



# Spring AGRICULTURE 2018

Plain & Valley

## Global Ag Risk Solutions has new approach to insurance

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

A lot of growing agriculture related businesses on the Prairies started out in a quonset, with farmers taking machinery apart and trying to come up with solutions to some of the shortcomings of existing technology. The people behind Global Ag Risk Solutions believe they have come up with a better farm insurance product, and it started with looking under the hood of farm financials.

"It was actually just an accident. It was in my boardroom here in Moose Jaw and I was showing a friend of mine how we do a farm profitability analysis," says Global Ag Risk Solutions CEO Grant Kosior, originally from Fillmore. "We looked at the gross margin component and just by accident we said 'holy cow we might have an insurance product if we get the data behind this.' So we went out and captured the data to back test our theory. That was in 2009. In January of 2011 we started selling. In the meantime we found capital to try the idea out, and in 2011 we started with 60 farms."

Some people may have noticed the Global Ag Risk Solutions logo on an office in Moosomin. Although the growth isn't as obvious to the passerby as a company like Vaderstad—where anyone driving down the highway has seen the company evolve from a small shop to a huge plant—the company has grown quickly. "We take out a couple of billion dollars of liability," said Kosior. "We're in Canada and the United States. It doesn't take very long for the billion dollar number to be achieved. Even if it was a million dollars of risk per farm, 1,000 farms will get you to a billion. It is a big number, but the amount of production that these farmers grow in Canada is very, very large."

How is the insurance offered by Global Ag Risk Solutions different than traditional crop insurance?

"Crop insurance is only guaranteeing you a yield," says Kosior. "In the Moosomin area they would guarantee maybe a 35 or 45 bushel yield. If the price of the



Global Ag Risk Solutions CEO Grant Kosior

commodity drops, they're not protecting that. If the farmer decides to add a significant amount more fertilizer, seed or chemical inputs, they're not covered for that. Our product is a gross margin product which covers the cost of the fertilizer, seed and chemical, and so as the cost of those go up—in other words as you use more—our coverage goes up and then we cover a margin above the cost of that as well. So if there is a farmer in your area that has \$200 an acre of inputs and he buys another \$100 an acre of margin protection, we cover him for \$300 an acre."

Why have other companies not been offering a similar product?

"The data is very difficult to get," says Kosior. "That is one barrier to entry, and

the other thing is, we have a unique combination in our group of ag accountants, farmers, ag finance people, and insurance people. So we have a group of us that all have a farming background but come at it from a little bit different approach."

The company has grown to 42 employees, spread from Moosomin to Moose Jaw to Winnipeg to Red Deer, along with 80 independent sales consultants.

Kristjan Hebert of the Moosomin area has been instrumental in the growth of the company. "He's on my management team. I don't make a major decision without running it by him," says Kosior. "There isn't a day that we don't talk on the phone."

All the shareholders in the privately held company are from Saskatchewan.

Kosior sees huge potential for growth in the United States.

"Our business in the U.S. is still in the infancy stage, so our main focus over the next couple of years will be to build out the distribution in the United States," he said. "We have been approached by Australia, Germany, South Africa, Italy, France, and the UK to bring the product there as well, but want to make sure that we take care of what's at home first before we start going too far away."

Global Ag Risk has set up its own sales network in Canada and is working within the existing distribution system in the U.S.

"In Canada we've got 80 sales people in Western Canada and then in the U.S. we utilize the existing U.S. crop insurance distribution force that is already in place down there," explains Kosior. "The difference is in the U.S. they already had a private distribution model already, whereas in Canada we had to build our own distribution model."

Kosior says that farmers using his insurance product end up putting more inputs into their crops, and getting more out of them.

"Farmers that use our product actually change their behavior and how they farm," he said. "They've got a different kind of product. In the past, if they had an insurance policy from Sask Crop Insurance, for example, and the weather conditions weren't perfect, they might quit spending on their inputs, whereas our policy encourages them to keep spending on their inputs, and as a result of that, they usually end up with better margins. In fact, we did a study and it showed that farmers who were on our product on average grossed \$35 an acre more than farmers who are not on our product."

The way the policies are designed, farmers automatically have more coverage if they have to add more inputs to deal with a situation with the crop, such as disease or insects.

*Continued on page 27*



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# Plainview Colony wins at Winter Fair, commits prize money to Moosomin, Virden hospitals

Quantity may have been lacking, but there was no shortage of quality on display at the 2018 Royal Manitoba Winter Fair pork quality competition.

Judge Jason Care said the smaller-than-average show was one of the few he has seen where every entry earned warm carcass points.

"Most of the shows that I do, I have anywhere from 20 to 30 per cent that don't get the carcass points," he said.

The points reflect the farmer's ability to anticipate how much weight will change from the barn to the processed carcass to end with the "perfect market hog," he said.

"Basically, this group this year at the show, they got their weight bang down," he said. "They learned and they realized how much gets deducted and the right feed to ship them at the right time to have that perfect weight to hit the target."

This year's show also had no need for tiebreakers since there were no ties, another oddity, Care noted.

Wayne Buhr of the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba said only 16 entrants brought in carcasses this year, down from a peak 29 competitors last year.

The competition typically gets 18 to 20 participants, Buhr said.

Results reflect the new status quo that has developed in pork competitions in recent years, according to Care. Size ruled all at one point in time, he said, comparing that to today's criteria, which take a closer look at fat content and cut size impacting yield percentage.

"When I first started doing shows, the way the points were set up was it was for this massive loin," Care said. "We felt that it would be better to transition the show into, basically, whoever could get the best market hog that's in demand."

Plainview Colony and New Haven Colony swept the top four. Plainview Colony North's two carcasses rose above all other comers, taking first and second with 95 and 91 points out of 111, respectively. The colony northwest of Virden was the only entrant to clear 90 points in the competition.

"I'm pretty excited," Ervine Waldner said



Representatives from Plainview Colony accept the reserve champion award from Ron Kristjansson, right, Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba general manager, during the 2018 Royal Manitoba Winter Fair pork quality competition. The colony took both first and second in this year's competition.

Alexis Stockford photo

after receiving his colony's award. "(We've been) trying for a few years now."

The western colony returned to Brandon for the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair after narrowly missing the top three at Hog Days, also held in Brandon's Keystone Centre, in December. Plainview Colony locked in fourth from that competition.

New Haven Colony, meanwhile, split third and fourth between its northern and southern barns at the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair. New Haven Colony North claimed third with 85 points, compared to New Haven Colony's southern barn at 81.

Assiniboine Community College will get the spoils of the competition. Both reserve champion and champion carcasses will go to the culinary arts program.

The winners' home hospitals are also set

for a boost.

Half of all prize money is headed for charities of the winners' choice. According to Ron Kristjansson, general manager of Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, a total \$4,300 will be headed back into the community.

Plainview Colony will be splitting the benefit. Half of its first-place prize money is bound for the Southeast Integrated Care Centre in Moosomin, while the Virden Health Centre will get a share of second-place winnings.

"They need it the most," Waldner said. "It's good for the community and we need it."

Both New Haven barns opted to support Ronald McDonald House, while the Neepawa Health Centre will get a windfall from Spruce Woods Colony.

"We're just really appreciative of the entries," Buhr said. "And it is just so cool to have the entries large or small and the fact that all of them are geared towards turning around and giving extra. They're not in it for the prize money. They're in it to give the prize money to someone else and they like the fact that those top carcasses are going to the school of culinary arts and going to develop the ability to make pork a more marketable meat."

The annual competition is part of Manitoba Pork Council efforts to tap into the fair, which draws a large urban audience, for public outreach.

"The industry is trying to reach out to the public and to try and say, 'This is how we do our business,'" Manitoba Pork Council general manager Andrew Dickson said. "There's a human person behind the business. People try to make it more factory farming—these unknown people who produce this stuff. What we're saying is we have human beings who come to events like this."

The pork industry is perhaps infamous for its clashes with public opinion on environmental and animal welfare. In particular, the industry made headlines this last year with the removal of anaerobic digester requirements and the current Bill 19, which would roll back some parts of the Planning Act when it comes to building livestock shelters. Equally attention grabbing, those legislative changes led to the resurgence of activist group Hog Watch, which exchanged barbs with the pork industry through 2017.

Dickson acknowledged those conflicts.

"I rarely have heard anyone who's come up to us and said they don't like the product. They are a little concerned about how we go about raising pigs and stuff like this, so they want some education and that's why we're at the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair," he said.

MPC has tapped into farmers to man their booth at the fair, one of several industry booths in the family-friendly Royal Farm Yard.

The Royal Manitoba Winter Fair ran March 26-31.

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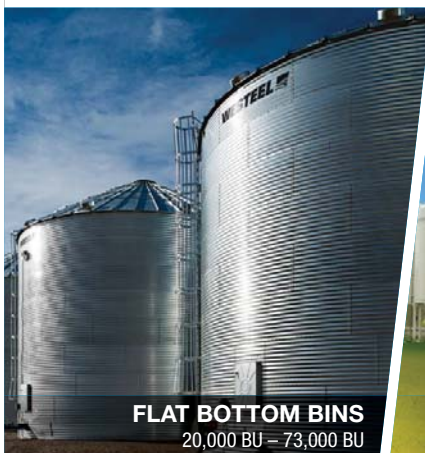
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# Understanding canola seeding rates

WENDY SCHATZ LEEDS, PAG, CCA  
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 Canola seeding rates have always been a hot agronomic topic. With some simple tools and knowledge you can get to the bottom of this topic on your farm.

The Canola Council of Canada recommends 7 to 10 plant/ft square.

There is now discussion around a slightly lower plant density.

This is the result of emerging industry research that takes into account equipment changes, seed cost, seed size and improved vigor of hybrids.

A target plant density could look more like 5 to 7 plants/ft square in certain situations.

We have all seen the power of hybrid canola.

Hybrid canola stands with higher plant populations tend to create more competition within the stand causing thin stems.

This creates a stand more at risk for lodging. As well a dense stand creates a more disease prone environment. However, the industry will still caution against a very low plant density.

Stands lower than 4 plants/ft square can drop yield potential and factors such as reduced weed control and delayed maturity can become issues.

Before you even consider lowering your seeding rate, you must have an understanding of the seed survivability on your farm.

The Canola Council have created a great calculator to help you with this process on their website. <https://www.canolacalculator.ca/>

The calculator sets your target plant



Canola seeding rates have always been a hot agronomic topic—the Canola Council of Canada recommends 7-10 plants per square foot.

density based on a series of questions that relate to your individual field conditions, abilities and appetite for risk.

The calculation also has a component for seeding rate that takes into account your seed TKW and help you understand your seed emergence and survival.

The best way to get an understanding of your canola survivability is to do some square foot counts in your fields.

Counting seedlings in the spring or plant stems in the fall will give you an idea of survivability.

TKW and survival play a large part in seeding rate as you can see in the example below.

Seeding rate (lb/acre) = 9.6 X target plant stand density/ft<sup>2</sup> X TKW (g) Seeding survival (%)

Example 1 – 9.6 X 10 plants/ft<sup>2</sup> X 3.6 = 6.91 lbs per acre 50%

Example 2 – 9.6 X 10 plants/ft<sup>2</sup> X 3.6 = 4.93 lbs per acre 70%

The key in these two examples are the difference in seed survival.

Seeding at 7 lbs per acre doesn't seem realistic but seeding at just under 5 lbs does.

Are there ways that on farm you can decrease mortality risk—Absolutely!

Watch depth – canola mortality tends to be lower if seeded shallow into a moist,

firm and warm seed bed. Aim for a consistent ½"-1" depth.

Limit Seed placed Fertilizer – Salts in fertilizer can harm canola seedlings. Make sure you are following seed placed guidelines.

Seeding speed – Seeding too fast can lead to variable depth.

Every drill and soil type is different so make sure to check often and find the speed that is working best for your situation.

Fan speed – Higher fan RPM rates are often needed to push through the fertilizer and seed needs for a productive canola crop.

This can cause seed damage and seed bounce out of the seed row.

Good luck in your quest for the perfect canola stand! Have a safe and successful seeding season!

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# Association hopes to put 'dollars in producers' jeans' for storing carbon

BY LAURA STEWART

Saskatchewan farmers may find ways to get paid for doing their part to sequester carbon to fight rising carbon in the atmosphere. The province's climate strategy, announced in December 2017, could bring that goal closer.

By setting a price for large industrial operations to buy offsets for the carbon they release, the plan will boost the market value for carbon stored in soil.

Cedric MacLeod, the executive director of the Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association, said in an interview, "It comes down to whether or not it's a voluntary or a legislated, regulated market."

MacLeod gave the example of Alberta, where the government set prices to start at \$15 per tonne of carbon dioxide and go up, even though they had been getting only \$2 to \$5 per tonne on a voluntary basis.

But before agricultural producers can get that money, they need a way to prove they have stored carbon in a measurable, meaningful way.

Grains and other agricultural products contain carbon, but most of it cycles quickly back to the atmosphere when humans eat the final food product for energy and breathe out carbon dioxide.

Instead researchers look for carbon "sinks" – places where carbon is building up over time. One promising place to look is agricultural soil.

Historically, Prairie soils lost carbon when tillage exposed roots and other organic matter in the soil to decay.

But if farmers can reduce tillage and tip the balance so plant growth is putting more carbon into the soil than decay is taking out, then the soil becomes a sink.



Studies are under way to find a way for farmers to unlock the value of storing carbon in cropland and pasture.

The Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association has been collaborating on a study to show how soil carbon has changed since farmers started using zero-till methods in the 1990s.

John Bennett, a farmer and advisory committee member with the association, said early modeling assumed soil carbon would increase for a while but soon reach a new steady state, or saturation, where no new storage was occurring.

But up to the latest sampling in 2011, at a network of sites across the province, soil carbon was still increasing.

Bennett said, "At the moment, the best data we have, which is the Prairie Soil Carbon Balance Project, is suggesting that saturation is a long way away."

Bennett sees potential for soil to eventually store even more carbon than it had before cultivation, as farmers continue to find new ways to increase plant productivity.

For example, when the soil carbon study started, farmers were starting to move away from tillage.

Later they added more crops in rotation, and moved to zero till methods, which included placing fertilizer better for efficient plant growth.

New revenue from carbon offsets might open up possibilities for further improvements.

Although the study focused on the effects of zero-till, the association wants to expand it to look at other ways of storing carbon.

"We're advocating we need a Prairie

Soil Carbon Balance Project II, that has way more facets, and it has to address forages, managed rangelands, a whole plethora of things that have to be brought into it," Bennett said.

Forages are the focus of a new Canada-wide project.

The Canadian Forages and Grassland Association recently received federal funding under the Agricultural Greenhouse Gases Program to find out how farmers can best store carbon in pastures and hay fields.

But there's a lot of variation across different regions, farm operations, and research findings.

The project will start by sorting out how to calculate carbon storage.

"What we're working on right now is a quantification protocol, which is the very first step," MacLeod said.

At a November technical workshop, researchers agreed they can already show a clear carbon-storing benefit of keeping grassland intact and not converting it to cropland.

The next step is to figure out what farmers and ranchers can do differently to coax their existing pastures and hay fields to store even more carbon.

"The third is actually to fire some pilot [sites] out on the landscape. That allows us to, A) test the protocol, and B) showcase these high-performance best-management practices," MacLeod said.

Soon, MacLeod hopes the project can at least help "get a few dollars in producers' jeans for maintaining the carbon we know they have."

Of course, all that will depend on the price of carbon.

Meanwhile, even if they're not directly paid for it, farmers and ranchers can still see returns for building up their soil.

MacLeod said a pasture with more root mass has more soil carbon, but it also produces more forage and more beef.

And Bennett cited the past growing season as evidence of improved climate resilience under contemporary cropping methods.

"If we went south of the Trans-Canada Highway last year, we had the driest year in, maybe recorded history, or very close to it. We actually didn't have any soil erosion to speak of, and we grew a crop," he said.

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# Manitoba introduces legislation on rural development

The Manitoba government is introducing new legislation that would modernize The Planning Act and ensure fair opportunities for economic development in rural municipalities, Municipal Relations Minister Jeff Wharton announced last week.

"Our government has worked extensively with municipalities and industry to see how improvements could be made to our existing regulatory framework," said Wharton.

"This new legislation strengthens our government's commitment to providing a fair say for municipalities on matters that affect their local community."

In addition to modernizing the current municipal zoning by-law review and approval process, Bill 19 The Planning Amendment Act (Improving Efficiency in Planning) would enhance 'fair say' by giving municipalities the option of setting a threshold for conditional use hearings for livestock, according to local needs.

Other changes would include:

- setting timelines for municipal board reviews of development plan bylaws;



New legislation on rural development is being introduced in the Manitoba legislature, above.

- harmonizing hearing process requirements with those established in The Municipal Act;
- introducing the option for members of the public attending planning hearings to opt to

- receive notice by e-mail;
- strengthening environmental protections by introducing a technical review process for aggregate quarry proposals;
- requiring municipalities to review their livestock opera-

- tions zoning bylaws within one year;
- improving animal safety by enabling producers to upgrade existing facilities and clarifying this reinvestment does not require a new approval from

council;

- dissolving the Interdepartmental Planning Board, which held its last meeting in January 2014;

- expediting the municipal zoning bylaw approval process by increasing the minor variance threshold from 10 to 15 per cent; and

- allowing municipal officials authorized by council to grant variances on zoning bylaw requirements such as square footage, height and parking spaces without holding additional council hearings.

"We have seen many examples of the significant economic benefit that livestock development can offer communities in Manitoba," said Agriculture Minister Ralph Eichler. "Our government wants to provide municipalities with the opportunity to achieve that growth and development through a more equitable process. The proposed legislation takes a balanced approach to the livestock review and approval process that improves animal safety and maintains a high standard of environmental accountability."

# Managing forages for uncertain weather conditions

NADIA MORI, P.A.G.,  
REGIONAL FORAGE SPECIALIST  
SASKATCHEWAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

Whether conditions will turn dry or not, extremes of weather have become more of a norm than the exception. The best way to manage your pasture or range through these tosses and turns is to A) have a plan and B) keep your forage stand as healthy as possible.

### NO ROOTS—NO GRASS

Have you ever strained to grab something from a shelf but despite your efforts, the desired item stayed out of reach? That is how your forage root system feels when it is too short to access a moisture layer which may be just below its reach. Roots are out of sight and often out of mind. Yet, it pays to remember that roughly two-thirds of total plant growth occurs below ground, while the visible above ground portion only makes up about one-

third. This extensive root system forms the lifeline for forage plants and helps ensure long-term survival as well as productivity. Remember that drought stress can reduce or impair root growth even without added grazing pressure.

### RESIST THE URGE

It is challenging but imperative to leave residual forage at a height of 3-4 inches (7-10cm). Removing every last blade of grass only leads to a longer road to recovery. The resulting rest period will automatically be longer. The grazing stubble left behind also helps shade and cool the soil, which reduces evaporation and conserves what little moisture there is. Just as important as removing the animals on time, is resisting the urge to put livestock back on a pasture as soon as some form of regrowth has occurred. Grass regrowth needs to reach 8 -10 inches (20-25cm) before animals can return to that paddock. Overgrazed plants will dip into the root reserves and stop allocating

resources to root growth in an attempt to survive short-term. If dry conditions persist into subsequent years, desirable plants will first reduce production and eventually disappear from your stand.

### IT TAKES MOISTURE TO GROW GRASS

This may be obvious but it is a reminder that there are no miracle solutions to forage growth in dry conditions. The absence of moisture will inevitably result in an absence of forage growth. Adjusting stocking rates and using alternative feeding systems helps protect your pastures, your animals, and your financial bottom line.

Keeping pastures healthy during good weather conditions is an investment in ensuring the pasture will remain more productive during weather extremes and recover quicker in the aftermath. Leaving sufficient carry-over may be the hardest but most critical management tool in dry conditions.



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# Global Ag Risk Solutions has new approach to insurance

☞ *Continued from page 21*

"By putting down additional inputs they are automatically getting additional insurance. If they had \$200 an acre of inputs and bought another \$100 of coverage over and above, they would be at \$300. The policy is for coverage for \$100 in excess of your inputs. If the inputs go up, the coverage increases automatically, and there is no additional premium."

Kosior said when the company began they anticipated rapid growth. "We were so excited because we knew farming as well as we did, and we knew the barriers to a farmer doing a better job was just that fear—what if I put those extra inputs down and Mother Nature still comes and gets me? If we could take away that fear, we knew that farmers would go for it. We knew it would change the farmers' mentality from survival

mentality to swinging for the fence every year. I have been enthusiastic and excited about this idea since 2009 and, if anything, I'm even more excited about it than I was nine years ago."

Of course there are potential downsides in any business.

"We have years like last year where we pay out an enormous amount of claims because it was so dry out west that there were a lot of farmers that really had a tough year, and we wrote some big cheques last year. A lot of people might look at it as a negative but I look at that as a positive because it was proof of concept. We put a minimum floor of revenue underneath those farmers, they kept farming and Mother Nature didn't quit kicking them in the shins, and as a result of that we paid big claims and they are able to continue farming without missing a

step."

As the company has grown, the model has been tweaked, but has not been substantially changed.

"We've refined it and we've increased the level of coverage, but it started as a margin insurance product and that is still the foundation of what this company is. We may in the future change our distribution model but the concept of margin insurance to us is like gravity. It allows the farmer in the long run to be richer."

Where does Kosior see the company five years from now?

"In five years I suspect it we will have added another couple of countries. I imagine that we will have more of an electronic on-line presence than we do now and I anticipate by then most likely we would have four or five billion dollars of risk taken on."

Kosior said there are both

challenges and advantages to growing a company on the Prairies.

"We've been fortunate thus far that we've been able to attract the talent that we require," he said. "Potentially down the road we may have difficulty. One of the biggest problems is that Regina International Airport is no longer an international airport. For our purposes, having to transfer through Winnipeg or Calgary to get to places in the U.S. is a significant barrier."

Kosior said he enjoys running a growing business.

"It is a wonderful life, it is an exciting career, because we know that we're making a difference. We're able to walk out on a farm and help them realize their dreams, and that's just to farm the best they can and never have to cut back."

He said one challenge has been coming up with the best way to explain the product.

"In the early years, we were building the airplane as we were flying it," he says, "but in recent years our messaging has become more and more refined and that ultimately becomes one of the barriers to en-

try—even if somebody did try to come in and replicate the model it will still take them a number of years to figure out how to tell the story properly."

Kosior says he has thought about taking the company public, but isn't there yet.

"We certainly have a model that lends itself very well to going public, and we've done some analysis on it. We think it's too soon to take it public right now but it's not out of the question. It's on the radar screen. The fruit might be on the tree, it's just not ripe yet."



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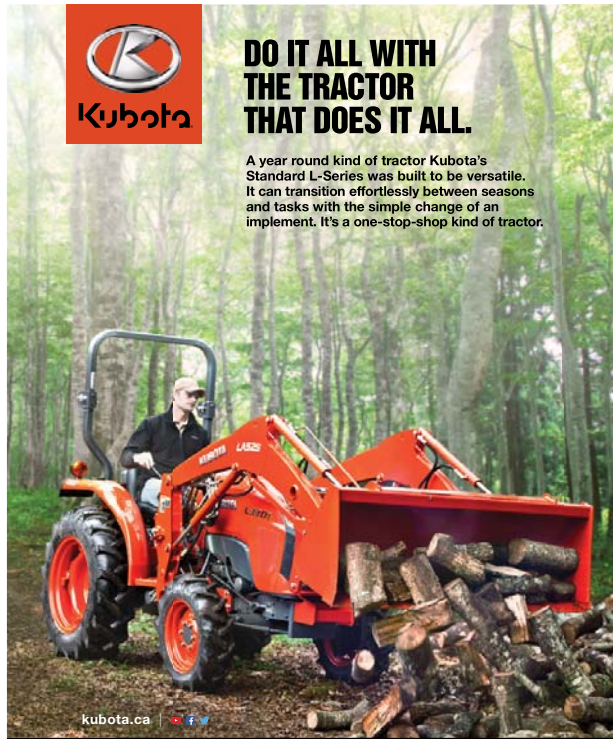
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## Twenty-year partnership helping thousands in Ethiopia

*Continued from page 13*

"For three days we came together to celebrate the success of this 20-year partnership," said nutrition professor Susan Whiting, who also attended the celebrative meetings at Hawassa University.

"Past and current students, collaborators and supporters were there, and while the focus was on the scientific outcomes of improving pulse agriculture and nutrition, there was friendship and a shared desire to continue with this work."

Working with the Ethiopian government and local organizations that focus on nutrition, agriculture and health, the Canadian government has invested a total \$8.65 million through the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF), administered by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Global Affairs Canada.

"Our 20-year journey has demonstrated the value of pulses in empowering the healthy future of Ethiopia," said Henry, assistant dean in Nutrition and Dietetics and the principal U of S investigator for the project.

By developing and introducing new varieties of pulses, researchers have provided smallholder farmers with high-protein crops rich in iron and zinc to combat hunger and malnutrition. The cultivation of these plants, which have good nitrogen-fixing capabilities, has also helped improve the extremely degraded Ethiopian soil.

"Literally thousands of men and women farmers are partners, and thousands of households have learned about and are benefiting from better nutrition, more stable income, and their healthier children will be the next generation of change," said Buhr.

An interdisciplinary approach that combines soil management, processing nutrition, seed delivery systems and marketing has led to:

- Benefiting 70,000 Ethiopian households and boosting the local economy with novel soil management strategies and newly developed high-yielding pulses that produce three times more than older varieties. This means diverse sources of income and an increased number of food suppliers, with more women becoming leaders in this sector;



The pulse-cultivated land of farmer Dibawa Amedin, who has joined the project. Almost 36,000 women and their children have benefited from educational campaigns on the advantages of eating pulses.

- Benefiting 10,000 Ethiopian households and impacting directly 36,000 women and their children through educational campaigns on the benefits of eating pulses and on food preparation to preserve the nutritious properties of these seeds;

- Successfully training 200 graduate students at Hawassa University, 40 per cent of whom are female, and having 26 U of S students visit Ethiopia to gain first-hand experience.

Building on these positive outcomes, the U of S and Hawassa University will collaborate with partners in Canada and sub-Saharan Africa to improve food security and sources of income for rural women, youth and their households.

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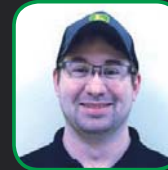
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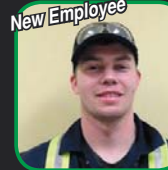


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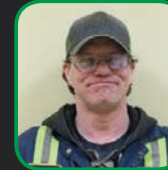
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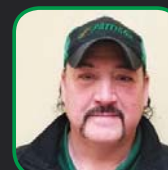
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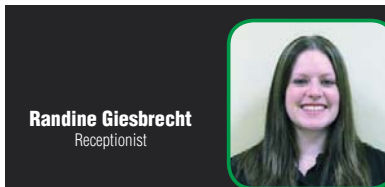
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# APAS raises transportation issue with government

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK  
Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan Vice-President Ian Boxall travelled to Ottawa a few weeks ago to make a presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

In an interview with the World-Spectator following his presentation, he said he had seen the crisis coming.

"I think anyone who followed the issue knew early in the fall from the projections that the railroads had done on car supply that we were going to be short, and then the car supply targets that the railroads had set for themselves, they couldn't even achieve, which has caused a huge backlog in Western Canada."

He said APAS has been raising the issue for a long time.

"I think we've been pretty vocal about it right from the start and during the week of the CFA Canadian Federation of Agriculture we had a big push with senators and MP's and parliamentary staff, making sure that they understand that it has gotten critical on the Prairies as far as farmers being able to cash flow their operations because of the lack of the movement of grain. That was at the end of February when we had that big push, and I believe we got some reaction and we got some stuff done. I believe CN dropped the ball and we need some management changes in their operation based on that, and they have made some commitments to increase capital investments to try and alleviate some of this."

He said he sees this year's crisis as a railway management issue.

"We've heard stories of it being a rail car shortage, but that is not the case. This is a locomotive and manpower shortage. That is what has caused this issue this time. I think in 2013 and 2014 it might have been somewhat different, but the railroads have done some layoffs and got rid of some locomotive power and it's come back to bite them to the point where it has really affected our business. I believe this time around it is absolutely a management problem on



Transporting Prairie agricultural products to market has become an issue, and the Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan's vice-president went to Ottawa last week to raise the issue.

the side of the railroads. They use weather as an excuse but they've operated a railway line in our country for 100-plus years. Winter comes every year. They should be able to figure out to manage that risk."

How did the presentation to the parliamentary committee come about?

"From our push we had out there in February I was asked to be a witness to the standing committee to explain just how critical the situation is in the West," Boxall explains. "We were asked, and we decided to absolutely take advantage of the opportunity to tell our story."

Boxall said he felt the MPs listened to what he had to say.

"I feel I was listened to, and I think any time that the committee members can hear from a producer, it's a good thing. Lots of times they hear from the railroads and hear from the stakeholders, but when you can go and present as a producer I think it is important. It's good when they hear right from the producer about how it is affecting us."

"It was a good experience. It was nerve

wracking to say the least, but it was a good experience and I think all the stakeholders and all the people that presented that day, we had the same message: Pass Bill C49.

"We understand that is not the home run we are looking for to fix rail issues, but it's a piece of legislation that we feel we can work with to get things better so we're not having to have this conversation every four years on lack of rail service."

Boxall said he's optimistic that his presentation had an impact.

"I believe I, and all the people that presented there, had an impact on getting the House and Senate to get this moving forward."

"Part of the issue is that it is a big bill. It includes air, water, sea, land and rail. It's a large bill but they need to get it together and figure it out and get it passed this spring sitting so that we have legislation in place for next year's crop."

"The weather will fix the back log this year because it's getting warmer and they can pull longer trains, and things will im-

prove on that side of it to fix this year's backlog. But we need legislation in place so that going forward we have adequate rail service every year."

Boxall feels there is a 50-50 chance of the bill passing this spring.

"I think it's 50-50," he said. "There's an aspect in there on air passenger rights that is somewhat holding it up as well. When you get all those aspects it's hard. We're hoping that it will pass this spring so that it's in place, and I believe for it to be effective for next year's crop it needs to be passed this spring."

Following is the full presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food presented on Monday:

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to present to this committee. I am here today to explain how poor rail performance affects my industry, my community, and my family business and why we need Parliament to take immediate action.

Continued on page 31

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# NRGene crop research partnership maps lentil genomes

In cutting-edge research aimed at breeding better lentils, a partnership between University of Saskatchewan (U of S) crop scientists and world-leading genomic big data company NRGene of Israel has successfully sequenced two wild lentil genomes—the largest legume genomes ever assembled.

Largely due to advances in plant breeding at the U of S, Canada is the world's leading exporter of lentils, delivering millions of tons of lentils to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh where this vegetable-based protein serves as a critical food source.

The research, part of the

\$7.9-million Genome Canada-funded "Application of Genomics to Innovation in the Lentil Economy (AGILE)," is led by U of S scientists Kirstin Bett and Bert Vandenberg. With the help of NRGene's genomic assembly and analysis technology, the research is expected to empower future breeding efforts aimed at enhancing lentil yield and quality.

"NRGene's technology has dramatically accelerated our research, which aims to shed light on lentil domestication and adaptation," said Bett. "Through identifying beneficial traits from wild relatives and integrating them into the ge-

nome of the domesticated lentil, we can now develop lentil varieties with much improved vigor, resilience and productivity. Maintaining sustainable lentil production will play an important role in addressing the world's need for an ecologically sound protein source that is also highly nutritious."

Professor Bett's group leads the international lentil genome sequencing initiative which has resulted in the release of a "reference genome" (a complete genome sequence) for a Canadian-cultivated lentil variety. Now with additional genomic information from the wild species, the researchers have a much broader view of genes and pathways that enable lentils to thrive in volatile climatic conditions.

She noted that to date, breeders have only been able to access a small fraction of the total germplasm diversity in existence, which hinders Canadian producers' ability to meet growing global demand. With its focus on wild lentil genomes, the project is aimed at introducing genetic diversity with great precision and speeding up the breeding cycle to provide breeders with faster access to better lentil varieties.



Crop scientists Kirstin Bett and Bert Vandenberg examine lentil plants.

The U of S Crop Development Centre (CDC), which to date has developed 400 commercial crop varieties, is working with NRGene to sequence several of the world's major crops. A huge step forward in crop genomic research was the release this year of the wild Emmer wheat genome sequence generated using NRGene technology and involving U of S scientists. Emmer wheat is the wild form of all the domes-

ticated wheat in the world. The work was published in Science in July of 2017.

Knowledge gained from this innovative research is expected to have an immediate effect on the world food supply since the scientists at the CDC are directly applying genomics to breeding of superior varieties grown on millions of acres. NRGene data provides the underlying understanding that can lead to breeding seeds for

higher yields with fewer resources.

"Our partners at the University of Saskatchewan are aggressively pursuing the quest to identify essential traits that strengthen the genetics of the crops that feed the world," said NRGene CEO Gil Ronen. "We look forward to our continued partnership to disrupt the cycle of world hunger by offering harder, more nutritious plants."

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tandem semi truck with 10 speed, 1996 Chev 1500 regular cab truck, 1976 GMC 6500 tandem grain truck with steel box and roll tarp, 1973 Ford service truck, 1968 Mack R600 tandem grain truck, 1956 GMC 2 ton grain truck, 1964 IH tandem grain truck, Chamberlain 40' aluminum flat bottom grain trailer, Fruhauf 45' hay trailer, Richardson 11 yard PT scraper, Buhrer Farm King 960 3PTH snow blower, Adams PT grader, Ag Nav GPS system, NH 479 haybine, IH 45 square baler, NH 273 square baler, NH 1033 bale picker, NH 1010 bale picker, JD 510 round baler, Rockomatic PTO HDWS rock picker, Crown hydraulic rock picker, Bergen tandem utility trailer, Naden aluminum fishing boat with 50 HP Johnson motor, Coats tire changer, 100,000 lbs tow ropes, Lincoln 400 AMP welder, Wagner W-14 4WD tractor with Cummins engine, Ford 8N PTO with new tires, Case tractor, JD D, Oliver Standard 88 tractor, Wallis steel wheel tractor, Willy's Jeep truck with snow plow, 1970 Cadillac Eldorado 2 door, 1958 Edsel Pacer 4 door, 1936 2 door, 1952 Plymouth Cranbrook 4 door,

1960 Ramble 4 door, 1968 Suicide 4 door, 1954 Pontiac 4 door, 1940 Ford 2 ton truck, 1956 Ford T-Bird hardtop, 1958 Edsel Pacer 4 door, 1926 Chev 2 door coupe, 1928 Dodge car, 1964 Volvo Model 122 4 door, 1928 Dodge car, 1964 Volvo 122 4 door, Ski Doo THT snow machines, Honda Big Red ATV, 1928 IHC wood thrashing machine, Sunshine Waterloo SP combine, Democrat horse buggy, Otto Berg wood lathe, Wooden water wagon and pump, Massey Harris 90 SP combine, JD 12A combines, IH and JD stationery engines, Holt combine parts, Massey Harris Case and Cockshutt binders combines and thrashing machines, Buildings for removal Estevan Co-op store, Macoun hotel, Benson general store, homesteader shack, railroad bunk house, story and half house, advertising signs Red Rose and Fairbanks etc. advertising tins and crocks, Eastlake furniture, wall phones, barb wire collection, cream separators, dressers and washstands, oak kitchen Hoosier, oak display cabinet, dentist and barber chairs, restaurant booths, coffee grinders, plus many barn finds.

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with impeller conditioner (Charlie Wilson 306-925-2018) JD 568 round baler with twine tie and Mega-Wide pick-up (Charlie Wilson 306-925-2018) 16' NH 1475 with 2300 series header (Jim Wilson 306-925-4915), 1974 IH 1600 Loadstar grain truck with remote tailgate and hoist, 1980 Ford F350 one ton dually flat deck truck with 1000 gallon poly water tank and 2" water pump, 1981 Chev C70 Tandem Top Axle Grain truck with steel box and roll tarp (Jim Wilson 306-925-4915) 1966 Fargo 600 grain truck with steel box, 39' Conserva Pac air drill and Ezee On air tank with double shoot, Summers 70' tine harrows, Case IH Vibrashank 33'

cultivator and harrows, Farm King 10-60 swing auger, Sakundia HD 8-1200 auger with 12 HP electric motor, Brandt 6-33 auger with Kohler motor, Farm King 7-36 auger, Can Am Outlander 650 quad with very low miles, Diamond 10' utility trailer, Polaris 440 wide track snow machine, Polaris 250 wide track snow machine, 40' IH 645 Vibra shank cultivator, Rockomatic 546 hydraulic rock picker, JD F525 front mount riding mower, Crown 5 yard scraper, Hydraulic flax straw buncher, Labtronics 919 grain moisture tester, 500 gallon poly water tank, 500 gallon fuel tank and stand, diesel tank with electric fuel tank and trailer, plus much more.

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NEXT ISSUE: May 18

# What we stand for

It has been said by quite a few people that organizations are best defined by what they oppose versus what they support. That seems like too cynical of a view of the world. I want to talk about what we stand for.

Canadian agriculture stands for science-based regulations and rules of trade. Why? Because farmers across this country depend on access to international markets for their livelihood. A farmer in Mortlach, Saskatchewan must have access to Japan, Indonesia, Algeria and about 100 other countries in order to ensure their farm is economically viable. If countries are free to set up trade barriers in response to the latest internet trends with no reference to evidence-based health or safety concerns, then our friends farming in Mortlach will soon find themselves without any markets to sell into.

What is this "science" that we stand for? This is the science behind Canada's regulatory approval process for pesticides. Pesticides that are registered for use in Canada have been tested and found to be safe—safe for human health, safe for animal feed and safe for the environment. This applies even to pesticides like glyphosate that the "experts" on the internet might not like. This assessment of safety is built upon rigorous research, scientific peer review and studies that have been replicated around the world.

Modern Canadian agriculture also stands for sustainability. What is "modern agriculture?" Modern agriculture makes use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Modern agriculture is often large in scale. Modern agriculture makes use of cutting-edge technology to deliver new plant varieties that give higher yields, are more resistant to disease and

have superior quality. Modern farmers use GPS, satellite imagery and big data to precisely place seeds and crop nutrients.

Many might think words like "modern", "large scale", "pesticides" and "chemical fertilizer" do not belong next to "sustainability." But these words do belong together. Modern Canadian agriculture has a fantastic sustainability story to tell. And yes, I am going to use a bit of science to tell that story.

Between 1981 and 2011 (the last year for which we have data) the amount of energy needed to produce a tonne of wheat in the prairies declined by 39 per cent. Back in 1981, soil organic matter was being depleted. But because of modern agriculture, such as conserva-



Cam Dahl

tion tillage, organic matter in prairie soils is increasing every year. What does this mean? Well, it means soil is healthier today than it was in 1981. Soil is more productive, it is less susceptible to wind and soil erosion, and farms across the country are sequestering carbon dioxide every year.

If you happen to live near Mortlach, Saskatchewan you will know that the summer of 2017 saw record low rainfall in the region. In many towns, there was less rain

than the famous droughts of the 1930s. And yet farmers in Mortlach did not have a complete crop failure. Nor did Saskatchewan soil blow into Ontario all summer long like it did in the "Dirty '30s." I find it hard to think of more graphic demonstrations of the sustainability of modern agriculture.

Modern agriculture stands for science, we stand for innovation and we stand for sustainability. Some try to say that this means we stand against other ap-

proaches, like organic or natural production. This is not true and is a false conflict that is harmful to farmers who utilize both production systems.

There is room for many different ways of producing food, provided these production systems are safe for the people who eat what is produced, safe for the livestock that depends on the feed grown, and is safe for the land and water. These are scientific questions that are a matter of evidence.

What we do not stand for is governments deviating from scientific evidence because of pressure from activists who do not believe the scientific consensus on modern agricultural practices. Deviating from an evidence-based approach, such

as banning or limiting pesticides that have been shown to be safe or limiting the use of modern biotechnology, will limit the tools available to farmers. This will reduce the environmental gains that we have seen in the last 20 years. Deviating from science-based rules of trade will limit agriculture's ability to access markets around the world, deliver jobs to every region of the country and support our economic health.

So I guess in the end we are defined a bit by what we are against. But this is not fellow producers who are trying to make a living meeting varying demands coming from consumers.

That's what we stand for. *Cam Dahl is president of Cereals Canada.*

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# FCC makes investment in the future of agriculture

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) has committed \$100,000 towards the construction of the Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence (LFCE)—a world-class facility that will unite livestock and forage research, and allow for enhanced teaching and outreach. Marty Seymour, FCC's director of industry and stakeholder relations, said that FCC was eager to support the project, knowing the positive effects the centre will have not only on the cattle and forage industries, but on students who will have access to the most advanced facilities and best practices.

"We are proud to invest in projects that support agricultural research and enhance the student experience. This will also help attract the best and the brightest into pursuing an education and future career in agriculture."

FCC has been supporting agricultural initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan for more than 30 years, supporting student awards, helping to fund the construction of the Rayner Dairy Research and Teaching Facility, and recently provided the necessary funds to refurbish a study area for agriculture students.

Mary Buhr, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Biore-sources at the University of Saskatchewan, said the support of donors like FCC has been crucial in helping bring the vision of the LFCE to reality.

"When we brought forward the LFCE initiative to Farm Credit Canada, they recognized the potential of these facilities and this centre to benefit the cattle and forage industries, to advance research, to help producers gain access to new innovation and to provide the human capacity and leadership that our industry needs," Buhr said. "We are grateful for their support."

FCC's donation will go towards construction of the livestock and food building at the Clavet site, which will house a meeting room and handling facilities equipped with real-time video capability, allowing in-house and distance edu-



Janelle Smith, M.Sc Candidate in the Department of Animal and Poultry Science, will be one of the first students to conduct research at the newly constructed LFCE facilities once they open in spring, 2018.

cation and outreach activities to be conducted.

Two new facilities for the LFCE are expected to be completed in the spring of 2018 and will complement current livestock and forage research sites. The LFCE, a partnership

between the U of S, the livestock and forage industries, and the Saskatchewan and federal governments, will unite livestock and forage field laboratories and science labs in a collaborative centre with a total cost of \$36 million.

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# Learning outside of the classroom leads to industry connection

BY CRYSTAL JORGENSEN

A University of Manitoba student has partnered with Manitoba Beef and Forages Initiatives (MBFI) in a unique learning opportunity that brings together academic learning and industry experience.

Mikayla Rouire, second year Diploma in Agriculture student, utilized a special project course offering in the School of Agriculture to create her own project with MBFI last fall.

Over the past year, she interacted with industry members, attended a producer event, developed communications materials and organized an on-campus information booth.

Manitoba Beef and Forage Initiatives is a Brandon-based collaborative effort between Manitoba Agriculture, the Manitoba Beef Producers, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association, with input and leadership from producers, academia and other industry stakeholders across Canada.

"At MBFI, we utilize science-based research and innovative farming practices within the beef and forage industry to boost producers' economic success and environmental sustainability, and to engage the next generation of consumers on topics of public trust," said Ramona Blyth, MBFI chairperson and a beef producer from MacGregor, MB. "So for MBFI to build this relationship with the University of Manitoba students via Mikayla is a valuable step on all of our key fronts."

The win-win for both parties was clear to Rouire.

"This project has given me the opportunity to forge valuable relationships with members of the industry that wouldn't arise in a classroom setting. I strongly believe the special project option has allowed me to gain real world experience in the agriculture industry," said Rouire.

One of Mikayla's assignments included planning an information session that



Mikayla Rouire is in her second year Diploma in Agriculture.

took place Friday, March 16 in the Agriculture Building Atrium. Students and staff had an opportunity to interact with MBFI representatives to learn more about initiatives, research, and technologies involved in the beef and forage industry and underway at the three farm sites of the MBFI.

Mikayla noted that public engagement is a critical part of MBFI's mandate. "I quickly learned that the success of this industry in our evolving society relies on having an educated consumer base. Knowledge exchange was at the heart of some of the assignments that I completed as part of this project."

The Agriculture Diploma Special Project is a three-credit hour course which allows a student to make practical application of scientific knowledge acquired to intensify the study of a topic of particular interest.

Students must be active participants in developing the course and project requirements so that it can meet their individual learning objectives.

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# NSERC awards \$1.65 million for fertilizer remediation training program

Soil researcher Steven Siciliano has been awarded \$1.65 million over six years by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council's (NSERC) to train a new cadre of scientists in sustainable environmental remediation of fertilizer sites. The funding is part of NSERC's Collaborative Research and Training Experience (CRE-ATE) program.

"Fertilizer is key to a safe and sustainable food supply," said Siciliano, NSERC/Co-op Industrial Research Chair in In Situ Remediation and Risk Assessment. "However, the incidental release of fertilizers during distribution can cause environmental damage. The program will focus on ways to minimize the damage, restore ecosystems adversely impacted during fertilizer distribution, and develop cost-effective methods of remediation."

Including \$432,000 in funding from the U of S, \$432,000 in internship stipends from four industry partners, and \$239,000 from other participating universities, the Sustainable Applied Fertilizer Environment Remediation (SAFER) graduate training program is worth a combined total of about \$2.7 million.

Siciliano has assembled a 10-person team of academic and industry experts in soil science, renewable resources, land and food systems, indigenization, toxicology, fertilizer management, and agriculture for the SAFER program.

"Through this major public-private investment, we will work with industry to address a global problem involving fertilizer distribution that has particular relevance for Western Canada," said Karen Chad, U of S vice-president research.



Soil researcher Steven Siciliano.

"This tremendous collaboration among universities, academic disciplines and industry will train scientists who will safeguard the environment and help industry and communities with cost-effective remediation solutions."

In collaboration with the European Union's International Masters in Applied Ecology (IMEA) program, SAFER will train 29 master's and 13 PhD students from Western Canada and Europe, providing them with a unique learning opportunity that transcends disciplines and borders.

"The goal of SAFER is to integrate training with addressing the scientific and practical challenges of remediation, and help students transition into research and

industry careers," said Siciliano.

Canadian students will spend nine months in France and Portugal learning about applied ecology before returning to apply their knowledge at home, while some of the best European students have the chance to work in Canada not just at universities but also at paid internships in private sector companies.

The international experience and internships encourage students to develop communication, project management and leadership skills in academic, industrial, and Indigenous settings.

Production, warehousing and transportation of fertilizer can harm the environment if the nitrogen, phosphorous, potassi-

um, and sulphur are accidentally released. Sustainable remediation of these sites is a pressing agro-economic challenge in Canada and elsewhere, said Siciliano.

Major changes in recent years to environment regulations require companies to clean up fertilizer sites, Siciliano said. Remediation is important because the high concentrations of fertilizer can pollute groundwater. But remediation costs can often surpass \$1 million per location, often far exceeding the property value of bulk fertilizer plants, requiring the development of more cost-effective solutions.

The Canadian component of the program includes collaboration among researchers from the U of S and three other universities (University of Alberta, University of Manitoba and University of British Columbia), and private-sector companies—consulting engineering firm Amec Foster Wheeler, Federated Co-operatives Limited Ltd. (FCL), United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), and CHS Inc. Also collaborating is the International Minerals Innovation Institute, jointly funded by industry and government to provide education, research, and training partnerships to support a world-class minerals industry.

FCL, UFA and CHS are founding members of the Sustainable In-situ Remediation Co-operative Alliance (SIRCA), which promotes the development and implementation of sustainable environmental management practices. SIRCA asked Siciliano for help in training professionals in Western Canada who could address fertilizer remediation in ways that take into account the needs of the industry and affected communities.

## Don't skimp on the pre and post calving minerals

If a cow is to calve every 365 days, she must be pregnant again within 83 days after calving. That can only happen if she comes through calving in optimal health and body condition. From calving until the uterus is again in condition for pregnancy is about 40 days. That leaves only two heat cycles for cows to rebreed on time. Cows that are short on nutrition are slower to return to normal heat cycles, and have lower conception rates.

Researchers estimate that eggs begin maturing about 100 days before they are actually released, so the process of achieving the next pregnancy starts even before the current pregnancy ends. Minerals play a key role in enhancing fertility. Although beef cows only require three to four ounces of trace minerals in their daily diet, this little bit of supplement helps ensure that cows will rebreed and produce a healthy calf. The availability of free choice minerals is critical in the three months prior to calving and during lactation, when the cow has increased energy and protein requirements.

To provide minerals cost-effectively, mineral supplements need to be matched to your forage base, which var-

Table 4. Guides to Selecting Minerals of Suitable Trace Element Content

Mineral	Recommended Range (mg/kg)
Copper	2,000 - 3,000
Zinc	10,000 - 12,000
Manganese	8,000 - 10,000
Iodine	70 - 200
Cobalt	40 - 60
Selenium*	30 - 80

ies in nutritional content each year. Thus, an annual forage analysis should be conducted on your ranch.

A cow's phosphorous and calcium requirements are

high during the winter and spring due to fetal development. Phosphorous will likely be the primary mineral needed because it is generally lower in dried winter forages. Matching a mineral supplement to your forage base can be done using the rule of thumb that cows need a 2:1 ratio of calcium to phosphorous in the diet. Since legume type forages tend to have higher levels of calcium, a 1:1 or 2:1 mineral would be the best fit. Grass type forages are low in both calcium and phosphorous, so a 3:1 or 2:1 with added limestone would fit the bill in this case. Including a vitamin A and E supplement is also very important as dry forages are often deficient in these as well.

Minerals, other than trace-mineralized salt, intended for free-choice feeding, under current federal regulations can contain no more than 30 mg of selenium/kg of mineral. If higher levels are required, a mineral may be manufactured as a "customer formula feed" or under the prescription of a veterinarian.

The result of proper nutrition will be healthier, more profitable calves, from cows that will breed back in the first few cycles.

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# Making driverless farm equipment even smarter

BY DALE JOHNSON  
Driverless farm equipment is becoming more and more attractive to today's farmers as they battle short growing seasons and rising fuel and equipment costs.

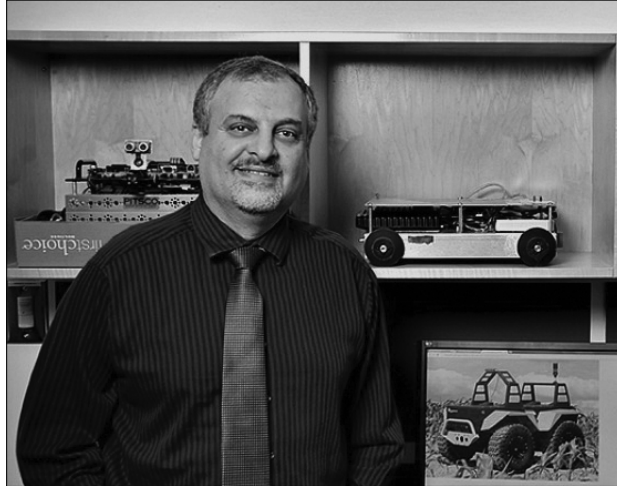
Dr. Mehran Mehrandezh has his eye on improving crop yields through the use of automation and algorithms, focussing his efforts on making the entire tillage process more precise.

Mehrandezh, a Professor of Industrial Systems Engineering in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, says faster and more precise farming can also reduce the carbon footprint of the farming machinery by consuming less fuel.

He and his research team are developing sensors that can be mounted on farm implements.

While there is already plenty of research being done into automated and precision agronomy, Mehrandezh says, "the use of machine-learning techniques for adding autonomy to tilling applications is a new and novel research area."

He says this new form of Artificial Neural Networks is a physical replication of how the brain works, and how it learns how to learn. "If trained well, the ma-



The reason for Dr. Mehran Mehrandezh's research is simple: He likes to do research that can impact lives.

chine-learning algorithm may be able to outperform humans in terms of the speed of detection, and accuracy. Furthermore, the sensors used for monitoring the process, namely cameras, can zoom in on the features of the landscape, something that homo sapiens lack," Mehrandezh explains. He says these sensors will observe if the machine

is producing the desired results; detect malfunctions due to the breakage of a shank; and spot areas where tillage is undesirable.

His research team has received funding from the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada to work with the Salford Group, an agricul-

"I have decided to put the research on precision agriculture at the centreline of my research activities. I like to do research that can impact lives."

—Dr. Mehran Mehrandezh

tural equipment firm, on adding autonomy to tillage applications for testing.

Mehrandezh's latest research follows work with automated seeding in 2016.

That's when he led a team of students at the AgBOT Challenge held in Indiana. The student teams had to come up with the most efficient unmanned crop seeder capable of planting two varieties of seed over half-mile-long rows, while providing real-time data utilizing a mobile

tracking antenna. The team came home with the first prize of \$50,000.

Mehrandezh says that experience led to his current research.

"It provided us with an excellent venue to connect to and network with key players in agriculture industry. I have decided to put the research on precision agriculture at the centreline of my research activities. I like to do research that can impact lives."

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# \$378.6 million for ag in Sask budget

The 2018-19 Saskatchewan budget invests \$378.6 million in the agriculture sector, including a record investment in agricultural research and continued support for business risk management programs, such as Crop Insurance.

The budget also includes increased funding for Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan, the organization that enforces Saskatchewan's Animal Protection Act. The new, three-year funding agreement will provide the organization \$800,000 a year for investigative services, an increase from \$610,000.

"We appreciate the work of Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan in supporting a sound animal welfare system and this funding will help ensure they have the resources they need," Agriculture Minister Lyle Stewart said.

The \$31.8 million agriculture research budget includes support for programs that foster the adoption of new technologies and increased funding for Ag-West Bio, the Food Centre, and livestock and forage research through support for the Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence. The funding is part of the \$71.2 million that will be invested into strategic programs under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) this fiscal year. CAP program details were announced at the end of March, with the signing of the new federal-provincial framework.

"Our government is making important investments targeted to the continued sustainability and growth of the agriculture industry," Stewart said. "Agriculture is a major contributor to the province's economy and this budget will help producers in-

crease crop production, value-added processing and agri-food exports."

Approximately \$258.2 million will go toward fully funding business risk management programs including AgriStability, Agrinvest, Western Livestock Price Insurance and Crop Insurance, which this year added fire insurance as a coverage feature for pasture land. The 2018-19 budget also includes \$3 million for irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation costs and irrigation asset transfer to irrigation districts.

Saskatchewan producers harvested a crop of about 35 million tonnes in 2017, the fifth consecutive year the provincial harvest has been more than 30 million tonnes. Saskatchewan's 2017 agriculture exports were the fourth largest on record with total sales of \$13.5 billion, an increase of more than 60 per cent since 2010.

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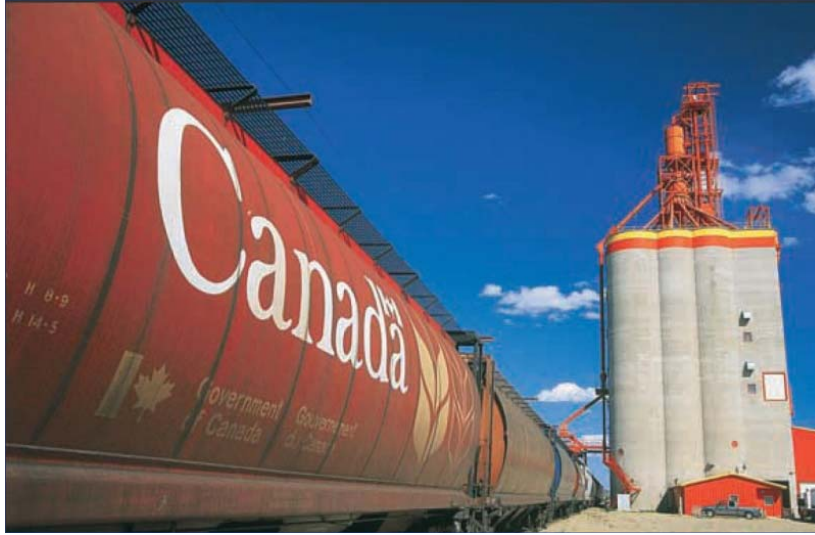
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# APAS raises transportation issue with government

**Continued from page 31**  
 My name is Ian Boxall and together with my wife Lisa my brother and sister-in-law we farm 8300 acres of grains and oilseeds in north east Saskatchewan. I am also the vice-president of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan. We farm about as far from port as you can get and on an average year, our farm pays \$360,000 in rail freight to get our products to our customers.

The backlog of grain in the prairies has had a huge effect on the ability of producers to cash flow their operations and is making things extremely difficult for farmers going into their most expensive season. In the north east, we are sitting with three-month-old grain contracts undelivered due to the shortage of timely and sufficient rail car service to the elevators. At the end of February personally, we were sitting with an outstanding wheat contract from December that we had been unable to deliver. This was leaving us in an extremely tough financial position. Lucky for us our local elevator, that is one of only four in Canada dual serviced by both CN and CP, found some room to take our product and help us out. They didn't have enough



Transporting Prairie agricultural products to market has become an issue, and the Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan's vice-president went to Ottawa last week to raise the issue.

room in the elevator and weren't able to take the entire contracted amount, just enough to give us the money we needed at that time. We don't get paid on a contract, until we can deliver, and these delays add financial and personal stress on us as pro-

ducers for something that shouldn't be a concern.

Two of the short lines that operate in northeast Saskatchewan have also felt the pinch of lack of rail service this season. They have had very poor and inconsistent supply of cars this shipping year and this

started in October, long before winter showed up again in Canada. They have also had several cases where cars have been loaded and then not picked up for weeks. Producers do not get paid for the product loaded in these cars until it's re-

ceived by the end user. So again, adding unnecessary financial and mental stress on producers. A lot of the highly sought-after oats grown in North East Saskatchewan are loaded on these shortlines in either dealer or producer cars. I grow 2200 acres of these oats every year and with poor rail service the market for these oats is in jeopardy. The processors need to find alternative sources for their oat supply since our rail roads have dropped the ball on shipping our product in a timely manner. My little boys want their oatmeal most mornings. I want them to eat Canadian oats from Tisdale, not oats from Australia.

This rail issue isn't just affecting grain deliveries. Our local fertilizer dealer has been trying to put fertilizer in place for us its customers since last fall and due to rail logistics have to pull fertilizer by truck out of Redwater, AB instead of Clavet, SK. That is an additional 1000 km per tip. So far this season they have had to pulled roughly 60 loads of fertilizer from Alberta and that is only half of the product they require, so if things continue like this we are looking at an additional 120,000km of trucking freight. That's added man power, truck power, wear and tear on the roads, and on equipment and cost and carbon emissions that we as end users are going to have to pay for. Spring road bans will be coming into effect very soon, and we could be short of fertilizer in Western Canada for seeding this year's crop. All of this due to poor management and planning on the side of the railroads.

Farmers need to get the rail service that we pay good money for. Bill C-49 was drafted because of the disastrous shipping crisis of 2013/14, and its outrageous that we are even talking about this again.

In closing we need all parliamentarians from both the house and the senate to come together and pass Bill C-49 NOW for the sake of the shippers, the processors, the retailers, our economy, our farmers, and all Canadians. Farmers already deal with so many unreliable factors, weather, crop prices, and input costs. Reliable rail service should be something we can depend on. EVERY YEAR!!!

Thank you.

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