform proof-of-concept that automates manual wheat-production observations," says Weiping. "We are leveraging geospatial, deep learning, machine vision, and high-performance computing technology to evaluate three representative primary objective characteristics and one subjective characteristic in Canada Western Red Spring Wheat kernels."

Following the initial 15-month Canadian Agri-Food Automation & Intelligence Network (CAAIN) investment period, R&D will continue, leading to eventual commercialization and product adoption. The goal is to create and market a scaled-up, all-in-one GeoAI-driven cloud platform that automates grain grading, reducing manual observation requirements, and increasing producer productivity, profitability, sustainability, and competitiveness.

This highly complex, multifaceted project seeks to solve a challenge that has plagued the agricultural sector for the past 100 years, namely, how to grade grain consistently and objectively to the satisfaction of both buyer and seller.



er. CAAIN is pleased to be able to fund such important work, and Dr. Zeng and his team appreciate the support.

"When we first responded to the 2021 Open Competition, we were looking to automate various agricultural tasks. The feedback we received from the reviewers helped us zero in on grain grading," He smiles.

"We are now developing a solution to a very specific global problem, and that's very exciting. That initial guidance was more important than we realized at the time, as potential investors appreciated our clearly defined objective. Don't get me wrong. The money has been very helpful, and we wouldn't be anywhere near where we are now without it. But probably the greatest value we've received through our association with CAAIN is the network we've joined. For example, thanks to the doors this competition opened for us, we are collaborating with Olds College and the University of Saskatchewan. This kind of program will really advance AgTech in Canada."

CAAIN's mandate from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada is to fund technological responses to the most significant opportunities and challenges facing the nation's agri-food producers and processors. That means supporting promising efforts with the potential to provide economic or environmental value.

"Canada's grain producers collectively contribute billions to our nation's GDP," said Darrell Petras, CAAIN's CEO. "Despite that, the process of assessing product qual-

ity has remained essentially unchanged throughout the last century—it's basically manual observation that relies on the skill and knowledge of inspectors and merchants, meaning that the livelihood of thousands of families depends on a subjective assessment. Don't get me wrong," he adds. "Canadian inspectors are world class, but they are human and, therefore, like all of us, prone to inconsistency. We're supporting this complex project because it has the potential to improve profitability in a big chunk of the agricultural sector."

GeoAI Platform for Automating Manual Observation Associated with Wheat Production is Part 1 of a two-stage project. The total cost of this first phase is \$1,198,103, of which CAAIN has committed an investment of \$372,370.

The Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network is a not-for-profit company launched in July 2019 with funding of \$49.5-million from the Government of Canada's Strategic Innovation Fund, and assistance from Alberta Innovates in the form of significant in-kind contributions. CAAIN drives collaborative agri-food technology research and innovation from coast to coast by performing three core functions. First, it supports the development of promising solutions to important challenges facing producers and primary food processors. Second, it is building an online, member-based network connecting Canada's agricultural and technology stakeholders. Third, CAAIN is developing a digital platform to link nationwide, production-specific networks of smart farms, which will collaborate to validate and demonstrate emerging technology in diverse locations across the country.

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