

# Plain & Valley

December 2022 • Volume 15 Number 12

Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba



Aaron Hack says his favorite part about working on a Christmas tree farm is helping families find their perfect Christmas tree during the holidays.

## Cornucopia happy to provide fresh cut Christmas trees

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The family owned business, Cornucopia Tree Nurseries, have been providing fresh cut Christmas trees to people and families in southeast Saskatchewan and surrounding areas for years.

The local Christmas tree farm is located two miles south of Rocanville, Saskatchewan.

Aaron Hack said Cornucopia Tree Nurseries is one of the few tree patches where people get to cut and choose their very own Christmas tree.

"It's great seeing the individuality of people when they come to pick out their trees," said Hack.

"What I think is the perfect tree isn't necessarily your perfect tree. Sometimes people find one that's flat at the back so they can stick them at the corner of their wall or they might prefer a wider, more bulky tree for their home.

"I like that people are happy when coming out because they're having fun, they're finding their spot and we're able to help them with something that they're doing.

"You don't see people who are mad or grumpy about having to find a tree for Christmas, that they don't want to do this. They enjoy it, and it's fun for us."

The average height of most indoor Christmas trees is about seven feet tall. Hack said it takes about eight to ten

years for trees to grow that size, and a bit longer for them to reach the 12 to 14 foot mark.

"For the Christmas trees that are six to seven feet tall now, we seeded them around 2005," Hack said.

"My sister Heather is the one who first seeded some of the trees and we just kept on going every year. Then in 2017 is when my wife and I took over, that's when we started expanding on the retail side.

"We started to get more trees that were ready to sell around that time, it's been a gradual process."

Hack spoke about why he enjoys growing and maintaining trees all-year around.

*Continued on page 21*

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# Cornucopia happy to provide fresh cut Christmas trees

Continued from Page 21

"There's a real need for it and that's part of the reason why we're expanding is because there's a shortage of quality, fresh cut trees," said Hack.

"A lot of the trees that are around are shipped in from out of Eastern Canada, but they've been on a truck, they've been cut early, they're dried out.

"Plus, when they've been cut down there, the trees aren't used to the Saskatchewan cold. That cold weather could affect and change the needle drop of the tree, and everything else because they are frozen when they get here.

"I'm a part of the Prairie Christmas Trees Grower's Association and that's where we source our seedlings. We get a nursery up in Prince Albert to grow our seedlings for us and everything that we use is all from Saskatchewan, it's all hardy for the environment. If you bring seeds from another area, it may not really thrive and grow in this environment."

People come from all different areas to pick out a tree at Cornucopia Tree Nurseries.

"Our purchases vary, it's been picking up more all the time. I think last year we sold around 175 trees," he said.

"Right now we're definitely trying to provide more because there is only one wholesaler in Saskatchewan which is up at North Battleford.

"We have people travelling up from the U.S. border, into southwestern Manitoba, we've got people travelling two hours to come and choose their tree from here."

## Growing trees are great for the environment

Planting the seeds and growing the trees every year is also great for the environment, Hack added.

"With a lot of the Christmas tree farms (out there), the trees are being grown on patches of land that aren't normally as great for grain farming," said Hack.

"Because tree growing is more of an intensive agriculture, you can utilize small patches which is great because you're using farmland that has never had trees on it before.

"Plus, we're planting trees on those lands every year and it's a crop we're growing for that specific purpose. It's not like we're going and cutting down trees, we're actually helping out because we're putting in more. Also with the landscape side of it too, we're scaling up the landscape by keeping the trees there that don't really make it out as a Christmas tree."

Hack spoke about the importance of providing a space that offers good quality and fresh trees to people in rural communities.

"There's a lot of people out east who are retired from growing fresh trees, and we're also seeing that here where we've got growers who are retiring," he said.

"It's a hard industry for a lot of people to start. We see that on the association where there's a lot of growers that start, and because it's a lot of years of investment, time, and work before you start getting a return, it's not always easy.

"We've got 2,000 seedlings coming in for 2024, but we won't see any income off of those for another, realistically, 10 years. Plus you have all the work that goes into them every summer, it's a lot of work, but it's a labour of love."

Hack said a lot of preparation goes into planting and maintaining the trees.

"We just planted some seeds this spring, those will be in the seeding bed for another year or two then they'll be transferred out in the field," said Hack.

"Once they get to be about three or four feet tall we start shearing them and shaping them every summer to get them growing nice and dense. We start filling them to get the shape that you want and then you keep on doing that.

"Those little ones that we planted in the spring, they'll probably be at least another seven or eight years before we start getting something in that seven foot range."

Hack said he enjoys maintaining the trees all year around.

"It's a beautiful spot to be in the summer out here shearing because you get the smell of Christmas in the summer," he said.

"It's really neat seeing them grow. The trees are one side of it, but I also love that it's connected to Christmas because it's something fun. Memories are being made and you get to see new traditions being started.

"It's really neat when you see families coming back and you see the kids grow, you recognize things like that."

Hack was asked what it is like for him and his family to pick out that special tree for Christmas time.

"What my family does is we go out and pick the most scraggly, Charlie Brown tree and give them a good home," he said.

"My kids love doing that because if a deer damages it or something happens and they're never going to make it as a Christmas tree, it's neat to have that tree serve a purpose."

Eventually, Cornucopia Tree Nurseries plans on creating a Christmas tree maze at their site, along with activities for kids and families to enjoy while they are shopping.

"There's a lot of things that we're planning on for our



Aaron Hack built his own tree baler to help with the wrapping and shipment of Christmas trees that he grows at Cornucopia Tree Nurseries, to help make it easier for families to bring back to their homes.

future, as far as family activities and different things because as we get people who are travelling from farther, we're planning on providing things to make a day out of it for them and to have some fun," he said.

"Also, I enjoy the fun and excitement of everyone finding their perfect tree because we'll have it here. I'm sure if you look long enough we'll find a tree that will fit your spot."

Hack said people are welcomed to stop by Cornucopia Tree Nurseries any time they like to pick out a perfect tree that suits them.

Although appointments are encouraged, to help families out with the tree cutting and shipment, drop-ins are also welcomed.

More information can be found on the businesses website: [www.cornucopiatrees.ca](http://www.cornucopiatrees.ca)

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Beast (Trevor Poole), Belle (Brianna Browman), Mrs. Potts (April Durksen), Lumiere (Jarrod Slugoski), and Cogsworth (Kendra Parrish).

Kim Poole photos



Trevor Poole and Brianna Browman as the Beast and Belle



# Disney BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

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Santa Day in Moosomin was hosted by the Moosomin Kinettes on December 3 followed by a free matinee of The Grinch at the Moosomin Community Theatre. Above is the Cunday family getting their photos taken, and the crowd at the theatre.



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# Eight billion people now inhabit the earth

## Do we have the capacity to feed them all?

On November 15 of this year, the world population reached a symbolic number: eight billion people. The planet took about 11 short years to add one billion more humans to its population. By 2058, it's estimated that the planetary population will reach 10 billion.

That's a lot of people. Whenever humanity is reminded that our population is increasing, we always wonder if we have the capacity to feed ourselves adequately, and for how long.

Amazingly, 90 per cent of the world's population lives in the Northern Hemisphere, and almost 40 per cent of the surface area of the Northern Hemisphere is land, compared with only about 20 per cent of the surface area of the Southern Hemisphere.

More than half of the world's population lives in Asia. A single visit to this part of the world will help you realize that the space in Canada is an overlooked asset. Our abundance of space defines our quality of life, our policies, and the way we eat. Most don't realize this, but it's true.

But are we producing enough to feed eight, nine or even 10 billion people on earth? The answer is yes.

The food sectors are adapting and developing new technologies at an astonishing pace. Many underestimate the ability of agri-food stakeholders, from farm to consumer, to adjust. While our planet produces enough food to feed the more than eight billion people who inhabit it, systemic inequalities and economic disparities have led to unbalanced distribution and irregular access to agri-food commodities. Corruption, pandemics, poverty, lack of infrastructure, and, of course, geopolitical



Sylvain Charlebois

conflicts, as we have seen this year with Ukraine and Russia, often undermine our global food security.

We produce enough to feed the planet, but climate change remains the greatest threat to our agrarian systems. For centuries, humans have adapted to risk. We are compelled to find solutions to problems that suddenly emerge: floods, drought, fires, hurricanes, and the list goes on. But with climate change, the risks never go away. Risks will essentially move and threaten other parts of the food supply chain.

"Band-aid" solutions are just no longer feasible. Greater resilience in the industry requires extreme adaptability, which is what our recent federal task force on supply chains was advocating.

And Canada is making a difference. In fact, the Barton Report, presented five years ago, offered us a road map in this regard. The Barton Report talked about unlocking the potential of key sectors and identified agribusiness as one of them. And fortunately, Canada has delivered the goods, yet we rarely talk about it.

The report mentioned expanding populations around the world, growing demand for protein in Asia, and a need for reliable markets, such as Canada. As

the fifth largest agricultural exporter in the world, Canada can become a trusted global leader in healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food in the 21st century. The report indicates that Canada has the potential to become the second-largest exporter in the world. Second, no less.

The strengths of our agri-food sector include a reliable food supply, the availability of resources, the position of arable land, and strong research poles. In addition, global opportunities relate to exploding demand from emerging markets as well as growing global supply constraints on land, water, energy, and carbon emissions.

Our agri-food exports have continued to grow despite challenges in the sector, reaching over \$82 billion in 2021 and surpassing the previous goal of increasing agri-food exports to at least \$75 billion by 2025. With better resilient logistics networks and supply chains, we can do even better.

The catch is that when people discuss food security and leading countries internationally, Canada rarely gets mentioned. The Netherlands, Denmark, and the United States are often mentioned, but our reputation is simply not there. Our image as a global agrarian provider lacks a bit of pizzazz.

We have to brag about it and celebrate the incredible contributions of our agri-food sector internationally as often as possible.

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



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# Rock Creek Tap and Grill opens in Esterhazy

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The well-known Rock Creek Tap and Grill restaurant has officially opened a new location in Esterhazy.

This is the franchise's first location in a small town. There are currently a few spots in Regina and Saskatoon.

"We officially opened on October 13 of this year. We're planning to do a grand opening sometime next year," said Apoorav Joshi, owner and chef of Rock Creek Tap and Grill in Esterhazy.

"It's been good so far since we opened. People have enjoyed the quality of food. Because we're a franchise, the food you get in Regina is what you'll get here.

"We did do a little bit of a change because Rock Creek has never been in a small town before, this is the first time it has come into a small town."

Right now the restaurant is open for lunch and dinner and offers take-out. In about a week, they will also be offering a breakfast menu.

As well in January, they plan on opening the restaurant's drive-thru to customers.

Joshi spoke about the different food options the restaurant has to offer.

"We have nachos, chicken and bacon dip that you don't easily find at other places," he said.

"We carry wings, we have asiago garlic fries. We try to offer different foods that are new in town. We also have very good quality steaks."

He was asked why he chose to open the restaurant in Esterhazy.

"Esterhazy is a small town, but because of the mine it has a very good cash flow," said Joshi.

"If you compare it to other towns whose populations are around 2,000 to 3,500 people, they don't have an A&W, Tim Hortons or other restaurants, but Esterhazy does.

"That's one of the reasons why I chose to do it in Esterhazy because it is my first business."

Joshi has been working in the food industry for over a decade and felt it was time to open up his own business.

"I started cooking 12 years ago. When I was in Grade 10 I started a part-time job as



The franchise restaurant Rock Creek Tap and Grill has opened a new location in Esterhazy. Owner and chef Apoorav Joshi of the restaurant in Esterhazy, said he looks forward to offering a new space for people to come and eat in the community.

a helper doing the dishes and being a fry cook," said Joshi.

"Then for my bachelors I did a professional cooking course and in my masters I did business management, I did both of them in Canada.

"I also worked at Boston Pizza, I was the general manager at Humpty's in Moose Jaw, and before this opened, I was the manager at The Canadian Brewhouse in Regina."

He was asked what made him decide to start his own business.

"I wanted to just start somewhere. It's not a problem to work for someone, but because I'm only 27 I thought it was a good chance to start something at this age," he said.

"If it's successful that's really good, if I fail I have enough time to make up for it. Right now the response has been great so

it's been really good for me."

## Happy to receive support from community

Since the opening of the restaurant, Joshi said the community has shown a lot of support.

"The response has been very good, the community has been really supportive," he said.

"There's been a lot of people who have come and I would say 95 per cent of the people understand that we are a new business.

"It has been very hard to find staff. I've hired a few people who don't have restaurant experience who are still learning, but they're still doing very good. We can always train them because people have to start somewhere."

Aside from having experience in the food industry, Joshi said he also works in construction and helped build the restaurant.

"I moved to Esterhazy at the start of March," said Joshi.

"I also help in construction, I did a lot of construction work for the restaurant so I have a personal attachment to it too. I tried to make it a family restaurant as well as a sports bar because I want to make everyone comfortable and for it to be a place that everyone can come to.

"I think that balanced approach is working very good right now, it's great to see.

"Another good thing is we already have a lot of Christmas party bookings, a lot of businesses have booked their Christmas parties with us and I really appreciate that."

Joshi said he looks forward to welcoming people to the restaurant.

"Because it's a new restaurant and a lot of people have already come, if they have a good experience I hope they definitely come back," said Joshi.

"If the food is up or down, I have a Facebook page with our number, people can message me any time if they have any problems with the food.

"If I have 10 customers coming, I try to make sure they're all happy, but if one of them isn't happy, I will take their feedback and I will try to change it. Whatever people tell me, even if it's positive or negative I take it as feedback.

"We just want people to come in and try our food, if you haven't come definitely come and try our steak. If you like Indian food we have butter chicken and samosas.

"We have a rib rack, and based on the feedback we've had, people really like our burgers."

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# Family visits gravesite of Victoria Cross recipient, George Harry Mullin

BY DONNA BEUTLER

Susan Fisher never knew Harry Mullin nor did her husband, Tyler Dawson, who is Mullin's great-grandson but the stories of this Victoria Cross recipient have come alive to her through both her husband and her father-in-law Bob Dawson (91).

"I have heard about Harry many times," Fisher told the World Spectator in a Remembrance Day interview when she passed through Moosomin and visited Mullin's gravesite there, paying their respects for family and bravery.

"My father-in-law's grandmother, May (Mary) married Mullin when Bob (Dawson) was 12 years old," Fisher explained, adding that Dawson knew Mullin for about 20 years before Mullin passed away. And so for Fisher, the stories Dawson has told her about Harry Mullin have really brought Mullin's story and his exceptional bravery during World War I to life for her.

Mullin was born in the United States but at age two moved (1890s) with his family to the Moosomin area. When his parents moved further west, Mullin stayed on the farm northeast of Moosomin with his uncles, learning to shoot at an early age. In fact, as soon as he could carry a rifle, Mullin was shooting prairie chickens.

It wasn't long after World War I broke out that Mullin's service for his country began and his marksmanship resulted in him officially becoming one of 70 of the bravest Canadians who served in that war. He became a skilled scout and sniper and took part in the famous Canadian attack on Vimy Ridge

in April 1917, earning the Military Medal for his bravery during that battle. Six months later, during the battle of Passchendaele, he earned an even greater honour by winning the Victoria Cross—the highest honour available to British Commonwealth troops, and one that only 70 Canadians earned during the war.

Mullin earned his VC on October 30, a day that found his unit under fire by a German "pillbox" fortification that had stopped the Canadian advance and inflicted heavy casualties. Moving out from behind cover, Mullin crept toward the German position while under heavy fire, stopping to take out an enemy sniper position along the way. Reaching the pillbox, he climbed on top, shot the two machine gunners inside with his revolver, then rushed to another entrance and forced the remaining ten occupants to surrender. By the time he'd seized the pillbox, Mullin's clothes were riddled with bullets, but he was unharmed.

In 1934, Mullin started a position in Regina as the Sergeant-at-Arms of the Saskatchewan Legislature, responsible for both the security of the Legislative Building and the ceremonial handling of the Mace, which symbolizes the authority of the House Speaker. Mullin left the position in 1941 to sign on with the Veterans Guard of Canada, where he stayed until 1947, guarding German prisoners of war—many of whom would salute him as he passed in recognition of his prestigious medal. In 1947, he resumed his role as Sergeant-at-Arms, and settled at 1262 Garnet street in Regina, remaining

at the same address and job for the rest of his life.

In the last ceremony before the provincial legislature ended its spring session in 1963, Mullin was awarded a plaque announcing that, in honour of his military service, a lake in the province's far north would be named after him. Just a few hours later, in the early morning of April 6, he passed away at his Garnet Street home.

Fisher, who lives in Vancouver, happened to be passing through Moosomin with her niece Allison on Remembrance Day on their way to Ontario where Fisher will be visiting her parents. The eight-day drive across five provinces included a planned stop in Moosomin to not only visit the cemetery and pay their respects, but to attend the Remembrance Day supper at the Moosomin Legion.

"I just wanted to honour the incredible sacrifice Harry made," Fisher said of her stop in Moosomin, "and to do some visiting." Though Fisher and her niece didn't know anyone in Moosomin, they knew they would be warmly welcomed by those at-



Pictured above is Susan Fisher, great-granddaughter of Harry Mullin by marriage, at Harry's gravesite in Moosomin on Remembrance Day 2022.

tending the local Legion Remembrance Day supper.

"We're paying tribute to very brave people," Fisher went on to say. "They are

why we have the freedoms we have today. What I feel wonderful about is that we are connected to our past." Fisher and her niece con-

tinued on their journey eastward the following day recounting the "lovely warm folks at the Legion dinner."

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# Canada is one of the highest regions for containing radon gas: Second cause of lung cancer is exposure to radon gas

Map credited to: The Evict Radon National Study, [www.evictradon.org](http://www.evictradon.org).

Continued from page 6

## Why is it important for people to test the radon levels in their homes?

With November being lung cancer awareness month, Goodarzi explained why it is important to spread awareness about radon for Canadians.

"Two reasons, 1 in 5 lung cancer patients in Canada today have never in their life picked up a cigarette," he said.

"Our rates of non-smokers who have lung cancer continue to rise, where as tobacco rates of lung cancer continue to fold because our tobacco cessation campaign has been effective.

"Anyone can get lung cancer and particularly, Canadians are at risk of radon exposed lung cancer. That's the first reason."

Goodarzi said young people and babies are at greater risk for developing lung cancer because they have a longer life span for breathing in more of the air.

"The second reason is to do it for your kids. Our

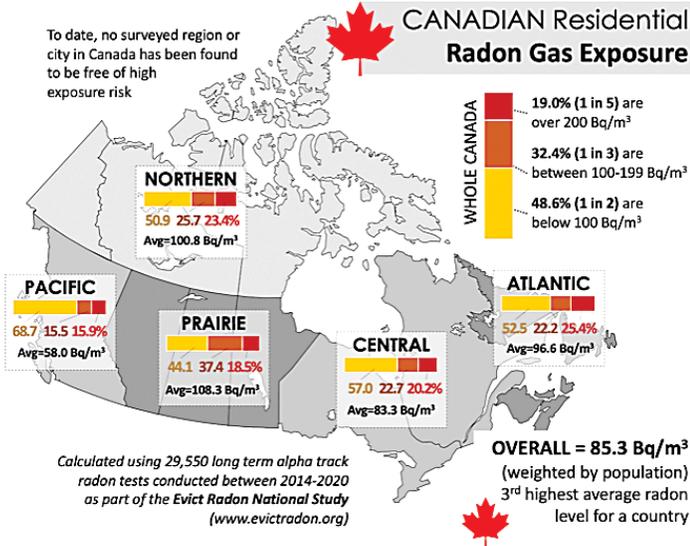
children are the most susceptible to the negative consequences of radon exposure at a young age," he said.

"That's because they have little lungs, they breathe faster, they have little bodies so it's more dose per kilogram, and they have the most life left.

"Because the latency of lung cancer is 20 to 30 years means that exposure to high radon in the first 10 to 20 years of life, you could be coming down with lung cancer in your 30s to 40s .

"We have seen many people in this situation right now, including the good folks in Saskatchewan and across the rest of Canada. Patients with lung cancer in their 30s and 40s who have never smoked, and their houses and childhood houses have been found to have extremely high levels for radon.

"Do it for your kids now, do it for their kids in the future and do it for yourself. That's what we would argue because this is an issue that has been quoted, and that lung cancer is the most prevalent and lethal form of cancer in Canada. As well as radon induced lung cancer being the most preventable of them all."





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# APAS asks for explanation on why farm inputs are 11 per cent higher than 2020

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) representatives expressed their concerns about the lack of price transparency and supply certainty for critical farm inputs, such as fertilizer, fuel, seed, and chemicals, at the Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan's fall district meetings on Nov. 15.

APAS President Ian Boxall said the association does not know why farm inputs have increased drastically in a short period of time, but plan to further investigate why.

"Over the last month we've had district meetings across the province," said Boxall.

"I don't want to say that it's price taking, but producers' minds immediately go to price taking. There is no logical reasons for the increases that we've seen."

Farm cash expenses exceeded \$11.5 billion, which was 11 per cent higher than 2020 and the largest year-over-year increase since 2012.

Boxall was asked how this has impacted farmers.

"This is a complex story this year because commodity prices are good. Besides some pockets in the province in the southwest, I think overall Saskatchewan had a very good, average crop," said Boxall.

"I think we will be okay because commodity prices are high, but when you start hearing a shortage of the chemical in spraying time which puts farmers in a tough spot and hearing record fertilizer prices, our question is to why?"

"Why is this happening? What we're asking is to tell us why, 30 and 40 cents increase in the price of fuel in a month. What is causing these increases?"

If critical farm inputs continue to increase, Boxall said it can possibly affect farmers' production of food.

"My fear is what happens next year because as I start to price out and get inputs on my farm for this coming spring's crop, the prices are the same or higher," he said.

"I don't know what the market will be this time next year when I go to sell my crop. There is some fear and some uncertainty as to what it is going to look like next year."

Although prices for farm inputs were expensive last year, 2022 was least impacted because the commodity prices were fairly reasonable, Boxall said.

"This year we're going to be okay because commodity prices are strong. I'm not going to deny that our prices



Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan President Ian Boxall said APAS plans to find out why critical farm inputs, like fertilizer, fuel, and chemicals, are continuing to become so expensive.

are good," he said.

"Cash receipts will probably be up at the farm gate, but what is it going to look like in the future? We need some indication to why this is happening, why are there shortages, what are we doing to increase this, what is causing it so that farmers can make more informed decisions."

APAS has been hearing from farmers about how they have been impacted by the higher prices.

"I think it's eating away their bottom line. Now, I don't want to discount the fact that commodity prices are high because that's what everyone is going to say," said Boxall.

"But, are the commodity prices high because the manufacturer of our inputs are just taking extra? That's where the producer's mind goes, they're traditional indicators. Back when oil was \$140 a barrel, we paid a buck a liter for fuel. Oil is hovering around \$80 a barrel and we're paying \$2 a liter for fuel.

"There are traditional indicators on some of the stuff, like the length between natural gas and anhydrous ammonia, those numbers don't correlate anymore. They used to use that as a reading, and anhydrous ammonia is up because natural gas is up.

"So, what's causing these increases? As our products are needed around the world especially right now with what's going on, this could have an interest on production."

Boxall was asked what his biggest concern is regarding the matter.

"If these prices continue to stay up and the market drops. We can't afford it," he said.

"We spent \$11.5 billion last year, that's an 11 per cent increase from the year before which is the highest increase we've seen year over year since 2012. Inflation has gone up 14 per cent since 2019, and prices for fertilizer have gone up 129 per cent, why? Tell us why."

APAS has requested the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture to begin studying retail food prices later this fall and continue into 2023.

"We'll be in contact with the standing committee on Ag, as they look at the cost of food and all the other things. That maybe, the cost of inputs is something they need to be looking at as well," said Boxall.

"I believe the war on Ukraine and some of the supply issues we're seeing, as well as coming out of Covid, sure that's affecting it, but it needs to get under control because we can't continue to pay what we're paying. Especially if the markets fall off."

He said APAS would like to have a discussion to understand why critical farm inputs have become so expensive.

"Let's get the industry in a room and let's sit down to have them explain to us why we're seeing these increases," Boxall said.

"What's driving these increases? If farmers have the information we can make better informed decisions to ensure we're able to grow the biggest and best crop that we can, but we need to understand why."

## Competition Bureau's application on Moosomin, Virden elevators dismissed:

# Anti-Trust Tribunal says P&H can keep elevators

A federal antitrust tribunal's decision may soon make Parrish and Heimbecker the owner of KK of Louis Dreyfus' Prairie grain elevators.

In a decision on Oct. 31, the Competition Tribunal, which is a federal quasi-judicial body with the power of approval over any antitrust actions proposed by the federal Competition Bureau, dismissed an application from the bureau that would have ordered P&H to sell either the former Dreyfus elevator at Virden or the P&H elevator at Moosomin, which are only about 60 km apart.

"While we are disappointed that the tribunal has ruled against our challenge, we are carefully reviewing the tribunal's decision to determine appropriate next steps," the Competition Bureau said in a news release.

The bureau proposed the order following Winnipeg-based P&H's September 2019 deal to buy all 10 of the primary grain elevators Dreyfus built in the four western provinces between 1998 and 2003.

Of the 10, six of the Dreyfus sites are about an hour's drive or less from at least one other P&H elevator, but the bureau in December 2019 said it would ask the tribunal to make an order only regarding the Virden and Moosomin sites. The bureau also sought an order preventing P&H from buying any other elevator in those markets for a set period of time.

The Moosomin and Virden elevators "were close competitors due to their proximity" along the Trans-Canada Highway, the bureau said at the time, as the companies "closely monitored each other's wheat and canola prices and responded to competitive activity from each other by offering farmers better prices."

The deal "eliminates this rivalry," meaning "farmers in the corridor between Moosomin and Virden will earn less for their wheat and canola," the bureau said.

P&H, through its Dreyfus deal, got "the ability and incentive to unilaterally



The Parrish and Heimbecker terminal at Moosomin. The Anti-Trust Tribunal has dismissed an application by the Competition Bureau to have P&H sell either its Moosomin or Virden elevator.

exercise market power in the relevant markets," the bureau said in its application, adding that P&H already "no longer intends" to follow through on previous plans to expand its rail car spot at Moosomin.

P&H challenged the bureau's proposed order shortly after closing its deal with Dreyfus in December 2019. According to Competition Tribunal filings in January 2020, P&H said there was no evidence of any alleged imminent harm to farmers, other than allegations by the bureau that the company said "are based on a misunderstanding of the grain handling industry."

The tribunal, in its Oct. 31 ruling, said the Competition Bureau's commissioner "had not established that the acquisition lessened competition substantially in any relevant market, or was likely to do so in the future."

Focusing on wheat and canola purchases from farmers in the Virden-Moosomin corridor, the tribunal said it found the "relevant geographic market for the purchase of wheat" was more likely than not to include "at least seven" elevators in that area. For canola, meanwhile, the area included "at least 10 elevators as well as four crushing plants."

The tribunal said its evidence shows the price effects of the P&H deal for the Dreyfus elevators were "immaterial" and "several effective remaining competitors remained" in the market. It also found the relevant grain companies' "post-merger" market shares to be below the 35 per cent safe harbour threshold for such cases.

The tribunal kept its specific reasons "confidential at this time." It said it plans to release a full public version of its decision at a later date, after it reaches consensus with the involved parties about what exact information would still have to be kept confidential going forward.



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# USask student's wheat pathology research helps producers in practical ways

BY NYKOLE KING

Mackenzie Hladun is fascinated by the basic principles of how a host can defend itself from disease, whether it comes to animals, humans or plants.

"I'm just so intrigued with how a host can identify a disease and fight it off. I don't know if it's the resilience factor or if it's the have-to-survive factor in the host, but pathology has always just clicked in my brain," said Hladun.

Hladun, originally from White City, Sask., is a graduate student at the Crop Development Centre (CDC) in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at the University of Saskatchewan (USask). Her research is focusing on assessing many mechanisms that contribute resistance Fusarium head blight (FHB) in wheat.

"I'm measuring many traits in wheat that allow the wheat plant to fight off Fusarium head blight, and it's saving itself from being killed by this disease," said Hladun.

Hladun's undergraduate studies focused on studying human and animal diseases. After finishing her Bachelor of Science in Cellular and Molecular Biology at the University of Regina, she worked in an administrative role for Saskatchewan's Ministry of Agriculture.

Hladun had already spent her previous summers during her undergraduate program working for the Ministry of Agriculture, and she realized she had "fallen in love with agriculture."

From that point on, Hladun decided to research her options for a master's degree, landing on the USask website. Once she found Dr. Randy Kutcher (PhD), who spe-



Dave Stobbe photo

CDC graduate student Mackenzie Hladun.

cializes in disease resistance in wheat, she knew she wanted to conduct research in his lab.

Part of what made Kutcher's research stand out to Hladun was that it has practical applications for producers.

"The results can actually provide producers or other researchers' information that they will need — which to me is just a fantastic concept. We're actually helping people by doing this. You can see where it's impacting the industry," said Hladun.

By combining genetic data and statistical information, Hladun is looking to understand the genes resistant to FHB and help to improve varietal resistance through "marker-assisted selection."

"It's tracking this genetic information throughout the crosses so that the breeder can identify what disease-resistant traits are still in the population," said Hladun.

During her graduate research, Hladun collected all her field data and appreciated working side-by-side with the lab technicians in the CDC field lab, in the field, and at the USask Department of Plant Science greenhouses.

Hladun is currently collecting the last set of data for her master's thesis and her projected completion date is set for early 2023. After completing her research, she sees herself as an agronomist working directly with producers to support their work with "boots on the ground".

What drives Hladun is seeing her work positively impact local producers. During a CDC Field Day last year, she recalls a moment after she wrapped up her speech on her project. After a long pause, one producer thanked her for how it strengthens their crop productions on their own farms.

"This one woman just put up her hand and said, 'Thank you for doing the work that we can't do.' It just clicked that not everyone can do what I'm doing," said Hladun. "That's really rewarding."

To learn more about how to apply for graduate student opportunities with the Crop Development Centre, please visit the Plant Sciences graduate studies webpage.




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# USask announces new Precision Agriculture certificate



A new certificate program at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) will provide students the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop experiential skills in precision agriculture by leveraging competencies from their academic discipline.

Students in the new Certificate in Precision Agriculture will learn how to manage crops precisely to increase both production and sustainability. This includes knowledge of the technologies used in precision agriculture (satellite imagery, global positioning and information systems, big data, yield mapping, management zones) to understand what drives within-field crop yield variability from year to year.

The new certificate program will be housed in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources and will bring together USask students from AgBio, the College of Engineering, and the Department of Computer Science to prepare them to be leaders in the rapidly evolving area of ag tech.

"The Certificate in Precision Agriculture is the third new academic program announced by the College of Agriculture and Bioresources in the last year," said Dr. Angela Bedard-Haughn (PhD), dean of the College of Agriculture and Bioresources. "Our college is continually growing and strives to respond to student and community needs: providing hands-on training that combines both the 'how' and the 'why' and learning directly from industry-leading researchers. With this new certificate program, we continue to equip students with the critical thinking skills they need that will go beyond when a certain technology may become obsolete."

"Many of the world's leading precision agriculture companies are based in Western Canada and look to USask to hire our graduates," said Dr. Steve Shirliffe (PhD),

professor in the Department of Plant Sciences at USask. "By leveraging competencies from their unique academic discipline (AgBio, engineering, or computer science), students in the certificate program will be prepared for a variety of careers with a special focus on precision agriculture including agronomists, sales and marketing specialists, programmers and data analysts, and engineering machinery and control design."

USask students can earn the Certificate in Precision Agriculture concurrently with a degree program from the College of Agriculture and Bioresources. This certificate is also available to USask students studying computer science or engineering. The first cohort will begin classes in September 2023. Questions about the program can be directed to AgBio Student Services.

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Students and elders discussing ideas.



A picture of bison on the prairie

# Students from Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation using science to help bison

BY GREG BASKY

Bison have long held a prominent place in the culture of the Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation, located about 100 kms east of Regina. The once-abundant animals were a vital source of food and furs for the ancestors of today's Carry the Kettle people.

Now, high school students from Nakoda Oyade Education Centre at Carry the Kettle are using synchrotron imaging to study the health of a local bison herd, with an eye to protecting and growing their numbers.

Armin Eashappie, a student involved in the Bison Project, says the work she and her classmates are doing is a chance to give back to an animal that was once integral to the very existence of her community. "We don't want them to go extinct, says Eashappie. "They helped

us with everything. We got our tools, our clothes, our food from them. We used every single part of the buffalo, nothing was left behind...they even helped us make our homes – the teepees – we used the hides to cover them up."

Eashappie's classmate, Leslie Kaysaywaysemat, says that if their team can identify items the bison are eating that are not good for their health, these could potentially be replaced by other, healthier items. "We want to preserve them and make sure all generations can see how magnificent these creatures are," he says.

The students, who are participating in the CLS's Bison Project, gathered samples of bison hair, soil from where the animals graze, and plants they feed on, then analyzed them using the IDEAS beamline at the CLS. The Bi-

son Project, coordinated by the Education group of the CLS, integrates Traditional Knowledge and mainstream science in a transformative research experience for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

Timothy Eashappie, Elder for the Bison Project, says it's "awesome" that the students can use the Canadian Light Source machine to learn more about an animal that his people have long taken care of on the prairies. "That's how we define ourselves – as Buffalo People," says Eashappie. "Since the beginning of time, they gave themselves to us, and now these young people are finding out how important these buffalo are to them, because it preserves their language, their culture, and their way of life. And now it's our turn to take care of the bison."

Once they've completed their analysis, the students will share their findings with the Chief and Council for Carry the Kettle.

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# USask agricultural economics graduate calculates the value of a wetland certification program

BY BRETT MAKULOWICH

Valentina Ofori's thesis research focused on whether a wetland certification program could help reduce wetland loss in Canada.

Would you pay more for a bag of flour if it had a wetland certification label? It's a question that Valentina Ofori set out to answer in her master's thesis research.

"While certification programs exist for forestry, marine and organic products, and have been studied extensively, no research has been conducted to assess a certification program for wetlands," said Ofori.

Ofori will officially receive her Master of Science in Agricultural Economics at University of Saskatchewan (USask) Fall Convocation, taking place in-person on November 9 at Merlis Belsher Place.

In June 2022, she successfully defended her master's thesis, Economic feasibility of a wetland certification program in the Canadian Prairies. Her thesis was supervised by Dr. Patrick Lloyd-Smith (PhD), assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at USask.

For her research, Ofori estimated the price premium that consumers of prairie wheat would be willing to pay for a product that had a distinctive wetland certification label. The label would tell consumers that the product was produced on a wetland-friendly agricultural landscape and the level of wetlands restored on that landscape.

Ofori's research also assessed the profitability that a wetland certification program would offer wheat farmers.

"Although wetlands are very beneficial to the environment and society, farmers and landowners do not reap many economic benefits of maintaining wetland on their agricultural landscapes," said Ofori.

To conduct her research, Ofori developed and designed a survey questionnaire which was administered in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba.

"I enjoyed the survey design and development stage of my research," she said. "I had the opportunity to conduct focus groups and the interactions I had with participants were helpful in the final questionnaire design process."

Ofori analyzed the survey results using R statistical software (a programming language for statistical computing and graphics).

"The results of my research showed that Canadian wheat flour consumers were willing to pay about 16 to 40 per cent more for a bag of wheat flour with a wetland certification label," said Ofori. "Saskatchewan wheat farmers who adopt this program would enjoy a profit of about \$21 to \$32 more per acre than conventional wheat farmers."

Ofori's research was funded by Smart Prosperity Institute and the Global Institute for Water Security at USask. She also received the Dollie Hantelman Agricultural Scholarship, which is awarded for academic achievement by the College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

Originally from Accra, Ghana, Ofori received her bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Cape Coast. After attending a lecture on the economics of natural resources and environment, she realized that she wanted the focus of her graduate program to be on agricultural economics. She heard about USask via a friend who was alumni.

"I chose to study agricultural economics at the USask College of Agriculture and Bioresources because of the level of high-quality research produced by both faculty and students," she said. "I have passion for research, and I was excited to learn that the faculty has built such a great program with a strong research component."

Currently, Ofori is working as a Research Assistant for



Valentina Ofori chose to study agricultural economics at the University of Saskatchewan because of its high-quality research.

the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, with plans to pursue a PhD and become a professor, with a focus on natural resources and water economics. Ofori is interested in how the needs of society, policymakers, and producers can be jointly met via economics research.

"I hope a wetland certification program will be developed by policymakers as it has great potential, aligning society benefits to producer costs and helping reduce wetland loss."

## \$117,000 in local gift cards sold

Continued from page 20

Gerard was asked what she thought helped the most for the fundraiser's success.

"I think it was the length that we did it, more people were aware of it this year," said Gerard.

"We're going to line the fundraiser up to be the exact same way for next year.

"We already have a lot of businesses who have signed up again for it for next year ahead of time."

Gerard said she looks forward to SCC making the fundraiser an annual event.

"I'm excited for the SCC, it's huge. This will probably be my last year, I think I'll be a volunteer for it next year, but to get it started was great," she said.

"It was originally Alana Webb's idea. I think in Elkhorn, 4H did it, but they did it with city gift cards and this year I think Redvers SCC is doing something similar too with city gift cards. We figured local is better.

"We're hoping next year to run it the exact same time, to start it in September and finish in November."

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# Soil seeker: Finding new ways for soil to be more sustainable

Continued from page 28



**“Soil is the root of everything. It’s the root of the problem and the solution.”**

— Shannon Mustard

But it’s not an exact science, with weather conditions and topography complicating things. Specialized thermometers at four towers spread across 16 hectares of spring wheat track temperature and wind speed. She uses drone footage to monitor conditions.

“One area might be an emissions hotspot, whereas another might be an area that could be sequestering gases and that would be interesting for a farmer to know because they might then target that area,” says Mustard.

Since this extra step of adding an inhibitor costs money, it can be a tough sell to farmers without an incentive package and concrete evidence.

“We’re testing to see if we do see significant results or, if the results aren’t significant, maybe if we added more inhibitor or less inhibitor or tried a different type of inhibitor, would that maybe produce more significant results?”

Soil remains so mysterious, says Mustard, who as a kid would escape the city to her grandfather’s 10-acre farm near Collingwood, Ont., with its sea of winter wheat and soybeans.

“There’s so much going on beneath your feet that you don’t even realize and most of it you can’t see,” she says. “It’s often said there are more microbes in one teaspoon of soil than there are people on this Earth—it’s almost incomprehensible to imagine.”

**New space**

The tens of thousands of samples—from soil to grains—collected in the field every year by UM researchers and grad students exploring food and fodder production will have a new home for more high-tech analysis. An asphalt parking lot on the Fort Gary campus’ south-east corner will transform into the Prairie Crops and Soils Research Facility where, for the first time, all departments from the Faculty of Agricultural Food Sciences will work alongside one another in a shared research space.

Beyond how to mitigate greenhouse gases, they’re tackling problems like: What new crop varieties should Manitoba farmers consider to better handle extreme weather brought on by climate change?

“It’s a new level of co-operation and the state-of-the-art building and its equipment will allow us to do more field experiments, work faster, more accurately, and to train more students and technicians,” says Mario Tenuta, Senior Industrial Research Chair in 4R Nutrient Management. “I’m pretty excited that we have the opportunity to do things we’ve never done before.”

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