

# Plain & Valley

October 2022 • Page 25

Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba



Scenes from the harvest day for the Cross Borders Growing Project at Kola, Manitoba in September. There are several growing projects for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank across the region.

## Harvesting food for the hungry

Farmers across the Prairies are taking part in growing projects for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Growing projects in southeast Saskatchewan and southwest Manitoba include:

- The Harvest of Hope at Moosomin
- The Grenfell Growing Project
- The Langenburg Growing Project
- The Churchbridge North Project
- The Waldron Growing Project
- The Crossborders Community Project at Kola, Manitoba.

In Saskatchewan there are 33 growing projects, covering about 3,500 acres.

Moosomin Harvest of Hope is the largest growing project in the province, at 320 acres (about 290 seedable).

In Manitoba, there are 21 growing projects.

Volunteers with the CrossBorder Community Project at Kola combined more than 250 acres of wheat for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in September. About 150 people turned out for the Harvest Day, which is always a big event in the Kola area.

"When the harvest comes ... it's tremendous. This is an opportunity to showcase agriculture and it's nice for people to be able to come out, especially the school kids," said project co-ordinator Don Neufeld.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership between 15 agencies that aims to fight global hunger, through initiatives like working with locally based organizations in developing countries to meet emergency food needs and working to find long-term solutions to hunger.

Neufeld has been involved with the

Crossborders project for 38 years, after it was launched by his father, Art Neufeld.

He is excited about every harvest season, he said, describing the Foodgrains harvest day and community lunch as an annual event the entire community looks forward to.

He says he's eager to get on the field each season because he appreciates how fortunate he is to live in Canada and have food security.

"We always have enough food to eat and there's people that don't," said Neufeld.

"Agriculture is my passion ... growing food for hungry people is my passion," he said. "It's kept me going all these years."

There were 16 combines, 16 trucks and about five grain carts were brought out by local farmers and the harvest was done in less than two hours.

Before the combines started their en-

gines, the community hosted a picnic celebrating the harvest.

Gordon Janzen, the Manitoba and northwestern Ontario regional representative for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, said the funds raised by the Crossborders project will support programming his organization does in 34 different countries. That includes nutrition and agricultural training in addition to emergency food response, he said.

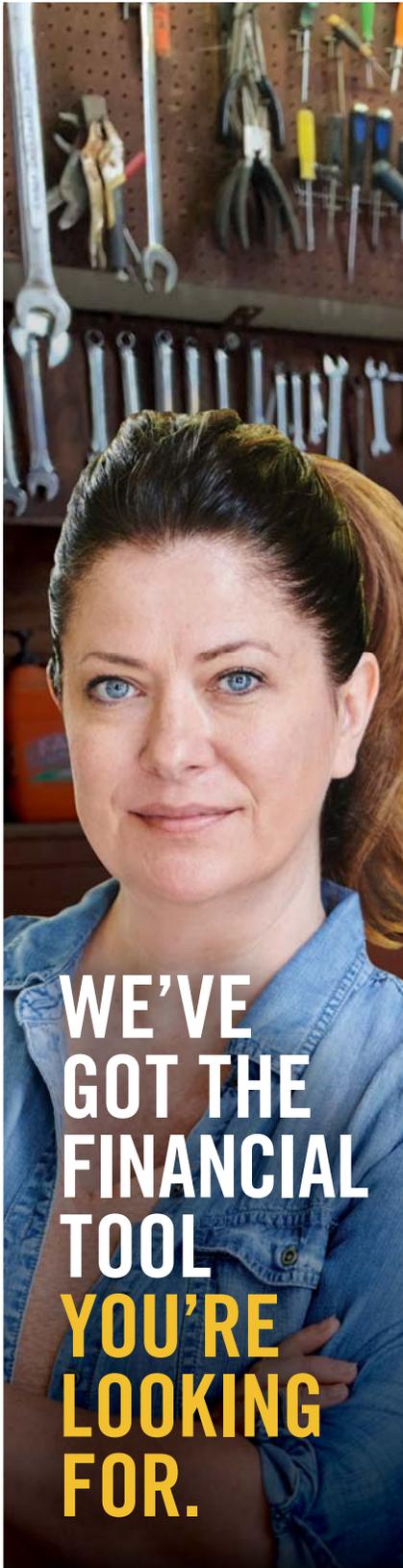
The Crossborders project "is one that brings people together from not only here in Kola, but the surrounding communities across the border into Saskatchewan. So it's really a great community spirit," Janzen said.

"It's just all thanks to the community people that are looking beyond themselves to the needs of hungry people around the world," he said.

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More students from Manitoba and Saskatchewan can apply for the WCVm's veterinary program, thanks to increased funding from the two provinces. Christina Weese photo

## Saskatchewan and Manitoba increase funding to educate veterinarians at USask

Saskatchewan and Manitoba are addressing Western Canada's urgent need for more veterinarians by increasing their funding to educate more students in the Western College of Veterinary Medicine's (WCVm) Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) program at the University of Saskatchewan (USask).

During a news event at the WCVm on Sept. 29, Saskatchewan's Advanced Education Minister Gordon Wyant (KC) and Agriculture Minister David Marit announced that Saskatchewan will increase its annual quota from 20 to 25 seats for the 2023/24 academic year.

On the same morning, Manitoba's Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration Minister Jon Reyes and Agriculture Minister Derek Johnson also announced plans to add five seats to Manitoba's annual quota for a total of 20 seats (fall 2023 entry).

"Further expanding USask's capacity to train veterinarians will contribute to the sustainability of the profession and allow us to further enhance our leadership role in the veterinary sciences and in One Health," said Provost and Vice-President Academic Dr. Airini (PhD).

"The increase in provincial funding is so appreciated, and it will allow us to deliver essential veterinary medical education, advance interdisciplinary collaboration and research, and amplify our contributions to the health and wellness of western Canadian communities."

The WCVm accepts 88 veterinary students to its DVM program each year. Through the veterinary college's Interprovincial Agreement (IPA) with Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia, each province has an annual quota of seats in the DVM program based on a cost-sharing formula.

"We welcome this commitment from our provincial partners that will help to address Western Canada's urgent need for more veterinarians," said WCVm Dean Dr. Gillian Muir (DVM, PhD).

"The provinces' support allows more students from Saskatchewan and Manitoba to achieve their dreams of a career in veterinary medicine. It's also a sound investment in protecting the health and wellness of all animals—from companion animals and wildlife to livestock that play a critical role in Canada's agriculture industry and the country's economy."

Several factors—including a rapid increase in pet ownership, a rise in veterinary professionals reaching retirement age, and a limited number of graduates each year—have led to a shortage of veterinarians and registered veterinary technologists (RVTs) across Canada.

In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the shortage is especially apparent in rural communities where veterinary clinics provide essential services for livestock producers and the agriculture industry.

"Today's investment in additional student seats demonstrates our government's commitment to addressing the shortage of veterinarians across the province," said Marit. "This initiative, along with the expansion of the Saskatchewan Loan Forgiveness for Veterinarians and Veterinary Technologists, will ensure that ranchers have access to the veterinary experts they need to provide the highest level of care for their animals."

"Animal health enables the success of our province's agricultural industries, so investing in the training of more veterinarians, particularly those with large animal expertise, will ensure this valuable support is available when needed," said Johnson.

During the WCVm event, several of the college's veterinary students demonstrated their clinical skills in the BJ Hughes Centre for Clinical Learning—the college's clinical simulation centre—for the Government of Saskatchewan representatives.

"I'm really excited for the future of veterinary medicine in Saskatchewan. I think this is a great opportunity for our province, especially with the shortage of veterinarians," said Jackson Goudy, a second-year WCVm veterinary student from Stoughton, Sask., and president-elect of the Western Canadian Veterinary Students' Association.

"Increasing the number of students who can attend vet school and enter the profession is the logical first step in addressing the veterinary shortage," added Michelle Streeter, a fourth-year WCVm student who grew up in rural Manitoba.

"I am also hopeful that Manitoba's decision to increase seats draws more students from the Prairies who are interested in working in rural mixed animal practice, since agriculture is such an integral part of so many local communities."

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# A proud moment for Scott Williamson

**Continued from page 17**  
 Was it always in the plan that you would ride the horses that had been gifted to the Royal Family over the years or was there a plan to take horses from the Musical Ride over there?

The plan always was to ride the horses that we had gifted Her Majesty.

Tell me what it was like taking part in it? Was there a lot of practice before the actual funeral or was there some time getting the horses and riders working together?

That's a great question. We flew in on Tuesday and pretty much from the moment we hit the ground at Windsor Castle we were mounted up on the horses. We got used to them and took them out for a hack or a ride and schooled them a little bit. That night we departed Windsor at 10 o'clock in the evening to go into London for a middle-of-the-night rehearsal, which is fairly typical of the British military. They like to do their rehearsals in the middle of the night.

Because the streets are empty?

Exactly, and to keep things a bit of a surprise. So we were mounted up by 1:30 in the morning and we didn't dismount until six o'clock in the morning, so it was quite a long rehearsal.

From there we got a pretty good idea of where the shortcomings were going to be with the horses and we had the remaining four or five days at Windsor Castle where just our little contingent rode the horses and prepared them specifically for what we had done during the rehearsal. We were able to very much close the gap on what we found their weaknesses were and prepare them for the actual event itself.

Were these horses given pretty much the same training that a Musical Ride horse would be given before they were gifted to the Royal Family? Were they easy to work with that way?

Yes, with the exception of one horse, Elizabeth. She never did do her time on the Musical Ride. She was five years old when she was gifted, if my memory is correctly, so she never did the Ride. However she still went through all of the same training phases that all of our young horses go through before going to the Musical Ride.

With the other horses, George, Sir John, and

Darby, they were in fact on the Musical Ride for at least two years before they were gifted. In the case of Sir John and Darby, I had ridden them quite a bit before they were gifted to the Queen so I had a pretty good idea of what to expect from them.

How did it feel to actually be leading that procession?

That has been, for certain, the most asked question by far and it sounds so cliché to say the words, but I just cannot describe the magnitude of what it was that we did and what we were feeling.

That feeling when we first turned down the mall and we had Buckingham Palace straight ahead of us—that was really our first opportunity to see the millions of people that were lining the streets.

It was just incredibly overwhelming and I'm sure you could appreciate, too, I had a lot of thoughts of 'Here is this young farm boy from Saskatchewan. How did he get to this place?'

There was definitely a pinch-me moment of being very grateful for having that opportunity to represent, not just the force, but our mantra that whole week was that we were really representing the whole country.

Every single Canadian that we know would have loved to have been there on their own behalf for that special day and that was our moment to represent every single Canadian and be at the very forefront, by Her Majesty's request, to lead Her Majesty to her final resting place.

It was just incredibly powerful and you had every emotion from honour and pride, and then on the other hand, grief, sorrow and sadness because at the end of the day it was a funeral and it was a funeral for our Queen. It was kind of a weird feeling at times, to be honest with you.

What sort of things have you heard from people talking about it since then? We had put up a a story with some information saying that you were part of it and showing a picture of the four riders and their horses. Of the four hundred comments on that, almost all of them were about the pride they felt seeing the RCMP taking part—what sort of things are you hearing from people?

I'm getting a lot of that as well, and it's just flooding in like crazy. It certainly



Scott Williamson, second from left, and other members of the Musical Ride on the grounds of Windsor Castle, preparing for the Queen's Funeral Procession.

ly makes me very happy to know that was the feeling the vast majority of Canadians felt. We did achieve our objective of representing Canadians in that procession.

Of course I've heard a lot from family and friends in the Rocanville and Moosomin area and that means that much more to me as well.

You don't get to places like this on your own. The old saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," could not be more true when you grow up in communities like Rocanville and Moosomin.

I had so many people to be thankful for that helped me get to where I was just this past Monday.

It meant a lot to hear that I was making people from the Rocanville and Moosomin area proud as well. I am happy to hear that they're very proud of me representing them, because I truly felt that I was representing them.

What are you going to do to top this? You must have something else on your bucket list.

I don't think there will be any topping that. Of course our eyes and ears are turned towards the potential coronation now, but I don't think that even the coronation can top that moment. Her Majesty was just beyond special, regardless if you're pro-monarchist or not.

What Her Majesty represented and her service to really all people around the world is just something to really take notice of—she was just incredibly special.

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

# Antique equipment used in Elkhorn harvest

BY ED JAMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

on a few breakdowns in the field.

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the end of the day the whole field was cut down and stacked on three hay racks.

The rabbit never did come back as we headed back to the museum and stored the hay wagons away until next year's Canada Day, where more antique farm equipment will be brought out of the large storage shed and set up to give a demonstration of old time threshing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Christina Weese photo

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

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

spearheaded the BIG proposal and shared the project's planning and composition with eight other co-investigators from the Toronto Zoo, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO), University of Alberta and University of California-Santa Cruz.

"A major facet of IntegrOmics is upgrading the

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

Genome biobanks are used to store and redistribute genetic material to preserve genetic diversity. Researchers will use genomic tools for disease surveillance and vaccine de-

velopment. They will also use the biobank resources to restore the natural genetic composition and genetic diversity of Canada's plains bison and wood bison populations—ensuring that the species will survive for future generations. Their work has the support of the Assembly of First Nations and other Indigenous groups.

Research findings gained

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

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

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Farmers have already taken initiative for reducing emissions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I think it's a pretty tight timeline to do it honestly. By the time you start doing research to determine where these nitrous oxide savings are, seven years isn't very



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

long and we know that when it comes to the research side of things.

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

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

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

## Concerns for food production from reduction emissions target

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The two entities need to get together and decide what is the goal for agriculture in Canada. I think there's a bal-

ance there between production and environment issues. It's about a balance.

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

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

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

"Because a lot of technology that's used here has been invented here, we've done it on our own because that's what is best for our land, whether it be zero-till or how we apply fertilizer now.

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

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

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

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

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

## Discussion between APAS and Agri-food Canada

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

"We had a Zoom meeting with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada where I laid out these same points to them and they were taking pretty vigorous notes I noticed," he said.

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

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

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

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

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



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**Above left:** Champion Bred Heifer - KCH Black Lass 2110J (KCH Cattle Co.)



**Above right:** Champion Heifer Calf - KCH Rose 204K (KCH Cattle Co.)



**Above left:** Reserve Champion Heifer Calf - EMF Keepsake 6K (Eden Meadow Farm)



**Above right:** Reserve Champion Bred Heifer - KCH Queen 2107J (Steppler Farms)

## Black Gold Classic jackpot held October 1 in Virden

This year was the first year for the Black Gold Classic jackpot. The goal for the cattle show was to allow exhibitors the chance to exhibit their cattle whether it be their first trip to town or one last time before the major fall cattle shows commence in November.

The show happened October 1 at the Virden fair grounds. It was an afternoon show and the organizers couldn't have asked for better weather for October 1! They ended up having around 50 head and were very happy with the turnout and excited to be able to host the show again next year on September 30, 2023.

The committee consisted of local producers Cody Renz, Naomi Best, Amanda Scott, Everett More, Greg Tough, Ashlee Mitchell and Trevor Nolan.

Black Gold Classic would like to **THANK** all our sponsors, exhibitors, judges and the Virden Agriculture Society for making this show happen! We look forward to seeing everyone next year. Mark your calendars for Saturday September 30th, 2023

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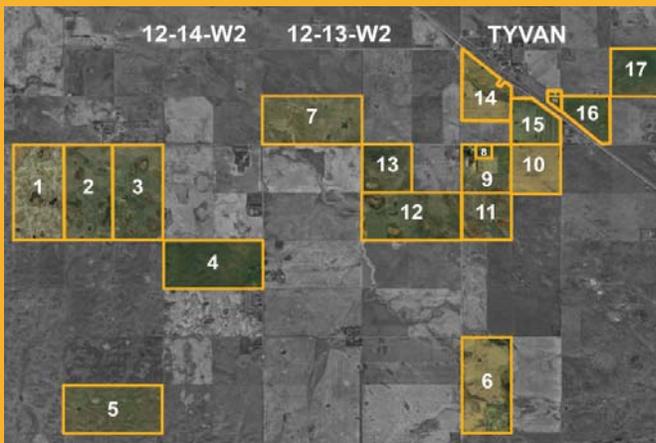
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Harvest photo submitted by Rylar Hutchinson.

# October is Agriculture Month in Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan proclaimed October as Agriculture Month. During Agriculture Month, we take time to celebrate the agriculture industry and encourage consumers to learn more about the world-class, environmentally sustainable products produced right here in our own province. Throughout the month, we encourage the public to share their connection to food through the theme, “#MealsFromtheFarm.”

“Saskatchewan’s agriculture industry cannot thrive without the dedicated individuals that make up the value-chain,” Agriculture Minister David Marit said. “They have a passion for producing the healthy, affordable food that we share with our families everyday. I encourage everyone to show support by celebrating this innovative, resilient and sustainable industry.”

This year, Agriculture Month will also focus on farmers giving back to the communities they belong

to, as well as highlight the great food they grow in the province. Throughout the month of October, Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan, in collaboration with industry partners, will share food stories, hold an online photo contest and use social media to encourage the public to learn about modern agriculture and to get involved by supporting meals in their local communities. There are many ways to celebrate Agriculture Month - participate in a community harvest supper, share a meal with your family in the field, or support your local foodbank.

“We are very fortunate to produce such an abundance of food in this province,” Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan Executive Director Clinton Monchuk said. “For Agriculture Month, we will be using the hashtag #MealsFromtheFarm to promote sharing the great food we grow here with everyone.”

For a full list of Agriculture Month events, or to learn how you can

take part, visit [farmfoodcaresk.org](http://farmfoodcaresk.org). Follow Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan on Twitter @FarmFoodCareSK, or on Facebook at Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan and share your stories on social media using #CelebrateAg and #MealsFromtheFarm.



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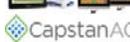
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# USask researcher tackles issue of shrub encroachment in Saskatchewan grassland ecosystems

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

BY SHANNON BOLASCHUK

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

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

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

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

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

"Since large parts of the grassland ecosystem are already lost, sustaining grassland health is important for preserving the multitude of ecosystem services that grasslands provide," she said.

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

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

Soubry's research focuses on commercial rangelands, pro-



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

vincial parks and native pastures where shrub expansion has been identified in grassland areas. She has collected field data during the past two growing seasons in three study areas in the province: The University of Saskatchewan's Kernan Crop Research Farm, the grasslands in the West Block of Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park and large commercial rangelands around Burstall, Sask., that have a fire history.

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

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

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

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

answer to these questions," said Soubry.

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

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

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

Soubry and Guo have co-authored and published four articles in several academic journals, with two additional articles recently submitted for publication that are currently under review. As a USask PhD student, Soubry has been awarded several scholarships and awards, including the prestigious Dean's Scholarship for three years.

"Being part of the University of Saskatchewan, with a strong geography and planning department and with Dr. Guo's research focus on grassland studies through remote sensing, allows me to undertake this research project with success," said Soubry.

"The fieldwork experience in the research group has significantly helped my research, along with the group's expertise in earth observation, climate change, grasslands and ecology. I am lucky to have interdisciplinary collaborations with the Department of Plant Sciences (in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresearch), the Saskatchewan Bison Association and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. I hope this can allow me to improve communication between research entities and stakeholders, and that it will help inform shrub management decisions."

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

BY MARTHA ROBERTS  
FCC ECONOMIC EDITOR

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

### Raw ag commodities

In 2021, Canada's single-largest ag commodity exports were wheat (HS1001) at \$8.3 billion and canola (HS1205) at \$6.4 billion. Total exports of ag commodities (includes HS01, 03, 06 - 08, 10, 12) summed to \$49.7 billion. Less-often reported ag products account for significant export revenues. All product categories show positive average growth between 2017-2021. The pace of exports in 2022 is impressive as YTD exports are 5.4% larger than at the same time last year. One notable exception is for exports of HS03 (seafood). The YTD pace shows a decline of 1.7%, opposite significant growth that averaged 7.3% annually between 2017-2021.

### Food products

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

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

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



hides falling 42.6%.

### Other manufactured agri-food exports

Canada is one of the world's largest exporters of fertilizers, with our potash exports (HS3104 worth \$7.1 billion, or 85.5% of total Canadian fertilizer exports in 2021) going to 47 countries. Canada is the world's largest potash exporter, supplying almost one-third of the world's traded potash. Total Canadian fertilizer exports in 2021 accounted for \$8.3 billion, followed by a distant second-

place category of farm machinery and equipment, worth \$2.5 billion.

Exports of farm machinery and equipment have grown yearly since 2016, averaging 10.1% per annum—the highest growth rate of all other manufactured goods exports—thanks to a 19.7% YoY bump in 2021 due to ongoing issues with unpredictable supply shortages. The pace of exports in 2022 is encouraging, with YTD exports 26.3% higher than last year. Fertilizer exports are more than 140% higher YTD as prices skyrocketed with the war in Ukraine.

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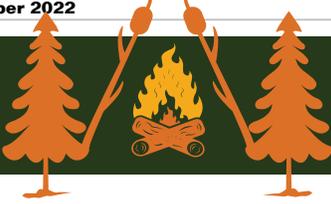
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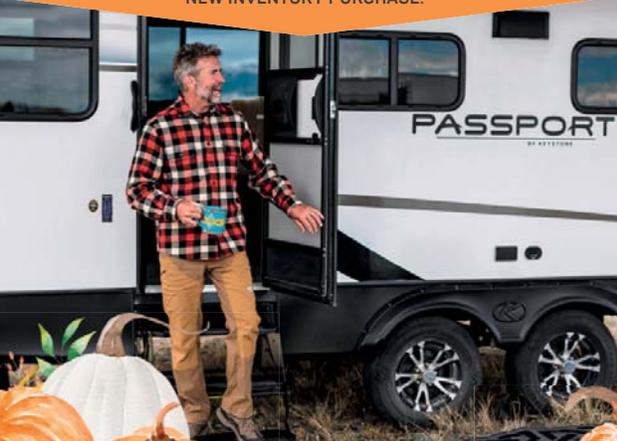
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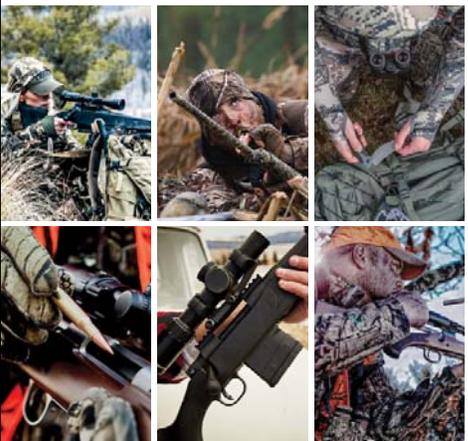
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# Concerns about SaskTel service issues along provincial border

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

People who live along the Saskatchewan, Manitoba border say they face daily issues with cellphone reception and internet connection.

Barb Cuthill of Welwyn expressed her concerns about the poor cell reception she has from her home.

"We cannot be the only community because Fleming, Maryfield and Spy Hill, all those people in that area must be going crazy," said Cuthill.

"The first responders in town can't even get calls. The people in Toronto had a meltdown when the Rogers service went down, we live like that every day."

A first responder from the Welwyn area said often, she is unable to receive emergency calls because the network connection is so bad.

"There's spots where you hit dead zones around here in Welwyn. It's really ridiculous," said Amber Hamilton, a first responder from Welwyn.

"We have a good first responder team here, I'm a first responder too, but I don't receive a lot of the calls. That's the problem, you don't get a lot of the calls, or if you do get them, they're 12 hours late.

"I work in the village of Welwyn, I'm the village supervisor. When I complained to SaskTel about it they told me to get a booster because I'm constantly roaming around the village. What am I supposed to do? Have a booster on my head or attach it to my body? There's no reason for it."

The ongoing problem of poor network connections has an impact to the safety for the community of Welwyn, Hamilton said.

"There's times where people just don't get the calls. In the first responders instances, you have people who don't have landlines anymore and can't call out because they only have cellphones.

"There was one call about a year and half ago, the man was trying to call 911, but he kept being disconnected. Then he finally phoned me and said I'm trying to phone 911, but it keeps disconnecting. I ran over there and checked it out, then came home and called 911 myself (through my landline). It's just horrible."

Hamilton said majority of the people in her community heavily rely using their landlines as their main source of communication.

"The problem I have with it is we have to pay the same price as everyone else for our cellphones, but we have to keep landlines because our cellphones don't work enough to communicate," she said.

"We're customers, we're paying more than the average person because we're paying for cell service, which can't be used most of the time. A lot of us still have to keep our landlines.

"When my kids started home schooling I had to get RF-NOW, which is a fabulous service, but that's another \$150 a month to get internet. I have a household of five, \$150 a month, plus five people with cellphones, plus a landline, we're paying a lot to communicate."

Hamilton said she has been a first responder for eight years.

"We have a great group of first responders here that aren't always getting the calls," she said.

"It shouldn't be this bad, all they need to do is put up a booster or something, but they really don't care.

"It seems there is not enough people, I guess, in their eyes. It just doesn't seem fair that everyone has to get double billed or tripled billed."

## SaskTel says they are looking into the matter

SaskTel stated that they have been made aware of the service connection issues along the Saskatchewan Manitoba border.

"Although our wireless network reaches over 99 per cent of the population of the province, we are aware that accessing a wireless signal can be a challenge in some areas, especially for those who live and work very near to our provincial borders," said Greg Jacobs External Communications Manager for SaskTel.

Jacobs explained what the primary reason is for the common network issues.

"As a regional wireless service provider, the wireless license we have been issued by Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED) prohibits us from emitting a wireless signal in any province outside of Saskatchewan and as such, we must do everything possible to ensure our wireless signals do not leak across any of our provincial borders.

"This, unfortunately, means that SaskTel is unable to provide comprehensive wireless coverage to all areas along our border with Manitoba and results in some of these areas having less than ideal wireless coverage.

Continued on Page 41



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# Concerns about SaskTel service issues along provincial border

Continued from Page 40  
 “While we are limited by our wireless license, it is worth noting that we are planning to upgrade our entire wireless network to 5G over the next few years, including the towers that serve customers near our provincial borders.”

In 2022-2023, SaskTel will be investing \$110.6 million into wireless network enhancements, including \$103.6 million for expanding 5G coverage. By the end of 2022, 5G will cover approximately 50 per cent of Saskatchewan’s population, according to SaskTel.

Jacobs was asked if communities in rural southeast Saskatchewan, specifically those who are in immediate need of stronger service connections, will be at the top of the list for upgrading its service towers.

“Given the intricate planning and complex work needed to upgrade the more than 1,000 towers we have across the province, I do not have an exact timeframe as to when the towers serving Maryfield and Welwyn will be upgraded,” he said.

“That said, once we do upgrade these towers to 5G, our customers in these areas will be able to enjoy increased data speeds and better overall reliability of their wireless service.”

## Many face cell issues

Kendra Lawrence, CAO of the RM of Moosomin, said residents have complained to her about poor cell reception.

“Cell reception is very poor all along our Saskatchewan-Manitoba boundary,” Lawrence said.

“I live in Fleming myself and our cell service is extremely poor. On a clear day we can see the Moosomin tower, but we can’t pick it up. I have a long-distance package on our phone because most of the time we pick up the Manitoba tower.”

“We get dropped calls, you’re in dead areas along the provincial border. The RM of Moosomin equipment is equipped with CB radios because we can’t guarantee the cell service along the border. That way we can confirm our guys have communication at all times.”

Lawrence said she personally addressed the issue with SaskTel this past year.

“From my own personal experience, it’s just coming on a year ago where I lost my son in an accident just directly south of Fleming,” she said.

“I have expressed the concerns to SaskTel myself. They had indicated there was a tower to be placed in Fleming. We thought it would be going into place this year, but with their plan for 5G upgrade, that has now been pushed back and could be two to three years in the future, before we see it placed in Fleming.”

Lawrence said she believes SaskTel should move up the 5G installations in border communities, where

it can make a real difference.

“When we are seeing these dead zones that are causing issues for the safety and lives of people, they need to move those projects to the top of the list.”

“Even some sort of compensation on our cellphone bills, for the fact that we have such poor reception or poor connectivity. That part, is frustrating because we pay the same price for the service, and we’re not getting the service.”

Lawrence has contacted SaskTel to address the issue herself.

“I have followed up with them numerous times in regards to the complaints from Welwyn about the service,” she said.

“Now I’m trying to work with the mayor of Fleming as well in regards to where the tower was at.”

“Recently I phoned SaskTel to see where (installing the new tower in Fleming) was at because we had been told it was supposed to be coming this year. Now I have been told over the phone that it can be up to three years, now that they are installing 5G.”

“There are some areas that don’t have reception at all. I understand that those could be the problem areas that if you have none at all, then the focus would be to those areas versus where we have some service, it’s just poor.”

She said people on the Manitoba side have also complained about their services being interrupted by cell reception from the Saskatchewan side.

“I don’t want to say that we are more important than someone else who doesn’t have service, because everyone should be able to have this,” said Lawrence.

“I just hope there could be some communication between the provinces. That if SaskTel is unable to provide that output of reception themselves, that they could speak with the Manitoba counterparts that we could tap into their towers without long distance charges or any extra data charges that would give us the service up until they (SaskTel) could upgrade theirs.”

“There seems to be that ‘argument’ between the two provinces. They probably have to turn our reception down so it doesn’t affect Manitoba, and Manitoba had probably turned down their services so it doesn’t affect Saskatchewan. Yet, those of us who are right along the border are fighting between the two.”

“People in Manitoba complain they pick up Saskatchewan signals all the time.”

Fleming mayor Trent Green, said there have been at least 20 people in the community who have spoken out about connection issues.

“We still have a headline just for the fact that we don’t have cell service,” said Green.

He said it is important that when emergency re-

sponders are out in the field, that they have service.

“It’s a safety concern. We’re far enough away from Moosomin that to wait for an ambulance is an issue, yet alone the time it takes to get somewhere to make a call, to even call the ambulance. Safety is our biggest concern.”

Residents who have complained about service issues to the town council have been asked to submit their complaints to SaskTel directly.

“We directed people to SaskTel because we figured if you can get 20 to 50 people complaining versus one letter from one municipality, I think would have more impact,” Green said.

“Ten years ago it was fairly common for connection to be spotty, but it’s 2022. Everyone has a cellphone, for what you pay for you should have service.”

Green reception is along the entire border.

“I run a crew that works for SaskPower, we work up to Langenburg to as far down to the States border, and anything along High-

way 8 going east is a problem,” he said.

“That whole strip to the Manitoba border has poor coverage. It’s not just directly east of Moosomin, but it’s that whole side of

the province in this corner.

“I run a cell booster in my truck on the job just to have better service.”

The Mayor of Spy Hill stated that residents in town have commented

about slow internet connections, but have not experienced cellphone service issues.

However people in the RM of Spy Hill face issues with reception often.

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# Sask has record quarterly population growth

Continued from page 18

"We are one of the most affordable places in Canada to live. Those conditions all add up to the fact that we've seen the highest population growth that we've ever had."

Harrison said different industries are driving growth in different parts of the province, but all seem to be booming.

"The province is such a large place that you have a pretty wide diversity of industries in different parts of the province," said Harrison.

"Up in my area, it's really forestry, oil and agriculture, which are the drivers of the economy. The forestry sector has been doing very well performing, probably, as strongly as it has performed in decades, which has driven some of the growth in northwest Saskatchewan and along the forest fringe more generally.

"In the southeast, where the energy sector is vitality important, having healthy energy prices has really revitalized the energy industry in a very real way. Companies are making investments again, rigs are moving again, people are back at work.

"Mining in your area, and manufacturing on the east side of the province, you have significant growth. There are labour market challenges for sure, but almost all of the sectors that have driven our economy are doing very well right now, which means that you're seeing growth right across the province."

## Government's plan for recruiting people into the province

Harrison said the word is getting out about opportunities in Saskatchewan.

"That awareness has manifested itself in a huge amount

of interest for those who are seeking to come to Canada and making that choice to come to Saskatchewan," said Harrison.

"We have thousands more applications to come through our provincial nominee program that we can actually accommodate. There's a long lineup of folks who want to come to Saskatchewan and that's not necessarily the case all over the country.

"The word really does get out there, we tell our story internationally and globally. We have officials right now who are in India, we just had officials in Europe. It's not always the elected officials who are communicating that message, but the government has really worked hard to make sure that message is getting out in this country, but around the world as well.

"We opened 10 international offices in the last couple of years. All of these things are significant in the immigration realm, but also in growing our economy and growing our exports in the world, and that's why we have really focused on it."

One of Saskatchewan's main drivers for its economy in the future will be the mining sector, said Harrison.

"We've seen significant growth in mining, BHP's announcement is huge," he said.

"Obviously there's been a tremendous investment put into Esterhazy. We have well over \$15 billion that has been committed just in the last year and a half or so, for the new private sector investment.

"That's in the mining sector, that's in the energy sector, we're seeing re-investment which is really positive given the reality, which is that the federal government is doing all it can to prevent the energy sector from being success-

ful. To see there being a growth in that sector despite that is very encouraging.

"As a provincial government, we have done all we can to create conditions for that growth to continue. We've seen growth in agriculture, where really great strides that have been made over the course of the last number of years as well. It's the food, fuel, and fertilizer, the three parts of the economy that have driven a lot of things."

Manufacturing is also driving growth, Harrison said. "We've seen real growth in manufacturing as well, I think that's one of the untold stories of economic growth in Saskatchewan, both the investment into the manufacturing sector, and the success of our manufacturers in exporting our products around the world.

"There's real growth in the tech sector as well, which has been a focus of the Government of Saskatchewan through innovation."

Harrison said a growing population for Saskatchewan will ultimately help improve the province's economy and fill labor gaps.

"We have a lot of employers out there who are really short staffed, and that is the number one thing we're hearing from employers, is that they just can't find the number of people to staff their operations," he said.

"Whether that's in agriculture operations, manufacturing operations, whether that's in construction, whether that's in service industry.

"The more opportunity and the larger the labour market that we have, the more opportunity our employers have to actually access the labour that they need in order to continue to grow their businesses. That really is where you see that impact."

# The right time for soil sampling

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

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

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

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

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

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

If farms plan to band fertilizer in the fall, sampling when soils drop to 10°C (not too much lower) should allow for fall application before the ground freezes.

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

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

**Composite samples.**

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

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

With one composite sample per field, farmers can create fertilizer blends specific to the needs for each field. If field-specific fertilizer blends are not logisti-

cally possible, a compromise is to apply the same blend but at different rates to match the yield goal for each field.

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

Zones are generally based on productivity differences that can be fairly predictable based on soil

characteristics, drainage or elevation.

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

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

This could mean six or more samples per field (two

depths for three zones, for example), but this method can provide meaningful results for fields with higher levels of soil variability, and can point to the value of variable-rate fertilizer applications.

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# The adventures of a harvest season

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



If you want to see a Grandma sporting two new hips move faster than you've seen in the previous four years, trust me, a frog on her lap will do the trick.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**– OCTOBER 2022 –**

17	Monday	Butcher Cattle Sale	8 a.m.
19	Wednesday	Presort Sale	11 a.m.
		Charolais Showcase	
24	Monday	Butcher Cattle Sale	8 a.m.
26	Wednesday	Presort Sale	11 a.m.
		Angus Showcase	
28	Friday	Regular Feeder Sale/Show List	9 a.m.
31	Monday	Butcher Cattle Sale	8 a.m.

**– NOVEMBER 2022 –**

2	Wednesday	Presort Sale	11 a.m.
		Simmental Showcase	
7	Monday	Butcher Cattle Sale	8 a.m.
9	Wednesday	Presort Sale	11 a.m.
		Speckle Park & Shorthorn Showcase	
10	Thursday	Tack Sale followed by Sheep, Goats, Swine, Horses	5 p.m.
14	Monday	Butcher Cattle Sale	8 a.m.
16	Wednesday	Presort Sale	11 a.m.
18	Friday	Bred Cow/HFR Sale	12 Noon
21	Monday	Butcher Cattle Sale	8 a.m.
23	Wednesday	Presort Sale	11 a.m.
25	Friday	"The Bell Ringer" Bred Cow/HFR Sale	12 Noon
		Craik Farms & A&E Boynton Farms	
30	Wednesday	Regular Feeder Sale/Show List	9 a.m.

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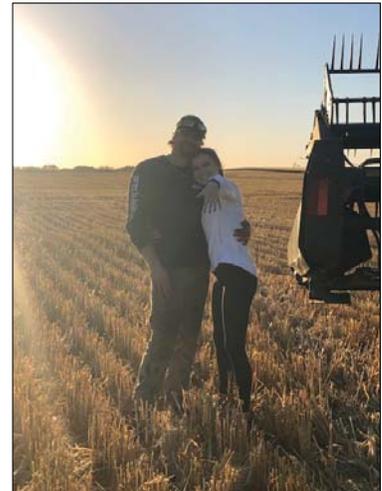
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**Happy harvest for newly engaged couple**

Some harvests come with more surprises than others. Tracey Fornwald submitted these photos of her son Presten Kopeck proposing to his fiancée Kyndra Gammon and getting engaged on the combine during harvest this year. The family lives in the Carlyle area.




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Carla and Neil Weatherald submitted this harvest photo of a harvest crew consisting of three generations re-fueling in the field (from ages 23-88). The photo was taken Southwest of Wawota.

## Forecast improves for food and beverage processing: FCC report

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

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

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

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

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

The seafood and alcohol processing sectors are feeling the impact of higher food costs as consumers cut purchases in the last six months due to inflation in other areas prompting them to reconsider their spending. Seafood, breweries and wineries are forecasted to see sales slip in the second half of 2022.

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

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

"We anticipate margins will start to improve as commodity prices decline," Gervais said. "Overall, the

trends to watch are the decline of global economic growth, job vacancies in the food and beverage sectors, and domestic food consumption growth as inflation slows and consumers return to normal shopping

habits." The FCC food report mid-year update features insights and analysis on grain and oilseed milling; dairy, meat, sugar, confectionery, bakery and tortilla products; seafood prepara-

tion; and fruit, vegetable and specialty foods, soft drinks, breweries, wineries and distilleries.

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