# CountryGuide

Strategic. Business. Thinking.

WESTERN EDITION / COUNTRY-GUIDE.CA / SEPTEMBER 2016

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# 2016

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REAL LIFE READY









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#### You grew it... make them pay

This year, good isn't good enough. Farms are under pressure to be great with their marketing. These six steps are the place to start, backed up with loads of shrewd advice from three of Canada's top marketers. Pg. 12

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These farm families have figured out how to take charge of their marketing. The days of waiting for the right price have officially come to an end.

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## Beyond our understanding



Before you put this issue down, read Gerald Pilger's 'The target is glyphosate' on page 58, even if you think you don't have time

The organization that Gerald writes about is called Avaaz, named after the root that gives us the word "voice" in several European languages.

Over 44 million environmentalists around the world now belong to Avaaz, and they are pushing to make it the most powerful ecoorganization the world has ever seen, far beyond Greenpeace or World Wildlife Fund.

In my own circle, few farmers have heard of Avaaz. Even fewer were worried about it.

That's about to change.

This is a group that has harnessed global energy to fight the world's biggest environmental challenges.

They're fighting climate change, which we can understand, and they're fighting to keep our oceans healthy, which we can also understand.

But their third-highest priority is to kill glyphosate.

And they know how to do it, by mobilizing popular support with a Bernie Sanders sort of momentum, telling everyone who checks out their website that "Glyphosate kills 'everything' except Monsanto's genetically engineered crops, transforming our planet into ecological wastelands where nothing can live but one GM crop. It's apocalyptic."

You know it's wrong. I know it's wrong. But the two million Avaaz members who lobbied Europe's parliament this year to prevent the EU from giving glyphosate an automatic extension on its registration don't know it. And, according to Pavel Poc, the vice-

chair of the EU's environment committee, it was Avaaz that tipped the political balance against qlyphosate.

With that success, Avaaz is getting bolder. If you can secure one victory with statements like "Our planet is one tremendously fragile, interdependent ecosystem, and Monsanto's wasteland agriculture is taking a wrecking ball to it," why would you give up?

But we must keep the balance in mind too. For this same issue of *Country Guide*, I spoke with the leaders of Nourish Marketing, and I encourage you to also read this story (The next step?, page 8).

For consumers, farmers are almost the only moral touchstone in a world where everyone seems directed only by their self-interest.

Farmers are wholesome, and what they do is wholesome, which is why McDonald's and so many others are trying to save their corporate brands by using their ads to paint their links to the ranch and farm.

As you'll see, Nourish president JoAnn McArthur believes this trust is one of the most valuable assets in today's food industry. It creates opportunities, and despite Avaaz, these are opportunities that farmers can control

Our challenge has got to be to show consumers that farmers are professional, and that wholesome can also be smart enough to make wise decisions about glyphosate.

Spend some time at avaaz.com, and then at nourish.marketing. Then let me know. Are we getting it right? Let me know at tom.button@fbcpublishing.com.

#### **CountryGuide**

1666 Dublin Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3H 0H1 (204) 944-5765 Fax (204) 944-5562

#### EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor: Tom Button 12827 Klondyke Line, Ridgetown, ON NOP 2C0 tom.button@fbcpublishing.com (519) 674-1449 Fax (519) 674-5229

Senior Editor: Maggie Van Camp mvancamp@fbcpublishing.com (905) 986-5342 Fax (905) 986-9991

Production Editor: John Morriss john.morriss@fbcpublishing.com

Field Editor: Shannon VanRaes shannon.vanraes@fbcpublishing.com

Online Editor: Greg Berg

Design & Layout: Jenelle Jensen

#### ADVERTISING SALES

Sales Director: Cory Bourdeaud'hui cory@fbcpublishing.com (204) 954-1414 Fax (204) 944-5562

Kevin Yaworsky kyaworsky@farmmedia.com (250) 869-5326

Lillie Ann Morris lamorris@xplornet.com (905) 838-2826

Advertising Services Co-ordinator: Arlene Bomback ads@fbcpublishing.com

(204) 944-5765 Fax (204) 944-5562

Glacier Farm Media President: Bob Willcox bwillcox@farmmedia.com

Publisher: Lynda Tityk lynda.tityk@fbcpublishing.com

Editorial Director: Laura Rance laura@fbcpublishing.com

Production Director: Shawna Gibson shawna@fbcpublishing.com

Circulation Manager: Heather Anderson heather@fbcpublishing.com

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## Somebody should speak up.

Somebody should set the record straight. Somebody should do something.

So be somebody who does something.

Well I'm somebody. You're somebody. Everyone in ag is somebody.

Somebody who speaks from a place of experience, with passion and conviction.

Somebody who proudly takes part in food conversations big or small, so our voice is heard.

Somebody who tells our story, before someone else does.

Somebody who builds consumer trust so our industry can meet the demands of a growing, and very hungry, world.

Somebody who shapes people's relationship with agriculture.

It can be done.

But it's a big job that takes **co-operation**, **patience** and respect for every voice in the conversation. We need to **build lines of communication**, not draw lines in the sand.

Be somebody who helps everybody see Canadian agriculture as the vital, modern industry it is. Somebody who helps everybody see people in ag for what they are - neighbours, friends and family who share the same concern everyone does: providing safe, healthy food to the people we love.

Our point of view is important. Our story is important. And people want to hear what we have to say. So be somebody who takes, and makes, every opportunity to share it.

I'm somebody. You're somebody.

Together, we can tell everybody.

Be somebody who does something. Be an agvocate.





Lemken's new Azurit 9 planter is being introduced in Europe this year. The brand expects to offer a 16 row version in Canada in the future.



### Lemken gets strategic

German company puts its focus on building a wider range of machinery for Canadian farms

issouri may call itself the "Show Me" state, but in my experience, farmers demonstrate more of that "prove it to me" trait more than any other group and for good reason. Over the decades they've heard machinery manufacturers make a lot of claims about the capabilities of their machines. Most of the claims turn out to be true most of the time, although some not so much, which is why nothing seems to impress farmers more than seeing the equipment makers take their equipment into the field to prove itself.

That fact hasn't escaped the notice of German equipment manufacturer Lemken. This company has made a habit of taking its machines into fields and inviting farmers and the farm media to come and see them in action. In June, the brand held a joint field day in Hungary with Krone, a Germany-based forage equipment manufacturer.

"Our definition of convincing farmers is showing machines in the field," said Ralf Bornemann, export manager for Lemken. "That's the most important thing. You can see how machines perform in the field. That's what we want to show worldwide."

The brand introduced new planting and tillage implements at last November's Agritechnica machinery show in Germany, and the Hungarian event was the first time machinery editors had a chance to see them at work.

Lemken first introduced its Heliodor compact disc harrow in 2005, and this year it was given what the company describes as a major update. Disc size on the Heliodor 9 grows by 4.5 centimetres to 51 centimetres (20 inches). That allows it to work two centimetres deeper than the previous version. It's now capable of digging down to 14 centimetres (5.5 inches). Hydraulic working depth adjustment is available as a new option, allowing operators to make changes right from the



configuration in twin rows 5.5 inches apart.





tractor cab. Discs running in the tractor's wheel tracks can be individually adjusted to compensate and leave an even field surface.

The Gigant carrier system now allows four, four-metre Heliodor sections to be connected together to create a maximum overall working width of 16 metres (52.5 feet), making it one of the widest discs on the market. But the company also has another, heavier compact disc to offer Canadian farmers as well.

"Our business model in Canada is based mainly on the compact disc," explained Bornemann. "For the corn areas, where you have a lot trash, we have the Rubin 12."

The Rubin 12 is capable of working "as deep as a cultivator," the company says. It was originally introduced in 2014, and it, too, has now been stretched to offer a wider seven-metre (23-foot) working width to suit Canadian needs.

Designed to work at higher field speeds, the symmetrical disc arrangement eliminates any lateral draft when working, making it an easier pull and minimizing fuel consumption. The Rubin 12 discs run at a 20-degree angle to the soil and 16 degrees to the direction of travel.

For growers who want just one implement to meet "strategic" tillage objectives, the company thinks the Karat 12 is the answer. It is capable of both shallow and very deep work, down to 30 centimetres (eight inches).

This tool combines a shankstyle cultivator design with discs and packing wheels that can dig into stubble and bury large amounts of organic residue without plugging, due to its 80-centimetre (24-inch) under-frame clearance. It can be used to break up compaction layers or for shallow seedbed preparation work for producers, such as organic growers, who use intensive tillage.

The Karat 12 also gets hydraulic depth adjustment for on-the-go changes. The ContourTrack option can automatically maintain consistent working depths in uneven terrain and assist in limiting wheel slip during hard pulling by transferring weight to the tractor drawbar.

Now the company has also announced it will eventually have a planter designed for Canadian conditions. The Azurit DeltaRow planter places seed in a staggered pattern in dual rows spaced 12.5 centimetres (5.5 inches) apart. The idea is that the spacing gives each plant the maximum ground surface area to absorb nutrients and moisture. That, claims the company, should help push yields higher.

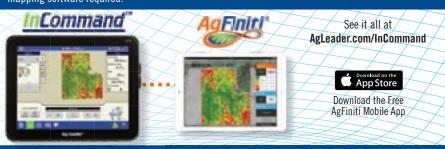
"Azurit is our new precision planter range," said Bornemann. "It will start next year. For the first step we have the European version, that means up to 12 rows. If we want to have the right machine for Canada, for the Prairies for example, we need bigger dimensions. We're talking about 16 rows. But that will be step number two, and we want to do it step by step." **CG** 

Lemken upped the maximum working width of the Heliodor 9 to 52.5 feet in order to better meet Canadian farmers' demands.



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# The next big step?

As their opportunities get bigger and better, more farmers are likely to hire marketing agencies

BY TOM BUTTON / CG EDITOR

mong my questions was the natural one for a skeptic to ask. "How are you going to convince farmers to take on an agency and pay all those fees?"

Seated across from me in a Guelph restaurant called Borealis — a thriving, trendy, happening sort of place that describes itself as "obsessively local" — agency execs JoAnn McArthur and Len Kahn didn't pause.

"We aren't," said Kahn.

"Farmers will decide for themselves when the time is right," Kahn said. "It's like knowing it's time to get an accountant."



"It will come from their own business goals... they won't need anyone to tell them."

McArthur and Kahn are betting that a growing number of farmers will begin deciding an agency is exactly what they need, and that it will become a powerful new dynamic in Canadian agriculture.

It's a prospect that McArthur wants to be at the centre of. Canada's huge grocery sector, she says, is primed and set for farmers to play a bigger role than ever.

This begins, though, as one of those convergence stories. McArthur and Kahn had gone to the same high school in Oshawa. Later, they both built careers in marketing and communications, but on opposite sides of the coin.

Kahn stuck with agriculture, building a Guelphbased agency called Kahntact and working on many of Canada's biggest accounts, selling seed, crop chemicals, machinery and more.

But Kahn was also seeing the old boundaries start to become too limiting. If farmers stick on the farm side of the farm-food continuum, they'll miss too many opportunities. "There's a nexus between food and ag," Kahn says. "It's only going to get bigger."

McArthur, meanwhile, focused on the consumer side of the food and beverage industry. She rose quickly, becoming a brand manager at Procter & Gamble, a marketing manager at Unilever and then president of Molson Sports & Entertainment, reporting directly to the president of Molson Canada.

She left, she says, because she wanted to build the kind of agency that she had wanted to hire, explaining that in order to sell beer, you have to score big with young men who no longer watch much network television.

"We would get the agencies together every year and we would keep saying, 'No television,'" McArthur says. "And the agencies would keep coming back recommending huge advertising spends on television."

The world was changing, and marketing wasn't keeping pace, McArthur says.

And not only in beer. The food market is in the midst of a revolution too.

So today, McArthur is Toronto-based president of Nourish Marketing, Canada's only marketing and communications agency devoted strictly to food, complete with test kitchens, food stylists, experts in every area of food wholesaling and retailing, and a storied chalk board where cutting-edge brand concepts get fleshed out.

But it starts with understanding the key driver in today's food market, she says. Consumers want to trust their food.

"Our parents used to trust big food," says McArthur. "Big used to equal trust."

Now, she says, "Big is no longer beautiful. Millennial consumers no longer trust big food."

#### THE TIDAL WAVE

Kahn and McArther met when they were both pitching to do work for Agri-Food Management in Guelph, and soon saw the opportunity that led Kahn to become a partner in Nourish.

McArthur points out that because of the huge shifts in consumer attitudes, there's blood on the floor at the mainline food companies. In the U.S., she says, the biggest 25 have lost \$18 billion in a deathby-a-thousand-cuts spiral.

To stop that bleeding, companies like McDonald's are linking their brands to the farmers who produce their food, such as in the fast-food maker's Olympics ads, which focused not on the taste or the price of their hamburgers, but on the wholesomeness of the ranchers who raise their beef.

The point, says McArthur, is that McDonald's saw it needed to create a new,

Big is no longer beautiful," says McArthur. "Millennial consumers no longer trust big food."

farm-based story to embed the idea that it shares the values of its customers.

Now, say McArthur and Kahn, imagine that you didn't have to try to link yourself to the farm. Imagine you ARE the farmer. The opportunities, they say, are essentially

"It's all about story," says McArthur. "When you meet someone, you want to

know their story. Now we want to know the story of our food too."

As an agency, their role is to help figure out and communicate that story.

In food, however, getting that story across to consumers isn't such an easy thing. Food is sold differently than anything else,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10** 

#### I will be a Smart Grower.



Growing up, I saw farming as a way of life. Now, as I work towards succeeding my father

in running our farm, I realize it's also a commercial enterprise. Every decision we make affects our bottom line.

When school is out and I return to the farm every summer, I realize how lucky I am to wake up every morning and have my future office just outside my door. My education is giving me a new outlook on how to manage the farm - from streamlining operations, to adopting new technologies and choosing crop inputs that maximize our return on investment.

That's why I'm proud we fertilize in the fall using ESN® SMART NITROGEN®. Shifting the workload from the hectic spring and increasing our spring seeding efficiency is good for both the bottom line and our work-life balance - and we don't have to worry about unpredictable spring nitrogen costs. The controlledrelease technology of ESN adapts to our corns' growing conditions, so the plants get the nutrients they need when they need it most. We can store our equipment for the winter, and I can return to college with confidence knowing ESN will be available to our emerging crops come spring.

I'm proud to continue the legacy of our farm by making smart growing decisions.

Farming is a way of life, and my future career.

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#### Finding the right agency

So you think maybe it's time to get some marketing help. What criteria should you use to choose your agency?

Here are tips from Nourish's JoAnn McArthur and Len Kahn:

- 1. Does the agency have deep knowledge in your product area? This typically means it will bring in people with extensive food experience.
- 2. Review the agency's other campaigns, especially in your sector.
- 3. Specifically ask the agency how it will help you define success, and how it will measure and report on that success. Says McArthur, "It's all about metrics."
- 4. Will the agency give you the cell phone numbers of its principals? McArthur says agencies are notorious for a kind of bait and switch. "They bring in the big hitters to get your business, but once you're signed up, they walk away," she says. "Know who is going to do the actual work."
- 5. Be sure you can build a good personal relationship with the agency, says Kahn. "It's a people business," he says. "Find an excuse to spend some time together. Play a round of golf. Is the chemistry good?"

McArthur says. Packaging is crucial, but designs must not only meet regulations and standards, they must work with the way that grocers work too. They need what McArthur calls "shopability and stockability."

Besides, stores are already jammed. They already have a low-price, a store-brand and a premium brand for every product on their shelves, all shouting their own messages.

And on top of all that come the stocking fees that suppliers pay to get preferential shelf placement, and the labyrinthine relationships of suppliers, brokers and retailers.

It takes work and expertise to figure it all out. But there's a rainbow that can make all that work worthwhile, says McArthur. "Everybody is looking for something new. Loblaws, Whole Foods, the independents... they're all looking for the next big thing."

#### **ARE YOU READY?**

Kahn tends to be cautious. "If you have a product and you're selling all you can make of it from your farm retail location, you don't need us," he says.

"You need us if you're laying awake, saying to yourself, 'This is such a great idea. There's got to be more we could do with it."

"It has to be innovative," agrees McArthur. "I don't care if people tell you that your cookies are best, the world doesn't need another chocolate chip cookie. There isn't room for it... we do crush some dreams."

But "innovative" is possible. Eversprings Farm near London, Ont. is a Nourish client, producing sprouted grain and seed products for a wide variety of food markets.

But innovative does mean that the product can be differentiated from other brands, and that it can carry a story.

And, McArthur emphasizes, "You should be able to come to me and say that you see a gap in the market."

The product may still be in development at that stage. Nourish would then do a market assessment, followed by initial branding and naming work, and working up a road map for the best way to go to market, which might for instance involve starting up with a low-cost online, e-commerce approach, or test marketing on an exclusive basis with specially selected retailers.

At every step, you can expect a rigorous focus on the product's differentiation "It needs to be expressed across all touchpoints," McArthur says.



We do better work when there's already a business plan in place," says Kahn

#### PLANNING FOR BUSINESS

With Canada's rapidly evolving food market, McArthur and Kahn see big opportunity for farmers to find such gaps.

Doing some quick mental arithmetic, the conservative Kahn says he sees the number of significant value-adding Canadian farms climb-

It's a good thing, he adds, that these farms are inherently business minded. "We do better work when there's already a business plan in place," he says. "You should have the sort of plan you could take to the bank."

Keep in mind, though, the plan has to be reality-checked. At Nourish, that could mean calling in brokers or distributors. "Nobody outside the food sector really understands how grocers work," McArthur says.

"There are more opportunities now than there have ever been," she adds. "Consumers want local, they want authentic, they want craft.

"The market has changed. Figure out your story... the time has never been better." CG







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### You grew it... make them pay

So you think you do a passable job of marketing. Not great, but not bad. These six steps let you shoot for more

BY MAGGIE VAN CAMP / CG SENIOR EDITOR

ommodity marketing can be like dancing a two-step with work boots on. Your timing is often off, you're dragging your feet, and you trip way too often. With volatility making our commodity markets more

erratic, and with more information spewing out of our smartphones night and day, marketing is getting ever more complicated.

Dancing with tighter margins also means a small misstep can cause a lot of pain.

So now that the super cycle of sky-high grain and oilseed markets has faded into memory, it's time to take your marketing up a notch, employ all the tools, become more disciplined, and make the most of any opportunities that come your way.

Improvement is possible. In fact, it can even be realistic. In the following pages, we bring you advice from three top commercial marketers, with their six key strategies for superior results.

No one is sugar-coating the job. Based in Winnipeg, Agri-Trend marketing coach Lawrence Klusa captures the crux of today's marketing challenge in a single sentence. "To be successful over the longterm, farmers need to be successful both when market prices are higher and when market prices are low," Klusa says

Then there's this extra complication. "What works one year might be totally wrong the next," says Frank Backx, marketing manager at Hensall District Co-operative north of London, Ont. "Grain and oilseed markets are continually changing, and every year provides different challenges."

And, adds David Derwin, portfolio manager with PI Financials in Winnipeg, who worked on the floor of the Winnipeg Stock Exchange for years. "The next few years, managing risk is going to be more challenging."

Following are six strategies that will help you take your commodity marketing from good to great, say Klusa, Derwin and Backx.

Get ready to dance.

#### 1. Know your farm's financials

few years ago it was easy to be A few years ago it had lullabled by the dreamy returns for delivering off the combine, without any storage costs, without even thinking about cost of production — just show up, dump, and wait for that lovely transfer to hit the bank.

But with current markets, knowing your farm's financials is an imperative first step to marketing. And it should be done long before seed is in the

Although many more farmers have learned to link input costs to market prices, some farmers have gotten stuck in the watch-and-hold mode, waiting for grain and oilseed prices to go higher without taking advantage of opportunities along the way to capture returns over their production costs.

Backx gets right to the point. "The main difference between average and excellent marketers," he says, "is knowing cost of production, and being willing to sell at levels that turn a profit."

Knowing your financials for each crop makes it easy to accept sell decisions and move on. Once an order is filled, great marketers ask themselves where's the next sale, instead of dwelling on what's done. They know they made a profit above their costs. "After pulling the plug, strong marketers don't look back to see if it was the right decision," says Backx.

Many provincial agricultural ministries have cost-of-production spreadsheets on their websites. On Manitoba's, for instance, you get a fill-in Excel spreadsheet to track your marketing plan and harvest results, with cells to input your operating and fixed costs for cost of production. There are even webcasts explaining logistics, how to use options, and the details of futures trading.

At some point during the crop year, most crops, most years, will offer a price that allows you to make a profit with that crop, says Klusa. Enterprise analysis helps identify which crops to grow to maximize returns, and the analysis will also give you a sense of what price is required to sell that crop at a profit. "Knowing which crops are profitable and what is a profitable price are keys to a successful marketing plan."

A sometimes-neglected part of a successful marketing strategy is linking it to a farm's overall financial numbers, including cash flow, debt repayment, expense payments, and operating line exposure in order facilitate both margin marketing of hedging of inputs and as well as outputs.

It's a process of understanding your farm's net exposure. Usually good marketing advisers will embed in their services a spreadsheet to help track things like acres, yields, expenses, debt servicing and production to be marketed for their clients.

On livestock operations, hedging both inputs and outputs is becoming more common, especially by pre-booking both feed grain prices and sales prices to guarantee a margin. Most are using only cash sales and cash purchase, not options. However, other businesses, like the corporations handling your grain and selling you inputs, use futures to mitigate market risk on both sides of their budgets. "Don't you want to level the playing field as much as you can?" asks Derwin.

Derwin also suggests benchmarking your selling results against yourself over multiple years, as a percentage, rather than in terms of dollars per bushel. Year-overyear will give you a clearer idea of how to improve your marketing strategy, regardless of market prices.

There's no lack of information out there." says Klusa. "Putting it all together to make good decisions is what takes some time and skill."

#### 2. Take a team approach

A solid marketing team will give the farm multiple eyes and ears. It will also keep decision-makers accountable to others, and it offers a built-in sounding board for ideas.

Top marketers meet with their marketing teams and review plans often, at least weekly. Together they look at the plan, update price charts and basis charts, and make sure offers are called in.

By talking about marketing out loud, a team approach helps ensure all avenues are explored, although this doesn't mean that everyone has to agree all the time.

Still, if the decision gets talked about by the team, it helps stop the blame game if a sale happens to go south. At least everyone knows what the alternatives were, and why the decision got made.

Plus, having to report to a team helps ensure that the farm's marketing plan actually gets implemented.

Team membership can vary with the farm, including farming partners, managers, children and couples, but everyone has to be knowledgable about markets and understand not only the tools available but also the farm's objectives.

A similar option is to pay for market advisory services. More farmers are concluding they can't do it all, and they're looking for help in areas where they may not have all the expertise they believe the farm needs. "As farms get bigger, and as operations become more complex, I expect more and more bushels will be managed by marketing experts or coaches," says Klusa.

For example, one of Klusa's clients last fall had low-grade chickpeas over a year old. The farmer was frustrated with trying to market them and was going to feed them in his livestock operation replacing a \$4-perbushel feed grain. Klusa kept pushing the crop into commercial channels, where they eventually sold for over \$13 per bushel, netting the farmer just under \$100,000. And that was just one minor crop on this producer's farm over a short time period.

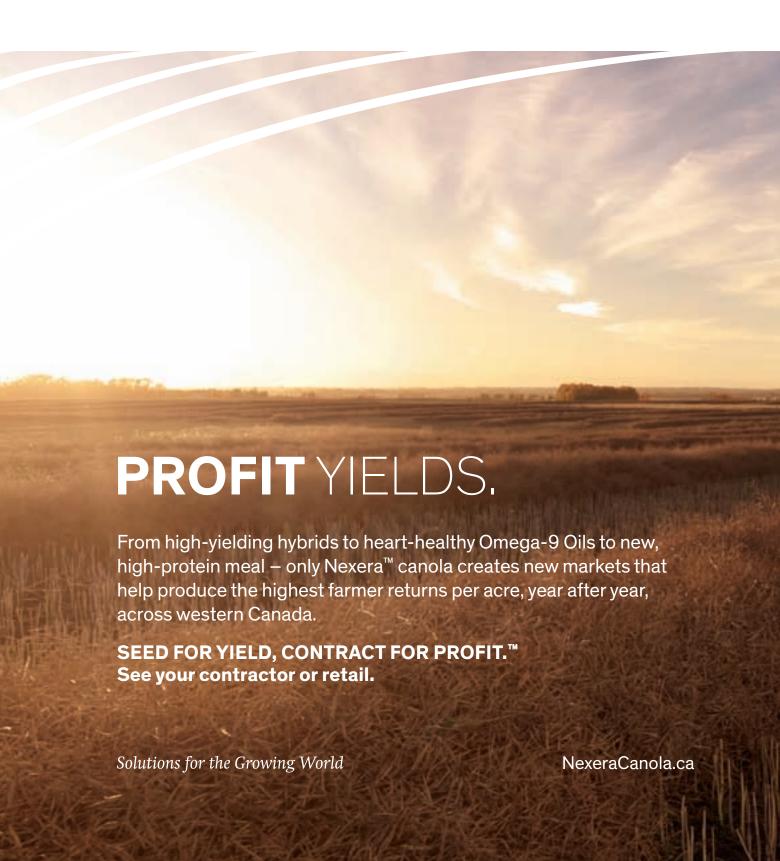
Some simply don't have the time to fully understand certain aspects of their operation (in this case marketing) and hire experts to help them. Or maybe it's just because of the large dollar amounts and risk involved with marketing decisions. Another educated voice to offer alternatives and help make decisions can be invaluable, considering the complexity of understanding various marketing strategies.

Besides, it takes a huge amount of time to stay on top of all the market information. Part of an adviser's job is to filter through information and source out new ideas. Moving from understanding the local markets to monitoring and evaluating outside influences can improve marketing but often that takes some outside help.

"There's no lack of information or opinions out there," says Klusa. "Putting it all together to make good decisions is what takes some time and skill."

Plus, all that information can create an additional danger if you don't have a system in place to review the markets and make decisions. It can be easy to become overwhelmed, says Backx. It can be easy to get confused by listening to too many experts too, and often the result is procrastination.

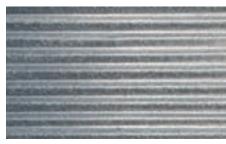
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 16** 











#### 3. Learn to use more tools

lthough you don't need to A be an expert and continually track markets, it's important to become aware of the systems and tools that are available and to be able to ask questions to build a solid marketing strategy. "Do your homework, so you can ask the right questions," suggests Derwin.

It's a leap to go from knowing that something exists to actually using it. However, it doesn't take a huge financial commitment to open a trading account. For a 3,000- to 5,000-acre farms a \$25,000 deposit would generally be enough to start a trading account, he explains, although the fees per trade or annually depend on the individual company.

"Every year it's important to try to capture value but using marketing tools is more important in break-even years. That's when they can make the difference between having a so-so year to having a disaster," Derwin says.

"Don't spend time guessing what's going to happen to the markets. Instead spend time learning ways to manage your farm's risk," he says.

All three of our advisers agree that today's Canadian farmers are more disciplined and have a better idea of target pricing and minimum price contracts. Excellent marketers also have a greater understanding of how to hedge, sell direct, and prebook contracts to counter the volatility of the markets. The farms that get more aggressive at pre-booking also use crop insurance and options to offset their more aggressive forward sales.

Using put options to price protect without having to commit to delivery is another marketing tool. Calls are used as a cash replacement or to create a minimum price contract when shared with direct delivery contracts where situations warrant. Buying put options connected to your cost of production is like buying insurance on the price falling to the point of your farm having to absorb negative margins, savs Derwin.

Derwin says that strong marketers not only look for profitable selling opportunities but also consistently protect the downside. "Can they go lower? Of course they can," says Derwin. "The question is what are you going to do about it?"

Beyond cash sales, there are three major ways to take advantage of higher pre-harvest prices: forward contracts, futures contracts and options. According to a study by University of Guelph economist Richard Vyn, strategies using futures or options tend to do better than those with forward contracts

because the price of an entire season's production can be hedged.

Yet only five to 10 per cent of Canadian farmers use futures and options, compared to a third of U.S. farmers.

Several factors have contributed to this disparity, says Derwin. The futures industry developed in the U.S. and that's where the big commodity exchanges and brokerage firms are located. So the concept has been known there longer and there's been more education around trading futures and options.

Also, Canada has a much greater on-farm storage capacity, so the pressure to sell crop off the combine is lower. Furthermore, the former longstanding Canadian Wheat Board monopoly on western grain marketing may have changed the dynamics and attitude for generations. Under the system, grain deliveries were set and staggered, so the other crops (such as canola) were often considered harvest cash commodities.

Or, the difference in our uptake of options may simply be due to societal differences, with Canadians traditionally being a little more conservative and shy to try new things while Americans are generally considered more proactive and

However, today Canada's farmers have a very different mindset about commodity marketing, particularly the younger generation. The ability to market is now considered accessible to everyone, anytime, anywhere. "It's often the younger generation who I deal with on the week-to-week transactions. They're the ones who are managing risk," says Derwin.

Don't spend time guessing what's going to happen to the markets," Derwin says. "Spend time learning ways to manage your farm's risk."





#### 4. Yes, you need a marketing plan

**I**t's one thing to know how to do something and it's another to actually do it. But if you have a predetermined written strategy using those tools, it's like starting off on a higher rung of the management ladder.

Not having a written marketing plan is one of the major mistakes farmers make, believes Backx. "That's why it's imperative that producers have a written marketing plan, with pre-determined objectives, and why they choose the target prices to sell at," he says.

With the increased volatility in the grain markets, making a series of 10 to 15 per cent (or five to 20 per cent) sales will work better than trying to hit the highs. Consistently stronger marketers often use the simple approach of incrementally selling with a combination of cash sales and forward booking.

A common mistake Backx sees over and over again is not forward contracting anything when prices are profitable, adding "One of the most common mistakes is trying to hit the home run, instead of singles."

As the understanding and comfort builds, the strategies get more aggressive and complex. They tend to forward sell more of their crop than they had prior to using our marketing services, says Klusa. The impact of a good or bad impulsive decision multiplies as farm size gets bigger.

A 6,000-acre farm sells about 250,000 bushels of grain, oilseeds and pulses, says Klusa. Changing the average price by only 50 cents a bushel changes revenues by over \$100,000.

The plan for each farm is unique and somewhat flexible depending on crop mix, grain marketing understanding and risk tolerance and looking for market opportunities and trends.

To have a successful grain marketing strategy, farmers need to have a good sense of market fundamentals or have access to someone with an in-depth understanding of the markets, says Klusa.

Better grain marketers make better decisions because they have the tools and expertise to know their farm operations, they know their farm financials, understand the grain markets and understand market timing.

And they get better over time. "As farmers become more comfortable with the information and expertise, they usually become more aggressive in their marketing strategies and tend to forward sell more of their crop," says Klusa. "This often involves using new or more complex strategies than they used in the past but, not necessarily."

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 18** 

#### These websites can help you improve your marketing:

#### www.cmegroup.com

The Chicago Mercantile Exchange is where most of the options and futures are traded so you can find pricings for your options. The charts show the base global prices for corn, soybeans and livestock. This is the source for getting a good sense of what's happening on the market daily.

#### www.barchart.com

Good online source for all sorts of charts. From what has happened to prices in the last two weeks to what price levels have done historically.

#### www.purdue.edu/agbarometer

On the first Tuesday of each month, Purdue's Ag Economy Barometer provides a sense of the agricultural economy's health with an index value. The index is based on a survey of 400 farmers on economic sentiment each month. Quarterly, the index will be accompanied by an in-depth survey of 100 agriculture and agribusiness thought leaders.

#### www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/business-andeconomics/marketing-management/

If you are looking to get back to the basics, try Manitoba Agriculture's marketing management website. Their webcasts explain how to use marketing tools including options and futures. By clicking on MarketPlan, you get a fill-in Excel spreadsheet to track marketing plan, production, and cells to include your operating and fixed costs for cost of production.

#### www.pdqinfo.ca

This site reports cash and basis prices across the Prairies in an effort to make market bids more transparent to farmers. (See more on the following page under "5. Watch the charts.")

#### www.hdc.on.ca/grain-marketing.html

Hensall District Co-op's website has cash and futures prices and general market news.

#### 5. Watch the charts

lthough it's impossible to predict what A Ithough it's impossion that the markets are going to do, it's quite possible to be aware of good selling opportunities, if you stay on top of the situation. Excellent marketers make marketing a yearround project, reviewing their position at least weekly. Some advisers suggest making decisions early in morning, before the mar-

The reality is that no one knows where the top will be, or the bottom. However, strong marketers like to know general price direction, and good market analysts will be able to tell you what market factors to watch and how these market factors will influence crop price direction. They look for trends. Charts can help identify which commodities have the best upside potential, which are likely to remain flat, and which crop prices are likely to decline going forward, says Klusa.

A good online source for all sorts of charts is www.barchart.com. It includes stock market and commodity markets and from what has happened to prices in the last two weeks to what price levels have done historically.

Even if you do not trade futures or options, do watch charts so you know where and when to place orders to get cash grain sold or new crop contracted ahead. "Selling in the top one-third of a crop's marketable price range is another key aspect to a successful marketing strategy especially when markets are declining," says Klusa.

The Chicago Mercantile Exchange is where most of the options and futures are traded so on their website (www.cmegroup. com) you can find prices for options. The charts show the base global prices for corn, soybeans and livestock. This is the source for getting a good sense of what's happening in the market daily.

Understand that timing is often more important than price. "Market timing is a very important aspect of any market strategy, especially in times of falling commodity prices," says Klusa.

However, identifying specific market timing opportunities is complicated and time-consuming and can cause information overload. Derwin suggests excellent marketing strategies focus on trends of the agricultural economy. They follow commodity trends over many years, and look for trends of stock prices of agricultural businesses. Some of the charts will show some overarching trends that can be extrapolated into future grain markets.

Risks and timing are automatically incorporated into the cost of buying call and put options. The more volatile the market and the further out you book, the higher the cost. Deciding how much that "insurance" premium is worth depends on your farm's risk tolerance.

Often strong marketers follow and chart local basis levels. The website, www.pdqinfo. ca, gives cash and basis levels from nine different Prairie regions. This information levels the playing field between elevator bids and allows for some transparency in the market, including between the large grain companies. In Ontario the basis is not as easily tracked and is highly impacted by U.S. sales.

In Ontario, basis is more difficult to follow. Basis is fluctuating more than ever, primarily due to Canadian currency swings, says Backx. "There is a very strong negative correlation between Chicago and basis in Ontario. It seems when commodities rise, grains participate," he says. "Stronger commodities (such as crude oil and metals) causes a stronger CAD, and basis gets

This is why Backx strongly recommends flat-price sales only. He says if you do only futures or basis first, and you do the wrong side first, you can get a double whammy very easily. He prefers incremental, flat-price sales on a scale-up basis as the best marketing plan. "Often there's money left on the table (such as in soybeans this year), but as the old saying goes, you never go broke taking a profit," he says.

Beyond the charts, farmers need a strong baseline of matching the farm's cash-flow needs with some sense about when is the best time to make crop sales to maximize returns. Strong farm marketers know which crops to sell first and which crops to hold, choose the right pricing vehicle at different time periods during the crop year and know when to be aggressive and when to be defensive in setting prices, applying new cropping ideas and making large capital purchases.

#### 6. Analyze your farm's potential

When harvest is over and done, excellent marketers take the time to look at their farm's overall strategy, connect with buyers and consider new opportunities.

They also review the year and look for crops they could potentially grow and learn how to grow to maximize returns, says Klusa. With that profit mindset, they consider crop rotations and inputs requirements to continue to be successful in the years ahead.

Top marketers are always on the lookout for new opportunities and synergies. Read, ask, think, listen and look around. Is there a backhaul or a new processor in the area? Did the specialty crop your neighbour grew last year turn out well? Maybe there's a chance to go together with another farmer and deliver a full load directly to a processor?

Take some time to do a new SWOT analysis focused on farm's marketing. Have a good hard look at your farm's strengths and opportunities, weaknesses and threats.

Then, together with your marketing team, start writing a new marketing plan for next year.

Let the dance begin again. **CG** 

After a sale, good marketers don't look back to see if it was the right decision," says Backx. Instead. they know they sold at a profit, and they turn their attention to finding the next profitable opportunity

### Fall forage management

#### A look at maintaining productive long-term capacity

By Trudy A. Kelly Forsythe

As fall approaches and forage stands approach near dormancy stage, it's tempting to think what's going on in those stands can be dismissed until springtime. However, if your goal is to maintain productive long-term capacity in your forage stands, experts say there are some important factors to keep in mind for fall management.

#### **Ensure good fertility**

The first is ensuring good fertility, particularly with potassium going into the fall as it helps prepare the forage stand for winter. Yousef Papadopoulos, a research scientist with AAFC specializing in forage, explains this is because as the seasons shift from summer to fall and then into winter, perennial species like forage and legumes need to become dormant.

"Potassium triggers a slowdown of growth and changes components in the soil to facilitate winter survival," he says. "It is important, especially with legumes, to avoid winter kill."

While fall potassium is particularly important, Papadopoulos stresses that good fertilization is critical throughout the year. To ensure you maintain the proper levels of all nutrients year round, he recommends doing repeated soil tests and putting manure or fertilizer on if needed.

#### **Avoid grazing**

The second is not grazing, or harvesting, during the critical rest period to allow the forages to have sufficient root reserves going into the dormant season. Papadopoulos recommends allowing it to grow into September and mid-October.

"To extend the life of a stand, you really have to not take most of what you can," he says. "Leave some growth to acclimate that stand."

This is particularly important if a farm is vulnerable to icing. "You need to accumulate good snow coverage and the growth will trap snow and the snow will help avoid exposure to cold temperatures."

#### **Choose good varieties**

Another important consideration is ensuring the forage mixtures you seed have the appropriate species and varieties to tolerate the conditions a region can expect for the winter, especially regarding freeze-thaw cycles.

"Varieties are very critical," says
Papadopoulos. "They have to be persistent
and they have to be compatible. Some are
very aggressive, especially orchardgrass as
it has something in the root that prevents
other plants from growing because they
compete with them, except white clover
because it gives them nitrogen."

Legumes are important for their nitrogenfixing capabilities and the longer you can sustain them in their stands, the better.

"When animals go in to graze, they select the very best, especially legumes," says Papadopoulos. "If they keep grazing it, regrowth becomes very slow and eventually



A productive grass-legume pasture stand (left) next to a stand with poor regrowth. PHOTO: YOUSEF PAPADOPOULOS

dies out. Let the stand overmature to allow legumes to grow and they may even flower and seed."

If you're interested in stockpiling to extend the grazing season and reduce feed and feeding costs, some species are good because they grow throughout the fall, namely bluegrass and tall fescue. Papadopoulos explains you should look for varieties that maintain their quality but don't grow beyond September and if you're going to stockpile, don't touch the field in August.

#### Ask for help

Maintaining productive long-term capacity in your forage stands is something you don't have to figure it out on your own. Papadopoulos recommends you contact an extension specialist if you have any questions.





















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#### **ALWAYS LEARNING**

But how do you learn to market your grain effectively?

Jochum chuckles. "Well, the thing is I don't know much about marketing yet. I've only been farming actively since '84 and I'm still learning."

Jochum and his wife Crystal farm along the Assiniboine River. Most of their land is a heavy Osborne clay, and they're on a "keep it simple mission," says Jochum, growing soybeans, wheat, canola, and a few oats. The soybeans looked good in this year's wet weather, he adds.

But marketing changes constantly, says Jochum, and he has to be ready to adapt.

Jochum first learned the ropes from his father, Karl, who emigrated from Germany in 1980.

After earning an ag diploma from the University of Manitoba, Jochum came back to the family farm. One of his first tasks was to market grain. He would talk through decisions with his dad first, and Karl asked the right questions to help him analyze that decision.

Jochum took more hedging courses after university. He was also an active hedger at one time, which turned into speculation, although he doesn't have a trading account right now.

Speculating is not a good way of making money, he says. He compares it to gambling in Vegas. But true hedging is a very good tool, he says, as long as you can keep the emotions out of it and know your reasons for taking a position in the market.

And being an active hedger "was a very good learning experience," he says. He learned how much the markets move around. He learned about the forces at play — fundamentals such as weather, crop quality and volume, and speculators who don't grow crops but still trade it.

Speculators might read something in the news about the upcoming canola crop and buy or sell based on that information.

"Those people influence my grain prices as well," he says.

Critcher and her husband, Barry, have also been farming for over 30 years, and they've seen their share of changes in grain marketing, too. In the past, farmers basically hauled grain to the local elevator and got a price the day they delivered, she says.

"You left the marketing or the buying up to somebody else."

The end of the Canadian Wheat Board's single desk signalled big changes in marketing wheat, but the Critchers had started taking charge of their own marketing



You have more vested interest in marketing your own grain than anyone else will have."

Irmi Critcher

before that shift. In fact, the Wheat Board also picked up on that trend, offering farmers different marketing options, which the Critchers took advantage of.

"We started comparing prices. We started seeking out new opportunities."

Critcher also learned through the marketing packages offered by line companies. Farmers could commit a specific tonnage or acreage to the program. The company takes the crop, protects its position with puts and calls, and then the cost of those options comes off the farmer's final cheque.

Critcher says they've opted for this two or three times with different companies over the years. They commit a small percentage of their expected production to see what the company can do for them.

"You don't know whether you're doing the best job unless you can compare it to something," says Critcher, explaining it's partly about seeing what they can learn from other people.

Critcher learned that the person representing the company was vital to making the service work. It's about how seriously they

take their job, she explains, as well as the farmer's relationship with that person.

Critcher says she also realized they could do it themselves as long as they paid attention to the markets.

"Their vested interest isn't necessarily to make you more money. For them, it's probably to source more grain and have more clients. So you have more vested interested in marketing your own grain than anybody else will have."

#### **MARKETING ROUTINE**

Each morning Barry Critcher gets a market report, which zeroes in on different events around the world. He also checks commodity prices throughout the day, and gives Irmi the playback.

The Critchers also get text messages with market updates up to three times a day, and they periodically check the Alberta Wheat Commission's Crop Data and Price Reporting website. They also sell feed to dairy producers in the lower mainland, so they keep an eye on feed prices as well.

Critcher says watching global markets and news is also important. Problems with Brazil's soybean harvest will eventually affect the canola market, she says. Markets react to the USDA report before it even comes out, in anticipation of what the report may contain. And political events, such as the Brexit vote in the U.K., also "filter down into our markets."

"You have to be able to anticipate a few things and read into things," she says.

Jochum used to get a lot more market reports via email, but these days he focuses on one daily email. That report tells him about global fundamentals. It's also big on incremental selling, which is something he does.

If it's a "wild day," Jochum checks the markets with his smartphone. But because he aggressively forward-contracts grain, he can go on holidays without worrying about markets.

Jochum doesn't hedge or speculate these days. Instead, he uses run-ups in prices as opportunities to forward contract with local elevators.

"I never want to be caught in a situation where all of a sudden I have to pay for crop inputs and I have no cash, but I have bins full of grain so now I'm forced to sell something in order to pay for crop inputs," he says, explaining why he prefers to forward contract grain.

"I like to have empty bins and have the money in the bank." His ultimate goal is to have his whole crop combined, marketed, and off the farm by November 1, something he came close to achieving last year.

Once Jochum reaches the point where he's comfortable with how much he's already sold, he pays less attention to the markets. But if something makes a big move —for example, soybeans in his area topped \$13 per bushel this summer — he'll "open up the vault again and let some more go."

Both Jochum and Critcher see marketing as a year-round activity. And the Critchers also sell in increments, and like to have some movement during harvest. Usually they have about 30 per cent of their crop contracted before it's even in the ground.

Critcher says they sell their increments by super-B loads. For example, with canola, they could sell 80-tonne increments, which would take into account dockage, she says.

Markets fluctuate so much that by the time a farmer picks up the phone to make a deal, the price could drop again. To get around this, Critcher prefers to have targets in, rather than trying to pull the trigger when the market hits the price she wants. Once her target hits, the computer picks it up and the company contacts her, she explains.

Usually they put in targets with more than one company, she says. But she cautions that if two people are entering targets, they need to keep track of what the other person is doing. Otherwise they could have several targets hit at once, and end up with more grain contracted than intended.

The Critchers' son, Michael, returned to the farm from college a few years ago. He's gearing up to take over the farm, and is getting his feet wet with marketing, too.

One gets the impression that marketing is a job the entire Critcher family enjoys. Irmi Critcher says that when several people are interested in marketing, it's important to designate one person to make the contracts to avoid confusion. The rest of the team can then feed that person information, she adds.

#### **BEYOND ONLINE MARKETING**

These days farmers can do much of their grain marketing online. In fact, they don't even have to be in the country for some of it. But both Critcher and Jochum see relationships with elevators and other buyers as important.

The Critchers are a short haul from Dawson Creek or Fort St. John, B.C. They also sell some grain to Rycroft, Alta., which gives them more options and access to big throughput elevators.

Marketing grain starts with knowing what you have. Critcher says they participate in the Canadian Grain Commission's Harvest Sample Program, which provides farmers with unofficial grades, and other quality information, for free, And before hauling a load into the elevator, they bring in representative samples to see if they can make a deal. If they can't, then the Critchers start setting targets for that grain.

Critcher also emphasizes the importance of being honest about what you've got to sell. If you have poor-quality grain, tell the elevators that it's poor quality, and ask what they can do for you, she says. In those cases, farmers need to be "willing to take a little bit

of a hit on it because you know they'll have a job finding a market for it," she says.

Having a relationship with those elevators is especially important when it's time to deliver, says Critcher. Contracts may include clauses that outline deductions if the delivery isn't quite up to the company's specs. But sometimes the quality can be averaged out over the total tonnage, rather than each load. Or the elevator may take something that's a little lower quality if the farmer is delivering something that's higher quality later on. You've got to keep those lines of communication open, Critcher says.

There are several line companies and feed mills in Jochum's area, and they compete aggressively for farmers' grain. But Jochum still sees relationships with those buyers as vital.

And like any relationship, there has to be a little give and take. He's not afraid to sign contracts that require delivery during busy seasons, whether that's seeding, harvest, or even Christmas holidays.

"When they call us for grain, we try to accommodate them every time. And by doing that, you build a relationship."

Because he's quite accommodating, he says he feels comfortable walking into the office of any line company to discuss a problem. "It works very well. But it takes a little time to build that trust."

Ultimately, Jochum doesn't see marketing as an onerous task. Like most farmers, he is driven by the anticipation of growing and harvesting a crop. But selling that crop is a big part of it, too.

"I love marketing," he says. **CG** 



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### Buyer's choice

BY RICHARD KAMCHEN

ith the competition heating up among farmers trying to sell their grain, and also among the elevators trying to buy it, relationship building between buyers and sellers has never been more important to business success for grain and oilseed producers.

It's why dropping in to say a friendly hello every few months is no longer enough. Today's elevator relationships take a lot more finessing.

If that sounds like something you don't want to do, just be forewarned that your neighbours are already several miles down this road.

"As farmers become bigger and bigger, they're spending more time on marketing, and definitely spending a lot more time on building relationships with end-users and various grain companies throughout the province," agrees Richard Smibert, president of Ontario's London Agricultural Commodities Inc.

The competition is fierce across the country. On the Prairies, says Wynard, Sask. producer Norm Hall, the days of a grain elevator every few miles, or multiple elevators in an average community are long gone. Also consigned to the past are over 100,000 small operations in his province. There were just fewer than 37,000 farms in Saskatchewan in 2011, but their scale is now immense.

"Instead of the 1,500-acre farmer versus the 500, it's now the 15,000-acre versus the 5,000," says Hall.

The grain trade is still built on a handshake and a lot of trust. In fact, with such tight margins in the industry, many elevators have more riding on trust today than ever before.

#### Getting and keeping your farm on your elevator's 'first-call' list is harder than ever

It's why they want to do business with farmers they know, and why they're looking for forthright operators who will provide a good sample and deliver exactly what they've said they will.

"If you say you've got this quality and you deliver something else, you're not going to be on that list," says Hall. "Once is a mistake, but two or three times in a row and you quickly go off that preferred list."

Elevators are looking for sound farm management practices. They want producers who grow good clean crops that are high quality and contamination-free, Smibert says.

In return, farmers who come through stand to benefit. "We do some contracting of food grade soybeans here in the province, and we have certain growers that we call first because we know they do a good job — they grow good-quality grain," says Smibert. "Well-managed farms and the producers that take the extra steps to do a really good job likely receive higher yields and higher

You're only as good as your reputation, and a high standing can put a farmer up the list of people the elevator calls, giving them a better chance of moving their crop even in tough years.

premiums for their product."

"I need your help here, but I can help you out somewhere else down the way," explains Dan Mazier, who farms near Brandon, Man. "That elevator company's got to fill up a train, and if you're the guy that has that grain and quality, you might get your contract in. But you helped them out on one side and usually they do remember you."

If a company has a shipment that needs to be made and orders to fill, they'll text and email producers. If they're in desperate need, they'll put on a special price, and those first in line will get it.

"But if there's a real special on, you will get a phone call. And that's the preferential treatment," says Hall. "Once you have that relationship, then they will work with you on maybe a better price."

That's especially true if you have what they need.

"In a low protein year, if you have high protein, and you're on their list, you'll get the phone call," says Hall. "There's times when other qualities don't matter. If you've got a No. 2 high-protein (wheat), and they're shipping a train load of No. 1 and they need to bump that protein up in the grain they already have, it doesn't matter if yours is a No. 2, you'll get a No. 1 and high protein (price) for it."

It's never a bad idea to keep in touch with the elevators.

"We get calls from producers at different times telling us what they have, what they see for grades and quality in the bin. And if there are markets that we're looking for something specifically, we'll know who to call right away," says Smibert.

Mazier says there's a lot of fishing done by farmers and elevators throughout the year.

"It's not too bad an idea to every couple weeks talk to your grain buyer, see what's going on with the markets. Even though you're reading the emails, etc., you can't beat the conversation, hear what's coming up. And they're always probing too, how the crops are growing. They're tapping our shoulders to make sure they're in touch with us too, because they're trying to plan out for the next 365 days right now," Mazier says.

There's more communication between producers and elevators than ever in the past, in no small part due to technology.

"With the Internet, documents can be sent back and forth very easily; with text messages, you can shoot messages out to the producer when he's in the field with his smartphone," Smibert says.

"There's definitely more coming from the elevators because if you've got an email or text, they're shooting out messages every day," Hall notes. "And if you're dealing with a few like I am, your phone's ringing all the time." CG

#### What can you ask for?

Grain companies are also taking more time and investing more in the effort to cultivate relationships with the farmers they want to deal with.

"Many have teams dedicated to this and they spend a lot of time working with their country staff to ensure as consistent and as customer-responsive an approach as they can," says Wade Sobkowich, executive director of the Western Grain Elevator Association. "The grain companies operate in a competitive environment, and to do otherwise would be to risk losing that producer to a competitor."

"I think it's probably more important now than ever," adds Smibert. "You definitely have to be out talking to those producers on a regular basis and making sure they're aware of what's going on in the marketplace and letting them know what's available.

"If you don't get out there and talk to producers, there's a good chance one of your competitors is. There's a chance they will get the business if you don't do it," says Smibert.

While farmers will shop around for the best price, elevators can offer myriad other benefits to attract their business, Sobkowich says. That can include contract options and ways to mitigate risk, and they can also include financing, plus more efficient ways of doing business, with e-services becoming increasingly important, Sobkowich points out.

Ancillary services such as trucking are also getting included in the value calculation that grain companies will offer.

"I've gotten calls over the years that they're short, they know I have the grain in the bin, and 'can you bring it over or can we send a truck over to finish it up?" says Mazier.

Of course, relationship building can cut both ways, and this is a particularly bad time for an elevator to have a bad rep.

When farmers feel burned by an elevator, they'll hesitate to have further dealings with them, Hall says. Conversely, a farmer with a good relationship

with a particular elevator is more likely to want to sign more deals.

"If that means going a few more miles, you're compensated for the other side because it's just a better place to deal with," Mazier says. "It's no different than if you want to go to your local Superstore or you want to go across town to Costco: It's wherever you see the value you feel good with."

"For many producers it comes down to the relationship and trust with the local elevator manager/agent, all other things being equal," Sobkowich says. "The relationship both ways is important. Companies tend to go the extra mile for those that can deliver on a moment's notice, deliver in all conditions, and consistently deliver the quality that was contracted."

The grain industry can enhance its reputation when it steps in during a crisis, like when Triffid was found in flax, or a frost wipes out a crop, Mazier says.

A late May frost last year wiped out canola in a wide swath of southern Manitoba, and the industry reacted immediately.

"There was a million acres gone in Manitoba alone for canola. And the seed companies, their input suppliers stepped up. They were out going to Alberta picking up seed the next morning after the frost... In two days they had the seed in Manitoba; within a week it was already sown," Mazier says.

"Whether you're dealing with the chem dealer, fuel dealer or whoever, it's all about the cultivated relationship that you have," Hall adds.

It's when expectations aren't met that Mazier, as president of Keystone Agricultural Producers, gets a lot of calls, either from farmers or elevators.

And when the system breaks down because not everyone was involved in the decision-making — like the western rail transportation woes of 2013-14, or this year's sudden closure of the Port of Churchill — that trust is tested and bad feelings emerge, Mazier says.

### Selling direct

Small, direct-market farmers are building better business cases for their farms. But will business smarts be enough?

#### BY SHANNON VANRAES / CG FIELD EDITOR

llison Fenske pulls a reluctant grey cat off her dining room table to make room for her jars of homemade pea-shoot pesto, pickled beets and spicy slices of jicama turnip.

She points to the turnips. "Jonathan says he always tells people you can eat them the way you'd eat an apple, and I was like, yeah right," she says. "But sure enough, you can. They are really tasty and you could absolutely eat them raw."

Born and raised in the city, Fenske works as a lawyer at the Public Interest Law Centre and lives on a tree-lined street in Winnipeg's West End. But like many young, urban professionals, she is interested in knowing how her food is grown and who is producing it, even though she is employed far outside the agricultural world.

Jonathan is Jonathan Stevens — owner of Jonathan's Farm and one of a growing number of small-scale producers in Manitoba and across the country who are building their businesses by selling directly to consumers like Fenske, rather than dealing with third parties, brokers or wholesalers.

Stevens is also, in the view of Charlie Touchette, part of a new generation of direct marketers who are often driven more by social and ecological ideals than economic outcomes.

Touchette, executive director of the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, says that when his organization was founded 30 years ago, most farmers who chose direct marketing were looking for an alternative to the slim profit margins in traditional farming.

"The whole idea of farm-direct marketing or marketing directly to the consumer is born out of economic survival," says Touchette. Even 10 or 15 years ago, direct marketing was primarily tied to slashing the high costs of machinery, labour and land associated with largescale commodity farming.

"So farm-direct marketing or direct to the consumer marketing emerged as a way to capture more of the marketing dollar, not just the farm or agricultural dollar," Touchette says. "And I think it's fair to say that economic evaluation, the ability to successfully earn a living on the farm, is still what captures many farmers attention."

But not always.

Touchette has been noticing a substantial shift within the younger generation of direct marketers over the last five or 10 years. New direct marketers tend to see the relationship between the farmer and the consumer as a starting point rather than a final destination, he says.

They want to farm and they want to deal directly with customers who appreciate their labour of love. They want to connect with consumers who understand their love of growing produce or flowers, for instance, or starting up a brewery and growing their own grains and perhaps even their own hops, Touchette says.

As a philosophy, Touchette believes, it's fine if it is also accompanied by a solid business plan — even if it ruffles the feathers of an older generation.

The problem is that many people now jumping onto the direct farm marketing bandwagon don't have either a background in farming or a business plan, he says.

"What I am seeing as a trend in new entrant farms... is farm businesses that aren't surviving after they get rolling in the strong numbers they did 20 or 30 years ago," explains Touchette. "With this new philosophy, the outcomes are starting to look a little bit like the business model you see with new restaurants, where for every one business that is surviving five years, 10 or 12 of them have started but then weren't able to maintain their business and closed."

In many ways, Jonathan Stevens is that idealistic new entrant farmer, even if he has beaten the odds by not just surviving for six years, but thriving and growing.

"I actually grew up in the city, so I have no background in farming at all, it was just something I was really interested in," he says. "Every time I went out to the country I could just feel that pull, and that idea of growing my own food was really appealing to me - doing that kind of work was something I was just drawn to."

"So I took that interest in organic farming and small-scale farming and I went to Ontario where there is a lot of that and worked there for a summer, learning how it all worked, then I decided to give it a try myself," he says, speaking while on the road near Selkirk, Man.

By his own admission he didn't have a business plan when he launched, and even now he isn't particularly formal in preparing for the year ahead. That said, eco-



The first year, it probably wasn't a living wage," direct farmer **Jonathan Stevens** admits. Now, with several seasons under his belt. he's targeting \$300,000 a year in CSA sales

nomics have become more important to him as the business grows — he now budgets for four employees, buying seeds and compost, and paying down the mortgage on the 13-acre farm he purchased just north of Winnipeg last year.

In the long term he wants to expand and buy some machinery to lessen the burden of tasks like digging up garlic or potatoes. He would also like to take a vacation at some point, he says drily.

"I don't really have a plan and I didn't really think too much about the making money part of it when I started it, I just thought I would give it a try and see how it went and see what I made. It just felt like something I wanted to do," Stevens explains. "The first year, it probably wasn't a living wage... I lived a pretty simple life and there was just enough for me. The next year I grew and I think I hired one person."

He attributes the success of Jonathan's Farm to choosing the community-supported agriculture model or CSA, where customers buy a share or half-share in the farm before the growing season even begins, with the promise of fresh vegetables every week for as many as 18 weeks. Each full share costs the consumer \$587. This year he sold over 300 shares and his goal is to eventually be able to provide for 500 shares, which would push his enterprise gross into the neighbourhood of \$300,000.

But Stevens knows all too well that not everyone who tries their hand at market gardening succeeds.

"Whether they have a CSA, or just go through farmers markets, I've seen a lot of people start up and then after a few years realize they're still not making any money and they've been working themselves really, really hard, and then they give it up," he says. "I think there definitely is a knack to it, and I think you have to be in the right market for it."

#### **ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

How many Canadian producers engage in direct marketing?

It's impossible to tell — at least for now.

Historically, neither Statistics Canada nor Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have collected information on direct marketing.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 31** 

#### An opportunity for larger farms?

The growing gap between consumer demand and the ability of the farm business community to meet that demand presents a dangerous vacuum for small farmers, believes Charlie Touchette, executive director of the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association.

It could, he says, become a vacuum that gets filled by corporate entities rather than local producers.

As he sees it, farms that got into direct marketing in order to preserve farming as a lifestyle are coming under threat.

"My concern would be that there is a big enough consumer demand that a non-farm, non-back-to-the-earther, nonagricultural or a non-traditional farm corporation, such as something that might be designed on Wall Street, could actually become the farm-direct marketing of 20 years from now," Touchette says.

Farmers who see themselves as backto-the-landers, making a romantic and possibly short-lived attempt at commercial farming may exacerbate that production shortfall, inadvertently paving the way for big-box stores to capitalize on a local aesthetic, rather than actually promoting local food production, says Touchette. Even large amusement parks could hop onto the bandwagon.

"You could one day have a Six-Flags that offers something very similar to the agrotourism farm down the way, a pickyour-own pumpkin patch for example," Touchette says, adding that he isn't trying to be provocative, but rather wants to encourage direct marketers to take a hard look at their industry.

"I despise fear-mongering, but I don't mind slapping ourselves upside the head with a two-by-four once in a while," Touchette says.

Phil Veldhuis, the association's Manitoba president, says the fact that large chains are attempting to latch onto the ideas of local, healthy food is a sign that direct marketers have succeeded in getting their message out to the consumer.

"But I don't think they are fooling

anyone," says the beekeeper. "No one who goes to a grocery store that's decked out like it's a bistro in downtown Montreal really thinks that they are."

Consumers who are passionate about local foods won't be sucked in by supermarket schtick, Touchette agrees, but he says middle-of-the-road consumers who could go either way might be caught up and confused by such marketing. If that happens it will be direct farm marketers that lose out.

Back in Allison's Fenske's tidy Winnipeg kitchen (see main story), it's clear she is one of the passionate ones, drawn to direct marketing because it offers something even the most creative advertiser can't recreate — a real and personal relationship with the farmer who grows her food.

"One of the things that's really interesting for us is that we get to learn about vegetables that we probably wouldn't have bought if we came across them in the grocery store, so we are getting to try new things and be a bit more creative in our meal planning," she says, adding it's also drastically reduced the amount of food that goes to waste in her home.

"Now when we are sitting down to have a salad or to roast some veggies for dinner, there is not that distance between the immensely hard work put into growing the vegetables that go on our plate," she explains. "So all the fermenting and pickling is really just a direct response to me not wanting to waste a single thing — when you are just grabbing a box of mushrooms off the shelf in the grocery story for whatever reason it doesn't resonate the same way, I mean I never feel good about wasting food, but now that we have an actual farm and a group of people to connect it to, I just feel a really strong sense of responsibility to make the most out of everything we are so lucky to be provided with."

Those like Fenske who buy shares in Jonathan's Farm don't just get vegetables, they get a weekly newsletter with updates, recipes, news about farm employees and information on what to expect in the week ahead. They can also follow the farm on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, and most importantly they have the opportunity to meet Jonathan in person or visit the farm.



But social media is doing more than just helping producers like owner Jonathan Stevens tell their story and make sales, it's challenging the very idea of what the farm gate is, creating confusion as farmers and regulators work to redefine parameters around first sales.

"Sometimes the regulations don't take into account how the world has changed." says Veldhuis. "Does a farm gate sale include a Facebook post that is read by your friend list? I don't think we have thought very much about how we define the farm gate in the 21st century."

That is of particular consequence for producers who offer value-added products to consumers such as jam, ice cream, cheese or even meat products. While regulations are important for food safety and consumer confidence, they also have to be modern and easily understood.

"One of the reasons our organization has come into existence has been to try to create a dialogue on some of those issues," Veldhuis says.

However, amid all the regulations and trials that come with direct farm marketing, Touchette says there is something else the small farm offers, which can't be forgotten in the quest for success.

"I do like to remind those of us in agriculture that the rest of the public does not solely associate farms with food and vice versa," he says. "I would like to submit that as farmers we also grow fun. And that is how you hit the real sweet spot as it applies to farm-direct marketing... so let's not get so up on our high horse that it's only about food, only about fuel or fibre, because it is about fun, and anything else you want to talk about that hopefully maintains good stewardship of our farmland and our farm families."

However, that's about to change as the federal government recognizes the growing interest in the practice of direct marketing.

For the first time in its history, the Census of Agriculture posed a question to producers about direct marketing this spring. The results will be published May 10, 2017.

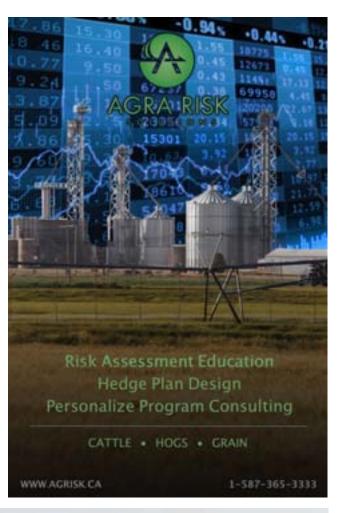
"As a new question there is no previous data upon which to base trend conclusions," said a spokesperson with Statistics Canada. "As well, we will not be able to provide the revenues generated by those sales."

Some information can be gleaned from individual provinces and a federally commissioned survey conducted in 2007, which asked farmers if they sold any of their products directly to consumers. The now-dated results found that 25 per cent of Canadian farmers sold at least some of their output at the farm gate, a two per cent increase over a previous survey conducted in 2004.

The same survey found that Manitoba had the lowest number of farmers who used direct marketing, a mere 16 per cent compared to 53 per cent of farmers in British Columbia, 39 per cent in New Brunswick and 43 per cent in Nova Scotia. The survey also indicated that 72 per cent of farmers in Newfoundland and Labrador used direct marketing, but cautioned the results were based on a very small sample group in that province.

For Crystal Anderson-Baggs, a market development officer with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador's forestry and agrifoods agency, that figure sounds a little low.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32





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We've seen a lot of new farmers starting up, which is exciting." says Kalynn Spain. But will those farms succeed. or are they just building a market that grocery stores and other food giants will learn how to exploit?

"I would think it's probably a little bit higher, but that is an educated guess," says Anderson-Baggs. She calls direct marketing "a very important tool, it's the majority mechanism that our farmers use here in the province, given the size of the industry and the geography of the province. Most producers do avail themselves of direct marketing, whether it's direct to the end-consumer, or the use of CSA, or direct to the culinary market."

While few farms in Newfoundland are close to the capital St. John's, smaller centres also favour directly marketed farm goods because they can provide a way to compensate for underdeveloped supply routes, says Anderson-Baggs. There is also a longstanding cultural basis for direct marketing throughout the Atlantic provinces.

"We have smaller farms and they are able to find suitable markets nearby, without having to necessarily depend on the St. John's market," says the development officer. "And buying things local is a part of our culture in terms of rural Newfoundland and Labrador."

While no solid numbers could be found for direct marketers in Alberta, the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association says their membership has declined in recent years.

"It's kind of a tough one to answer in terms of numbers, in a way," says president Jason Andersen. "Our membership levels are down slightly and I think in general there are fewer growers out here. The thing

is we are getting fewer new growers, a lot of the older growers are beginning to retire, but nobody is taking over — as far as the vegetable end of it goes."

Population density plays a part in limiting the growth of direct marketing in Alberta as well, according to Anderson, co-owner of Kathy's Greenhouse near Lloydminster.

"You've got a rural population and a lot of them are already doing their own gardens and everything else anyways, so it's kind of pointless for someone else to come in and try and set up a direct marketing operation in some of these areas," he says.

Geography also plays a role in Manitoba, which has the lowest levels of direct marketing in Canada. Phil Veldhuis, president of the freshly minted Direct Farm Marketing Association of Manitoba and a local apiarist, says it's one of several factors influencing the ability of a farm business to sell directly to the consumer.

"We really only have one large urban centre and there are not that many farms clustered around it, compared to southern Ontario where there are a lot of large or larger urban centres that have farms close by, where they can access things like farmers markets," says Veldhuis. "Another factor would be the climate. If you are in B.C. or Ontario there are apples and other fruits that we don't have here, so there will be some types of farms that just can't exist in our harsh climate."





Anecdotally, however, he believes that direct marketing is growing in Manitoba, especially when it comes to community-supported agriculture.

Kalynn Spain would agree.

The founder of Small Farms Manitoba, which offers direct marketing tools to small farm businesses, she says she has seen the number of small farm businesses that rely on direct sales grow in recent years. But she is also worried that these farms won't be able to keep up with consumer demand.

"Over the last two years I have really seen the demand for local food increase," she says. "I think the awareness in Manitoba and beyond is growing... but when it comes to the sales and the livelihood of the farmers, that's still quite slow to catch up. We've seen lot of new farmers starting up, which is quite exciting, but we also need those farmers to succeed, so just because we see farmers markets starting up or we see new farmers, it doesn't mean that those are extremely successful." **CG** 







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#### The seven laws of success

hat is success? How do we define it? How can we achieve it? Personally, my definition of success has mainly to do with becoming the best person you can be. I believe we all have a contribution to make on Earth, and we should use our talent to improve the world around us...

I also believe that success is a journey. You don't wake up one morning and say, "Wow! I'm successful now."

But that's just my definition. What is yours?

Almost all my life, I have lived on a farm. As the daughter, sister and spouse of farmers, I am very attached to the land and nature. But as a coach and psychologist, my purpose is to help my clients be more successful.

The first question to ask is, "Why do I pursue success?" Why do you want to become famous or buy a bigger car, more land, or a huge house? Yes, it's because we want to be happy. But we should look at the way we pursue happiness and ask ourselves if those things are really working for us.

For many people, success means money, prestige and beauty. However, the pursuit of those extrinsic values or "success symbols" is associated with anxiety and depression. What if I don't get appointed to that board, or if I lose my beauty, or if I have to sell the cottage?

We should ask these questions because the pursuit of intrinsic values such as personal growth, autonomy, competence, relationships, morality and ethics really are correlated with well-being. So, success and happiness are all about those intrinsic values.

Sometimes we should pause and look at what we can do to reap success more abundantly. I've found seven laws apply to success in life.

#### **LAW 1: VISION**

Just as farmers need to know what they want to harvest in order to prepare the field, we need a vision for success. What do you want to harvest? What does success look like?

#### **LAW 2: KNOWLEDGE**

Farmers have to know their soil and their environment. You cannot plant just any seed. You have to plant what is right for your land. Farmers increase the probability of an abundant crop if they know their soil and climate, and if they work in harmony with them.

Know yourself and your environment. Focus on your natural talents and be honest about weaknesses. Also consider those around you. Know your people's needs too.

#### **LAW 3: PLANNING**

Farmers must plan ahead of time — where, when, how. They have to evaluate the resources they'll need.

It is the same with success. You need a plan to achieve your goals. What are the resources you need in order to be successful?

#### **LAW 4: PREPARATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Farmers have to prepare the equipment and maintain it all year long so that everything is in shape when they need to use the equipment. They also have to prepare the land for the seed.

How do you prepare yourself for success? What do you need to maintain your body and your brain?

#### **LAW 5: FERTILIZATION**

Farmers have to know what kind of fertilizer will assure the most growth and be good for the soil. If they push too hard, they could have a wonderful harvest for one year but jeopardize the harvest in the future by depleting the soil. Similarly, we can overwork ourselves and burn out. Good farmers know the best management practices to protect against pollution while maintaining a fertile soil in the long term.

How do you nourish yourself and others around you? How do you know if you are pushing yourself or your employees too hard? How do you fertilize your relationships? How do you achieve work-life balance?

#### **LAW 6: OBSTACLES**

Farmers have to walk their fields and manage the obstacles they find. Weeds or pests can threaten the harvest. Controlling them with the right products in the right dose is essential. Farmers often seek help from the experts in order to deal with the unknown.

Consider your goals and the obstacles you will encounter along the way. You will have to stop, reflect, and ask for help and support. Challenges are part of life. We have to deal with them rather than avoiding or denying them. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

#### **LAW 7: EVALUATE AND CELEBRATE!**

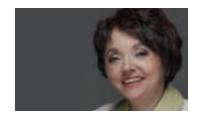
Many times throughout the season, farmers will walk their field. They will savour the experience, contemplate their options, evaluate how things are going, and make adjustments for the next season based on what they learn from the land.

You have to evaluate how you are doing along the road and adjust your course accordingly.

For many generations, farmers used to celebrate after the hardest period of work, when the harvest was finished.

Celebrate steps along the road to success with the people who help and support you.

When we take the time to look and learn from nature, we find it has a lot to teach us. CG



Pierrette Desrosiers, MPS, CRHA is a work psychologist, professional speaker, coach and author who specializes in the agricultural industry. She comes from a family of farmers and she and her husband have farmed for more than 25 years. Contact her at: pierrette@pierrettedesrosiers.com. www.pierrettedesrosiers.com

PG. 40 The West has one of the world's best systems of weed surveys. Here's why it matters.

PG. 44 Check out Country Guide's compendium of free. web-based spreadsheets that can be great tools for your farm.

## CROPS GUIDE

# GROWING YOUR OWN N

New research in Saskatchewan proves forage rotations of only two years can provide a valuable fertility boost

#### BY JULIENNE ISAACS

hen Duane Thompson talks about sustainability, he makes no bones about the fact that nothing is sustainable unless it's economical for the farmer.

"Sustainability is a nice notion but you want to be improving and getting better," he says. "I'm not really big on sustainability — I want to be sustainable-plus."

Thompson is a case study for how a focus on sustainable management practices can actually be profitable in

**Drought at Swift Current affected** the study results, but over the long term, red clover should also provide advantages when included in the rotation in drier areas. the long run. He runs a mixed crop-livestock operation on 8,000 acres near Kelliher in Saskatchewan's Aspen Parkland. For the last 15 years, he's made it his mission to increase soil organic matter on every one of those acres by including forage legumes in the rotation.

His formula: he runs five to seven years of clover or alfalfa, followed by oats, canola, wheat, barley or oats, and peas. If the field is not being seeded to forages after that, it gets canola again followed by wheat. Some fields run on 14-year rotations.

The result is a significantly decreased need for fertilizer inputs (he's grown over 60 bushels of canola per acre on 30 pounds of N), and improved water infiltration and soil organic matter (the latter, in some fields, by a factor of three).

"The system is more than economical. We have fourfold increased our land base and increased our cattle by a factor of 10 at least," he says. "My kids are coming back to the business and it's exciting to say we can support more houses on the land base."

A five- to seven-year stint of forage legumes in the rotation is not possible for every producer. But new research in Saskatchewan proves forage rotations of only two years can decrease N fertilizer costs.

#### **NITROGEN BENEFITS**

An Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) study, "Short rotation forage legumes for reducing fertilizer costs in Saskatchewan," aimed to quantify N fertility remaining in the soil after two years of forage legumes that could be available to subsequent annual grain crops (in shorthand: NFRV, or N fertilizer replacement value).

The study, a collaborative effort between the Western Beef Development Centre (WBDC), Swift Current's Wheatland Conservation Centre and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, ran from 2010 to 2013 on sites with a wide range of soil types — Swift Current (brown soil zone), Saskatoon (dark brown), Lanigan (thin black), and Melfort (black).

Rotations included alfalfa-alfalfa-wheat-canola, red clover-red clover-wheat-canola, barley-pea-wheatcanola and barley-flax-wheat-canola (control).

"After two years, the average cumulative net return on the alfalfa rotation (\$346 per hectare) exceeded the control rotation (B-F-W-C), and the red clover rotation (\$236 per hectare) was competitive with the control rotation (\$298 per hectare)," concluded the study.

The results did depend on location, says study lead Paul Jefferson, vice-president of operations at the Western Beef

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 36** 

The system is more than economical. We have fourfold increased our land base and increased our cattle by a factor of 10 at least." Duane Thompson

Table 1. Year 4 (2013) canola yield and value differences between rotations and locations

	A-A-W-C	RC-RC-W-C	B-P-W-C	B-F-W-C
	PER HECTARE			
SWIFT CURRENT				
Yield (kg/ha)	1,399	1,044	861	1,154
Yield as % of Control	121%	90%	75%	100%
Value of Additional Yield	\$104.58	n/a	n/a	
SASKATOON				
Yield (kg/ha)	1,908	2,269	1,521	1,421
Yield as % of Control	134%	160%	107%	100%
Value of Additional Yield	\$207.88	\$361.98	\$42.69	
LANIGAN				
Yield (kg/ha)	1,824	2,556	1,946	1,448
Yield as % of Control	126%	177%	134%	100%
Value of Additional Yield	\$160.50	\$472.96	\$212.58	
MELFORT				
Yield (kg/ha)	3,274	2,610	1,927	2,697
Yield as % of Control	121%	97%	71%	100%
Value of Additional Yield	\$246.30	n/a	n/a	

This table from the Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund study shows the 2013 extra yield value of four-year rotations including alfalfa, canola, wheat, barley, peas and red clover at four locations in the province. Development Centre. The highest NFRV came from Melfort, which had excellent moisture in the years of the study. The lowest came from Swift Current, where there were drought problems during the trial years.

"Producers can see the advantage of using more legumes, not just for pasture rejuvenation and hay yield but to improve their cropland and their neighbours' cropland," says Jefferson. "Also it can produce high-quality feeds. A lot of guys aren't mixed farming anymore, but we thought, 'if producers have an annual crop neighbour, can they make an agreement with them?""

Jefferson says forage quality was excellent with the study's alfalfa and red clover, and in a straw blend they could be valuable to cowcalf operations. In Saskatchewan, where rain during hay harvest can wreak havoc on quality, high-quality forages can be used as a feed mix with lower-quality hays.

"It's not a complex system. Producers only have to look at utilizing a crop they know well, using these crops in a different way," he says.

#### **PHOSPHORUS AVAILABILITY**

University of Saskatchewan soil scientist Jeff Schoenau was also involved in the study, analyzing phosphorus cycling and availability for short-rotation forage legumes, as well as NFRV.

He agrees that for many annual crop producers, five to seven years may be too long to have forage legumes in the rotation, but a couple of years could still offer significant benefits for nutrient availability.

In the ADF study, forage legumes didn't have a negative impact on P availability due to their deep-rootedness — their ability to draw P from deeper in the soil. "Despite the fact that forage legumes remove phosphorus from the soil, we didn't see a depletion or drawdown of P pools in the soil, which indicated that those legumes helped maintain P fertility," says Schoenau.

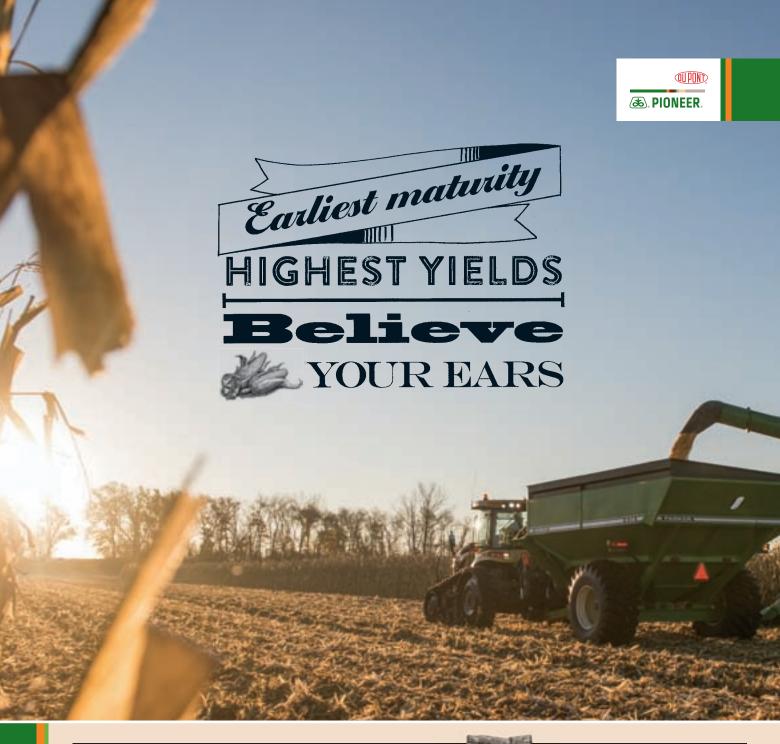
Over the long term, however, forage legumes are high users of P and some other nutrients, and if annual crop producers are having they will eventually have to replenish what they remove. "But there's an opportunity to benefit from the soil improvement qualities of legumes in rotation to bring in some fixed nitrogen, to recycle some nutrients from depth, and in cases where we have excess water, these legumes help lower the water table," Schoenau says.

The upshot of the study: depending on soil zone, there can be significant nitrogen benefits from including forage legumes in the rotation, even in the short term.

For producers like Thompson, it's a technique that could be called "sustainability-plus." CG







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## Taking fertilizer beyond yield

Plant breeding is the ultimate solution but in the meantime, foliar fertilizer shows promise in reducing micronutrient deficiency

BY SHANNON VANRAES / CG FIELD EDITOR

hile many people are focused on the fight to end hunger, Ismail Cakmak is focused on the fight to end hidden hunger. "Hunger is a lack of food and that is related to food security," Cakmak told participants during a special seminar at the University of Manitoba this summer. "But hidden hunger means lack of the vitamins and minerals in a given food. So we have to distinguish food security from nutrition security."



The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's HarvestPlus program is supporting several projects to add micronutrients to crops, such as this zinc-fortified wheat flour in India.



This map from the International Fertilizers Association indicates that many of the world's soils are deficient in zinc.

While the so-called Green Revolution did a great deal to increase yields, the push for bigger harvests also had unintended consequences, said Cakmak, a professor of molecular biology, genetics and bioengineering at Istanbul's Sabanci University. For one, it diminished the amount of nutrients in staple grain crops, such as wheat and corn.

"During the Green Revolution we focused always on the new genotypes having high capacity to produce more yield, make more grain, and more starch in the grain... but during that time we didn't pay sufficient attention to the nutritional value of the products that they produced," Cakmak said.

In wealthy, developed countries where vast quantities of animal protein are consumed, micronutrient deficiency isn't a problem, he explained. But in poor, developing nations where people eat little animal protein, diets are unable to compensate for the low level of micronutrients found in wheat, corn and rice.

"After a certain amount of time, deficiency problems with micronutrients develop because in the developing world, due to socio-economic reasons people eat a lot of cereal-based foods," said the professor.

In some regions of the world, 75 per cent of people's daily caloric intake comes from cereal crops, he said.

#### **INTERIM SOLUTION**

While developing new cultivars better able to take up micronutrients like zinc, iodine and iron is one possible solution, Cakmak said that plant breeding is a slow, longterm process that won't offer relief for decades. Fortification could provide very short-term relief to hidden hunger, but would be too expensive to maintain.

"Tell me, how can we implement such a solution in the rural areas of India? You cannot," he said. "Supplementation, fortification can be a good solution, but it is a short-term solution."

Even with better cereal varieties, micronutrient-deficient soils could still defeat the best efforts of plant breeders, he said. About 40 per cent of the world's agricultural soils have some type of nutrient deficiency, he said.

"Zinc deficiency and iron deficiency are very common problems in agricultural soil," he said. "Today nearly 50 per cent of cereal soils have zinc deficiency... now imagine that you are growing these cereals on

such deficient soils, you further reduce the plant's ability to take up zinc."

"There is also close overlap between human zinc deficiency and soil zinc deficiency, and when you have zinc deficiency problems in the soil, then you have another problem, an agronomic problem, the seed has poor growth."

#### **FOLIAR APPLICATION**

But Cakmak said there is a third option in the works. It would see farmers apply micronutrients as a foliar fertilizer.

"When we apply zinc not to soil, but to foliage, to leaves, shoots, you improve (wheat's) zinc concentration by 85 per cent, sometimes 100 per cent," said the professor, adding the new and unpublished findings come from his work with the HarvestZinc Fertilizer Project.

HarvestPlus Program, which is largely funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, HarvestZinc was launched in 2008 and is now in its third phase. Researchers are testing newly developed zinc- and iodinecontaining fertilizers on wheat, rice and corn in China, India, Thailand, Pakistan, South Africa and Brazil.

"So this biofortification, this enrichment of the food crops with micronutrients is a really hot topic today, because up to five per cent of gross domestic production is lost just because of micronutrient deficiency in some countries."

"That's huge," said Cakmak, adding child mortality is also strongly linked to hidden hunger.

However, while wheat responded exceptionally well to foliar applications of zinc and iodine applications, they raised zinc levels in rice by only about 20 per cent, and corn saw no substantial improvement.

What most interests Cakmak is not just that foliar zinc applications increase zinc in wheat, but that it specifically increases zinc levels in wheat endosperm — the most widely consumed portion of the grain.

"When you spray zinc after flowering time... there is a fantastic, very nice increase. You can get the zinc in the endosperm part

Medicine and agriculture must work together... but the only real solution for micronutrient deficiency globally, has to come from the agricultural sector."

Ismail Cakmak

up to 50 ppm. This is a very good increase, very nice in terms of human health," he said, noting that humans require zinc to process more than 3,000 different types of protein.

"In the end, agriculture will be the solution to this problem," he said. "Medicine and agriculture must work together... but the only real solution for micronutrient deficiency globally, has to come from the agricultural sector." CG



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## Why weed surveys matter

Regular inventories across the Prairies provide a valuable indication of emerging problems

BY CLARE STANFIELD / FOR THE WGRF

very decade or so since the mid-1970s, scientists at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), with the help of many others, have co-ordinated and compiled weed surveys in each of the three Prairie provinces, counting, mapping, noting changes and marking trends.

The most recent survey was conducted in 2014 and 2015 in Saskatchewan, with financial assistance from Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF), the Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund, the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers and others.

"The last time we did it here was in 2003," says Julia Leeson, weed monitoring biologist with AAFC in Saskatoon and the principal investigator with the survey.

Weed populations change gradually, so the roughly 10-year gap between surveys is ideal for revealing trends and changes in weed composition, density and

The 2014-15 Saskatchewan weed survey showed that the top three most abundant weeds — green foxtail, wild oats and wild buckwheat — are still the top three, in that order, as they have been since surveying began in the 1970s.



Spiny annual sow thistle is now the No. 6 weed, up a full 28 spots from the last survey.

PHOTO: G. GRAHAM, NB DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

But Leeson noted some pretty big changes, too. "Canola moved up to the No. 4 position from No. 14," she says, adding that it ranked within the top four weeds in all crops except canola, mustard and oats. "But that's not too surprising when you look at how canola acreage has expanded. It's actually the No. 1 weed in pulses."

Seeing kochia on the move northward is also not too surprising, but that it held steady in the No. 15 position is perhaps a bit of a stumper until you remember how wet 2014 was. Those conditions, says Leeson, would have knocked kochia back during a survey year, skewing the results a bit.

"I suspect it's more abundant than this shows," she says, adding that kochia's expanding range and herbicide-resistant populations are still big causes for concern.

There were a few lesser-known weeds that raised some eyebrows. Spiny annual sow thistle, for example, clocked in at No. 6. "That was surprising because it came up so far, a full 28 spots from the last survey," says Leeson. It's one of four weeds that have been on a steady rise since the '70s, the others being barnyard grass (No. 12), round-leaved mallow (No. 22), canola and false cleavers.

#### **UP 33 SPOTS SINCE THE '70S**

With false cleavers now taking the No. 7 spot (up six places from 2003), we see a prime example of what surveys can tell us about how the weed landscape changes over time, says Leeson. "It's gone up 33 spots since the '70s." She attributes this to range expansion and says that further movement south was documented in the 2014-15 survey. The weed is now in the top seven for spring wheat, canola and barley growers, and in the top 25 for durum, oats, flax and peas (it's No. 26 in lentils).

Leeson also has her eye on the No. 9 weed, narrowleaved hawk's-beard. "It's had a huge geographical shift since the last survey," she says. "It went from being found only in the northwest to everywhere. It started to increase in the '90s, which correlates to the widespread adoption of conservation tillage."

That kind of information is more important than it might seem at first blush. A leap in abundance of some weed species can be an early warning for resistance-management challenges to come, because resistance is, generally speaking, a numbers game — the more abundant a weed is, the higher the chances of resistance developing.

And while it's interesting to learn which weeds are moving up in the overall rankings, Leeson says that that's just one part of the picture. "Producers fill out a management questionnaire so we can look at their data and link it back to the weeds in their fields," she says.

This layering of knowledge — understanding how different crops and management systems affect weed populations and distribution - is at the heart of why AAFC does weed surveys and why it's important work.

Leeson says there are 182 weed species in the Saskatchewan database alone. Having all that historical information to draw on and using it to see how weeds are changing over time, and how farming practices and inputs may be influencing those changes, helps weed scientists develop studies aimed at finding sustainable management solutions that farmers actually need.

It would be easy to get complacent about weed surveys. Let's face it — this isn't the "sexy" kind of science that will lead to some snazzy technological breakthrough.

But it is foundational science that, oddly, sometimes struggles for funding, despite the important weed research that it underpins. "This survey wouldn't have gone through without WGRF," says Leeson. "People all over the world are envious of what we do here. The weed survey data is used to justify and direct weed research so that it's beneficial to farmers." CG

#### People all over the world are envious of what we do here." Julia Leeson



Narrow-leaved hawk's-beard is now found across Saskatchewan, probably due to the widespread adoption of conservation tillage.

PHOTO: PICH 7OLLINGER NDSLI

The following funders supported the 2014-15 Saskatchewan weed survey:

- Western Grains Research Foundation
- Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund
- Saskatchewan Pulse Growers
- · Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture
- Canada-Saskatchewan Growing Forward 2

WGRF is a farmer-funded and -directed non-profit organization investing in agricultural research that benefits western Canadian producers. For 35 years the WGRF board has given producers a voice in agricultural research funding decisions. WGRF manages an Endowment Fund and the wheat and barley variety development check-off funds, investing over \$19 million annually into variety development and field crop research. WGRF is the largest producer funder of research in Canada.



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## **Boosting** nutrition in gluten-free foods

Peas, beans and lentils provide a healthy option to corn starch and rice flour

#### BY ELLEN GOODMAN / CIGI

he Canadian International Grains Institute has been investigating the use of pulse ingredients as a way to improve nutrition in commercial gluten-free food products, and to add value to Canadian pulse crops.

Currently halfway through its four-year project called "Development of Gluten-Free Products Using Pulse Ingredients," Cigi has incorporated pulses in tortillas, pan breads and most recently, crackers. Other upcoming products include pasta and noodles.

Gluten-free foods are usually high in starch mainly from the use of rice and tapioca, ingredients that are also low in fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals, says Heather Hill, project manager of pulse flour milling and and food applications.

Since the project began, Cigi has been in contact with commercial gluten-free processors to gain insight into any production issues and requirements, Hill says. Processors are open to including healthy ingredients such as pulses to increase nutritional levels but are concerned about taste and functionality of the final products. Feedback from a survey of gluten-free consumers also indicated that flavour and nutrition are of prime importance.

Hill says Cigi has evaluated gluten-free domestic products and ingredients to help determine quality targets and formulations for the inclusion of pulses. "We evaluated ingredients for bread and then developed a gluten-free product with 30 per cent and 50 per cent



Cigi pulse technologist Gina Boux says incorporating yellow peas in food products such as crackers offers a chance to add value to the crop.

pulse flours. We found that fababean flour worked very well for high-quality colour and crumb structure comparable to the gluten-free control or even better."

Most recently, three different pulse crackers were developed and evaluated against a control cracker sample made from ingredients commonly found in a selection of commercially available gluten-free crackers. Cigi found that when the industry standards (i.e. corn starch and rice flour) were used as the main ingredients, the control cracker was low in nutritional quality.

Pulses technologist Gina Boux says crackers are a practical choice for gluten-free product development with pulses.

"For crackers you don't need the gluten strength that you would typically need for pan bread or even tortillas or pitas, and it is easier to experiment with more savoury ingredients."

#### **LENTIL/PEA/BEAN BLEND**

For the pulse crackers, pea fibre and three 50-50 blends of pulse flours were used: whole yellow pea and split red lentil, whole yellow pea and precooked navy bean, and split red lentil and precooked navy bean. To produce the crackers, the pulse ingredients were combined with the gluten-free ingredients used for the control sample. These included brown and white rice flour, corn and potato starch, and corn flour in addition to egg powder, vegetable shortening and salt.

Although there is some concern that pulse ingredients may introduce strong or undesirable flavours, blending pulse flours appears to limit specific pea or bean flavours or the perception of such flavours, she says.

The addition of pulse flours and pea fibre resulted in crackers that were firmer and thicker than the gluten-free control, although firmness decreased after seven days. Crackers made with yellow pea and precooked navy bean had the best texture, producing the thinnest cracker, and those made with yellow pea and red lentil flour had the most desirable flavour.

"We typically use yellow pea in our formulations because we grow them the most in Canada and are trying to add value to the crop while red lentil, which gives a nice peppery flavour, is also a common pulse type grown in Canada," Boux says.

All the pulse crackers had an increased nutritional profile, especially in fibre content, and tasted better than the control cracker although there are some challenges with cracker texture, she says. "The biggest thing when developing these products on a lab scale is achieving the flavour. If they taste good and nutritional content is improved, that's a great start. Then a commercial processor can steer you in the right direction on improving the texture." **CG** 





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### There's a spreadsheet that can do that

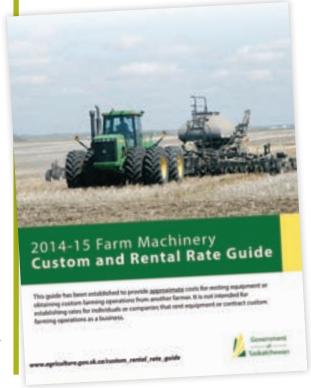
Provincial farm management staffs have developed tools for everything from converting bushels to tonnes to planning a whole year's cropping plan

BY JOHN MORRISS / CG PRODUCTION EDITOR

martphones and their apps may be handy for some purposes, but they're not tools for making detailed calculations, especially the kind that you have to take to your banker.

That's where you're better off with an old-fashioned Excel spreadsheet, and thanks to government extension staff in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, there are many adaptations where you can plug in data to help make better short- or long-term decisions on your farm. They're especially useful for "what if" decisions on whether purchasing equipment or inputs improves profitability. Buy more cows? Use more nitrogen? Rent more land? There's a spreadsheet for that, and more.

Each provincial agriculture department lists all it calculators on a single page — to find these visit the home page for each and search for "calculator" or the name of the specific one listed. We've grouped them in four categories - crops, livestock, nutrient management and financial management, listing the provincial source for each spreadsheet.



Sharing equipment or renting from a neighbour? This guide by the Saskatchewan and Manitoba departments of agriculture helps determine a rate.

#### **CROPS**

#### • Marketplan (Manitoba)

Allows input of costs and estimated returns for each crop and a profitability and breakeven analysis for the crop year.

#### • Crop planner (Alberta)

This planner allows producers to input their own values for yields, prices, fixed and variable costs.

#### • (MB) MyFarm crop production cost calculator (Manitoba)

Estimates the annual cash cost of producing field crops. Contains the department's annual estimates but farmers can plug in their own numbers.

#### • Crop enterprise analysis tool (Alberta)

Helps evaluate crop enterprise profitability by calculating production costs, break-even selling prices, gross margins and returns to equity.

#### CropChoice\$ (Alberta)

Downloadable software program provides Alberta producers with information to calculate expected total margins and probabilities based on soil and moisture conditions, along with long-term yield and price expectations and crop insurance data.

#### • General purpose seeding rate calculator (Alberta) Use this calculator to decide how much seed

you need to plant to obtain the desired plant population and calibrate your seeder.

#### · Seeding rate calculator for peas, pulses and other large seeds (Alberta)

Use this calculator to decide how much seed you need to plant to obtain the desired plant population and calibrate your seeder.

#### · Canola reseeding tool (Manitoba)

Calculates plant stand from damaged canola and evaluates possible market returns versus Manitoba crop insurance payouts.

#### • Forage seed mixture calculator (Alberta)

Grassland species are normally seeded in mixtures rather than monocultures. This calculator will calculate a mix and estimate a seed density for drills or broadcast seedings for any grouping of plant species in the list.

#### • Grain shrinkage calculator (Alberta)

Calculates losses from moisture evaporation and may be used with any type of grain including wheat, barley, corn, beans, sunflowers, canola and flax.

#### **LIVESTOCK**

- Bale grazing calculator (Saskatchewan) A tool to help producers estimate the cost of feeding livestock with bale grazing.
- Beef cow-calf plan (Saskatchewan) A five-year annual projection for an existing beef cow-calf operation.
- Cattle feeding break-even calculator (Saskatchewan) A tool to help producers make business decisions.
- Costs and returns for grassing cattle calculator (Saskatchewan) A tool to help producers make business decisions.
- CowPlan cow replacement cost calculator (Manitoba) Estimates income from replacement cows at various purchase and production costs.
- Crop residue calculator (Saskatchewan) A tool to help producers estimate the costs of feeding livestock with crop residue.
- Economics of commercial fertilizer for hay and pasture (Saskatchewan) Calculates the cost and return of fertilizing hay and pasture based on average fertilizer efficiency and costs.
- Ewe planner (Saskatchewan) A five-year annual projection for an existing sheep operation.
- Feed value calculator (Saskatchewan) Calculates the relative value of feeds based on current market prices of four reference feeds.
- FeedlotPLAN (Saskatchewan) A tool used to make five-year annual projections for a new or existing backgrounder and/or finisher operation.

- · Grain silage greenfeed calculator (Saskatchewan)
  - Determines the costs of producing a crop of cereal grain, cereal silage and cereal greenfeed.
- Swath grazing calculator (Alberta) Provides a cost comparison between conventional wintering feeding systems and swath grazing.
- Barley silage calculator (Alberta) Calculates the value of a barley crop as standing greenfeed and provides a value for the silage.
- Hay share calculator (Saskatchewan) Calculates the cost of producing baled hay and the value of standing hay.
- Beef feed value calculator (Alberta) Helps price livestock feeds based on both energy and protein content. Depending on feed ingredient proportions of digestible energy and crude protein, feeds can be priced based on the contributions they make to the ration.
- Feeding systems cost evaluator (Alberta) Compares the costs, on a dry-matter basis, of pit silage, bagged silage, bale silage, and dry hay. Calculates the costs from a standing crop to animalready product in the yard, factoring in standing crop value, equipment costs as well as field and storage losses.
- Creep feeding calculator (Alberta) Helps determine whether creep feeding will be economically beneficial. Often, the decision is based solely on "the weight gain" expected. This calculator will show the economic gain expected.
- Beef breed investment calculator (Alberta)

Computes the NPV value for a breeding beef female.

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Manitoba Agriculture's MyFarm crop production cost calculator contains a "what if" function to estimate effects of various changes on profits.

#### NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

 Nitrogen rate calculator for wheat, barley and canola (Manitoba)

Evaluates different net return-per acre scenarios involving N source and cost, the expected crop price and soil nitrogen (nitrate-N in lbs./ac. to 24").

• Phosphorus balance calculator (Manitoba)

> Allows farmers and their crop advisers to input actual yields and applied P fertilizer rates used in the crop rotation. The P balance is automatically calculated using P removal book values from the Manitoba Soil Fertility Guide to show if soils are being depleted, maintained or built up with P.

• Grains, forage and straw nutrient use calculator (Alberta)

This calculator will help you understand how much nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulphur, and calcium your crop will use for a given yield.

• Forage and crop nutrient calculator (Saskatchewan)

> Calculates the relative value of nitrogen, phosphorus (as phosphate) and sulphur based on the market price and nutrient content of reference fertilizers.

• AFFIRM V2.0 software (Alberta) Helps make fertilizer nutrient decisions based on soil test results, crops to be grown, soil moisture conditions, agroclimatic regions and economic factors of crop prices

and fertilizer nutrient costs. • MMP V0.310 software (Alberta)

Helps make manure nutrient decisions based on livestock operation, storage capacity, application equipment, land base, soil test results and crop selection

 Manure transportation calculator (Alberta)

> Can be used to determine the net impact of using (transporting and applying) manure or chemical fertilizer as a nutrient source in selected fields under different rotational systems.

• Ammonia emissions estimator (Alberta) A simple tool for a quick ammonia loss calculation. Accurate ammonia loss estimates from manure are needed to improve nutrient management recommendations and to test the value of ammonia abatement techniques.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 46** 

· Ammonia losses from liquid manure applications (Alberta)

Estimates ammonia emissions due to liquid manure application and the economic value of the ammonia volatilization loss based on fertilizer nitrogen cost.

 Manure composting calculator (Alberta)

> Determines the amount of carbon source material and water needed to create a good compost mix.

#### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

· Crop share lease calculator (Manitoba)

> Allows calculation of owner/ lessee costs and returns basis four split methods.

• Land rent calculator (Alberta)

Calculates the cost of land rent using four methods: income approach, cost approach, crop share approach and contribution approach.

• Alberta farm input prices (Alberta)

> Monthly survey of prices of farm inputs including presentation in graphical and tabular formats for the past five years.

· Grain bin and farm building rental cost planner (Manitoba) Calculates the annual costs

of bins and buildings. • Farm machinery custom rental rate guide calculator

(Manitoba and Saskatchewan) Provides approximate costs for renting equipment or

obtaining custom farming operations from another farmer, or to establish the value of the machinery and/ or farming operation that is being contributed to each farm.

· LoanPlan — loan calculator (Manitoba)

Calculates principal and interest payments for different rates and repayment periods, and shows savings from accelerated principal payments.

• Dollars/bushel/tonne converter (Alberta)

> Converts between dollars/ bushel and dollars/tonne for various grains.

• Test weight converter (Alberta) Converts back and forth between kg/hL and lbs./bushel. CG





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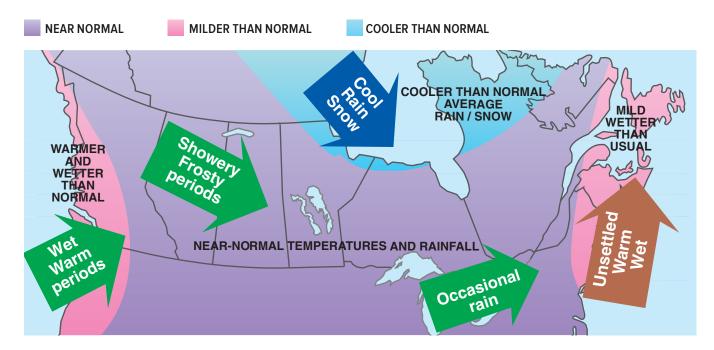
and marketing



Brought







#### **British Columbia**

- Sept. 11-17: Warm temperatures most days but some frost occurs at higher elevations and north. Scattered shower or thundershower activity, more common in western areas.
- Sept. 18-24: Highs often crest in the 20s except teens on the coasts. Frost is common at higher inland regions. Showers or rain on two or three occasions, mainly west.
- Sept. 25-Oct. 1: Fair overall except for a couple of windy, wet days especially west and north. Snow and frost at higher levels. Seasonable with inland frost pockets.
- Oct. 2-8: Seasonable to occasionally cool. Blustery winds. Frost at several inland locations. Fair but occasional rain west changing to snow north and in the mountains.
- Oct. 9-15: Weather and temperatures fluctuate as fair days and seasonable temperatures interchange with windy, cooler, wet days. Intermittent heavier snow higher levels.

#### Alberta

- Sept. 11-17: Variable temperatures with a few warm days but also nighttime frost at a few localities. Rain or showers and blustery winds on two or three occasions, chance heavy in places.
- Sept. 18-24: Highs reach the teens, some 20s with patchy frost on one or two cooler, clear nights. Fair skies alternate with rain or showers. Cooler, wet north.
- Sept. 25-Oct. 1: Disturbances bring changeable weather with gusty winds and heavier rain on two or three occasions. Frost on a few nights. Wet snow at some northern localities
- Oct. 2-8: Often fair with seasonable temperatures but frost on a few cooler nights. Expect periodic rain on a couple of days this week changing to snow north.
- Oct. 9-15: Unsettled on a few days as weather systems bring rain and windy conditions south and wet snow central and north. Nighttime frost most areas.

#### Saskatchewan

- Sept. 11-17: Sunny and warm days are interrupted by rain on a couple of days this week. Patchy frost on one or two nights south, more common central and north. Blustery at times.
- Sept. 18-24: Temperatures vary but average near normal. Fair overall but rain or showers and brisk winds on a couple of occasions. Frost occurs on a few nights.
- Sept. 25-Oct. 1: Conditions fluctuate as mild, fair days alternate with cooler air and occasional heavier rain. Blustery. Frost is common on a few clear, cooler nights.
- Oct. 2-8: Fair with seasonable temperatures but cooler, windy outbreaks bring some rain on a couple of days to the south and wet snow to the north. Frosty nights.
- Oct 9-15: Fair and dry conditions interchange with cool, wet days. Windy at times. Cool in the north with occasional rain and snow. Several frosty nights.

#### Manitoba

- Sept. 11-17: Often sunny and warm. Blustery. Lows dip to near zero on a couple of cooler nights. Scattered shower activity with a chance of heavier rain in places.
- Sept. 18-24: Fair skies and seasonable most days south but frost patches on a couple of nights. Intermittent rain on a couple of occasions, more common and heavier north.
- Sept. 25-Oct. 1: Variable as fair, mild days interchange with cooler outbreaks, blustery winds and occasional heavier rain. Frost occurs on cooler, clear nights.
- Oct. 2-8: Northerly winds on a few days result in wet, windy, cooler conditions across most regions. Chance snow north. On fair days temperatures reach near normal.
- Oct. 9-15: Weather conditions vary as mild, dry days alternate with wet, cooler days. Chance heavier rain south changing to wet snow in northern regions.

#### **National** highlights

#### September 11 to October 15, 2016

As days shorten and milder air is displaced by cooler intrusions in this period, look for changeable weather across the country. On average, however, we expect near-normal temperatures and rainfall from eastern British Columbia all the way across to the Atlantic provinces. In most of these areas, frost will make its first appearance of the season and snow will return to far northern regions. In contrast, summer-like conditions are anticipated over coastal British Columbia and the Maritimes. However, occasional storminess and frequent rain will accompany this warmth.

Prepared by meteorologist Larry Romaniuk of Weatherite Services. Forecasts should be 80 per cent accurate for your area; expect variations by a day or two due to changeable speed of weather systems.

## **INSPIRED** BY DISNEY

Andrew and Jennifer Lovell turned this small U-pick into a thriving farm market and entertainment destination, using the magic of Disney's marketing psychology

#### BY MAGGIE VAN CAMP / CG SENIOR EDITOR

lthough neither of them had been raised on a farm, Andrew and Jennifer Lovell bought the shares of a farm corporation four years ago. The farm was a small orchard near Keswick Ridge, a half-hour west of Fredericton, N.B., and when they took over, it was only 37 acres of apple trees, a quarter acre of raspberry bushes and a 4 x 6-foot shack for weighing the U-pick produce.

Today, River View Orchard is a bustling farm entertainment and school-trip destination. It has a contract to supply produce to four grocery stores and the Lovells have added snow removal and deer fence-building services for other growers throughout the Maritimes.

Today's River View also has 50 acres in production, including pumpkins, squash, cucumbers, apples, strawberries, raspberries, sunflowers and even a corn maze.

And on top of that, the Lovells have also become this year's Outstanding Young Farmers for the Maritime

It's an outcome that Andrew Lovell traces to an initial insight. Buying an existing business, he says, is 10 times easier than starting from scratch.

The insight is based on business experience he had already acquired before he even saw their future farm. After graduating from agricultural college, Lovell had started a cabinet-making business, and later a landscaping business.

Buying an existing business, he decided, would mean he could focus on their primary goal. "At least you've got some cash flow and you don't have to go prove it to everybody, digging and scratching," Lovell says. "You've already got revenues. All you've got to do is get some more."

And get more they did. Lovell projects that next year their gross revenues will be up 500 per cent since they started farming five years ago.

They did that by taking care of details, by seeking out



new ideas and opportunities, and by making changes with people-centric thinking.

The Lovells are a team, with Jennifer also working off-farm as a nurse while Andrew empowers their employees to be creative and self-motivated. And with every change, he tries to understand the emotional needs of his customers, using human behavioural patterns first to draw them to the farm, and then to engage them to spend money.

It's the psychology of marketing, but Lovell says it's just about treating people well. It was a lesson he learned while reading Creating Magic: 10 Common Sense Leadership Strategies from a Life at Disney by Lee Cockerell, former executive vice-president of operations for the Walt Disney World Resort.

"The idea behind it," says Lovell, "was to never say no. You might not be able to give them exactly what they want but people appreciate that you try to accommodate them."



The first challenge was the limited production capacity of the small patch of raspberries, which meant they could only open every other day in the summer. This frustrated customers, and for Lovell it was important to look at that frustration, not the production capacity of the farm, as the major problem.

So in 2013 they expanded the raspberry production area to 1.3 acres and planted two more acres of apples, However, the next winter, both were destroyed by deer so the expanded raspberry area was not productive until 2015. They also built a new parking lot and a more professional farm market stand.

That summer, they also bought a

wagon to take the customers out to the trees, which has proved to sometimes be more important to their customers than the actual fruit. "We get calls asking if we are the farm that gives free wagon rides. They're thrilled to take their kids on a wagon ride... And then they'll spend \$30 or \$40," says Lovell.

They also reached out to schools, charging only \$3 per head to go on a wagon ride and pick apples. Lovell says they kept the fees low, but in exchange asked the schools to put their logo on their mail-outs. In 2012, 250 students come to their farm and four years later about 1,200 students are booked six weeks in advance for \$6 per head.

The idea behind the school program was that the children would bring their parents back on the weekend. "Our focus is getting the kids' attention," says Lovell.

Today they focus on the farm experience that they provide. In other words, it's about entertainment as well as production.

In 2014 they built a giant, 24' x 30' sandbox, fenced in and loaded with toys, and they added picnic tables for the parents, and now they even have a big bouncy castle. They dug a duck pond and the resulting ducklings this year are a big hit. When his 11-year-old son wanted to raise a calf for the summer, Lovell built a paddock and now the calf gets petted all the time.

The farm also has a two-acre corn maze that takes about 25 minutes to walk through, compared to a couple of hours for most mazes, says Lovell. They went with a smaller one because they knew it was too much for the maze's target market: children under 10.

He also managed to leverage some free advertising out of the corn maze this year by making it in the form of local radio station's logo in exchange for some on-site broadcasting.

The farm has expanded its products and now grows cucumbers for pickling plus pumpkins and squash, with everything selling for a premium. They sell the pumpkins for \$6 each in a market where the local grocery store charges \$3.99. Their berries are often more expensive than any other local ones too.

But they aren't only selling the fruit, Lovell explains. Customers are paying for the experience too.

This year the Lovells have taken children's engagement and the school program to another level. In the spring, Lovell and the farm's retail manager provided soil and seeds to three schools and taught kindergarten to Grade 5 students how to plant pumpkins, while explaining basic agriculture. The students took care of the seeds, watering daily until the plants were at transplant stage. Then they came

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 50** 

#### Help for new farmers

#### Clearly, some provinces are better than others

Many provinces have loan and grant programs to help young and beginning farmers during farm transfers and through the higher-risk start-up period. Programs are designed to assist in the purchase of a farm and can complement other sources of lending, like Farm Credit Canada and other financial institutions.

To qualify for these programs, eligible applicants typically cannot own or have owned a farm. Their business plans must show that demand exists for the products and that the farm can be viable. As well, applicants must have an acceptable credit history, plus security for the proposed financing.

Usually eligible applicants also need agricultural knowledge and business skills.

New Brunswick's new farmer loan program is particularly encouraging. The Agricultural Development Board provides loans of up to 100 per cent of the appraised value of security, to a maximum of \$750,000. During the first four years, it's an interestonly loan and the new entrant may apply for additional funds for expansion or improvement (not exceeding a total of \$750,000). From then on interest and principal payments are blended, amortized up to 20 years at the provincial lending rate.

With Manitoba's Bridging Generations Initiative, farmers (aged 18 to 39) can opt for either 90 per cent financing or five years of interest-only payments. Also, they can apply for a two per cent rebate on the first \$150,000 of principal for the first five years of an MASC loan (with a lifetime maximum rebate of \$15,000).

Quebec has a similar interest-free program for five years, while the Alberta Farm Loan Program is 1.5 per cent for five years, contingent on limited net worth. Nova Scotia's FarmNext program is a direct benefit program covering interest payments for a few years up to a maximum of \$30,000.

For a full listing of the new farmer loan programs and links go to www.farmstart.ca and search "beginning farmers provincial."

out to the farm, transplanted them into the field and each row was marked with a sign stating which class planted them.

The students are so excited by the project that they dragged their parents to the farm to check the progress of their pumpkin plants. While they're there, the family picks berries, and maybe buys some other fresh produce.

The message is, if you engage the children, the parents will come.

As another example of people-first thinking, they bought a four-seater Polaris Ranger to transport older, less mobile people to the trees so they could pick apples too. As well, the retail manager ensures parents with strollers get help carrying in the produce. These customers really appreciate the extra service that allows them to participate and they tell others how they were looked after. "It's all about treating people with respect," says Lovell.

Referrals like these have been their main form of advertising, and that extends into social media. The farm's Facebook page has 4,100 followers of which 32 per cent are women aged 35 to 44. "These mothers are the target market of the farm. They have 10-year-old kids that want to be entertained and they also do much of the food shopping for their households," says Lovell.

Sunday afternoon and evening are the busiest time for Facebook so he posts either Saturday evening or Sunday morning before opening the store. He also pays for boosting the post, which you pay for by the click and says it's well worth it. He also posts with a picture, and has found doing that always gets more clicks.

Connecting to customers on social media takes time and commitment but the results can be staggering. For example, one week in July the River View Orchard's Facebook page had 31,000 views and 125 new likes. That's not bad for a province with only three-quarter million people, and for a farm whose closest urban centre, Fredericton, has fewer than 60,000 people.

Treat people well and they will treat your business well, Lovell says. That includes engaging them personally, not just selling to them. It also includes empowering employees.

Lovell gives full credit for the farm's success to his staff, especially production manager Dale Voutt and retail manager Barb Hoit. Not only do the managers take care of the crops and the retail store, they hire, train, fire, set wages and manage other employees. Neither Voutt nor Hoit were farmers but both worked in related fields. Voutt came from the forestry industry and Hoit worked in a greenhouse.

Both managers love the work, learn quickly, and are self-motivated and creative. Lovell continually asks for their input, and is repeatedly impressed with their thoughts and ideas. "Everyday we talk, but both managers know what has to be done and do it," he says.

On-farm markets demand close attention to detail. Not only does the farm have to be productive, it also has to have the look of a place that produces quality, says Lovell. He insists the grass is mowed like a lawn, and the tractors are washed and waxed daily. "I want customers to think quality when they see our farm," Lovell says.

Voutt crop scouts almost daily and only uses pesticides when needed on the berries. Hoit takes care of the customers and is constantly coming up with new ideas to make them happy and to draw people in.

Meanwhile, Lovell is busy looking for opportunities, doing sales and delivering to customers, and he sits on several agricultural committees. He's the guy who asks the questions no one else seems to be asking.

For example, a few years ago he asked folks at the department of agriculture about growing Fuji apples in the Maritimes, but no one in New Brunswick was growing them and the idea was dismissed. So he asked other people, found an early strain and planted 300 trees that are now starting to produce. "Just because no one's doing it doesn't mean it won't work," he says.

Lovell often looks south for ideas, and says Cornell University is an amazing resource for their apple research and extension. A lesson Lovell learned in the landscaping business was to always go looking for ideas in other places, other provinces and other industries. "Always embrace new technology and ideas. If you don't, you'll go stagnant and die," he says.

On-farm marketing tends to lend itself to experimentation, partly because they can do it in small increments and they have a ready test market right on site. For example, Lovell has tried growing a small plot of sweet corn but learned that they couldn't sell it.

However, Lovell isn't one to let failure get in the way of trying. For a year and a half he tried to connect with Sobeys, calling and getting shunted around until he finally connected with the corporation's "Buy Local" manager. After asking a bushelful of questions, he came to the understanding that it was a matter of finding a solution between price competitiveness and maintaining farm margins.

He learned to see the world from the grocery retailer's perspective, and to see that they shared a lot with him as a farmer. Like him, the stores are mainly concerned with how they're going to fulfill customers wants in a market where price is part of that equation. "They need to make enough money for their shareholders to be happy, and yet compete with (the) Costcos and Walmarts of the world," he says.

This fall he's going to supply four Sobeys stores with five acres of pumpkins and two acres of squash. He views it as an add-on to his core on-farm sales. "It's a way to increase revenues without increasing my debt load for infrastructure," Lovell says. "It'll help pay for some overhead, through diversification, and allow us to get back into a more comfortable financial position."

New ideas often start with trying to create more revenue from the same fixed assets. Similarly, he established snow removal contracts for the farm's tractors and other equipment.

The farm also sells imperfect apples to hunters for deer baiting, which it advertises on Kijiji. Normally orchards dump bait apples in old feedbags, apples crates or even directly into the back of pickup trucks. However, Lovell saw this as another opportunity to connect the farm with people, so he got bags printed with his farm's logo. "It's all about brand recognition."

When originally buying the farm, Lovell had written a business plan to get a mortgage and to apply to the New Brunswick New Entrant Program. However, a few years in, hail damaged the crops and in 2014 deer ate \$100,000 worth of apples and raspberries.

So he rewrote his business plan to include wildlife mitigation fencing, enclosing 50 acres of orchard and berries, the corn maze and the other crops. However, after having difficulty finding someone to install his own wildlife fencing, he began a new division of the farm in 2015 to supply and install fencing and trellis to other Maritime orchards. "It's made a huge different to our cash flow," he says.

In spite of production still not being fully back, revenues are improving with the additional crops, other divisions and school program. Next year the trees and bushes will be back in full production, and the Lovells will be ready for their customers with a warm greeting. CG



Their customer-focus strategy works beyond the farm gate too. It took a year and a half for the Lovells to get into four local Sobeys, a breakthrough that came when they learned to see what the food giant needs from farmers

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## A DIFFERENT SLICE

Philly Markowitz is fired up about supporting local farmers in an effort to build up rural communities throughout Ontario's Grev County

#### BY LOIS HARRIS

enerations of rugged farmers have worked this rugged landscape. They've run cattle, they've pastured sheep, they've planted crops. None of it has been easy. South of Georgian Bay, the county's highlands are notoriously cold, the ground rolls unpredictably in all directions, and the soil is just plain tough.

If Grey County was an old building, you'd probably call it quirky, with sloping floors, odd stairways and enough low beams to crack your head every time you try to stand up.

That may be why, although the county does have its share of big, progressive farms, it also has the kind of individuality that creates a real advantage for anyone who invests the time to get to know it, coupled with scenery that breeds intense loyalty.

In other words, this is a place that abounds with opportunities, even if it sometimes takes a different set of eyes to see them.

But Grey has another challenge too. A couple hours northwest of Toronto, its tourist areas are thriving, but many of its countryside communities face the same issues as rural communities all across the country. Everybody knows they need some kind of sustainable economic foundation, but nobody knows what that could be. Or at least, they didn't until now.

Now, the plan is to use local food to bridge the gap between farmers, consumers — and governments too.

Philly Markowitz has been in her job as the county's economic development officer for local food for three years, and her ideas keep getting bigger.

But maybe we're getting ahead of ourselves.

#### **GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT LOCAL**

"We recognize that agriculture is a major industry in Grey County in terms of economic impacts and activity," Markowitz says. "But things are changing rapidly, and there are a number of issues and barriers coming up in the next 15 to 20 years that will make or break it."



#### **Supporting local** farmers and keeping an authentic farm community absolutely makes sense here."

Philly Markowitz

She cites older farmers getting out of the business, and younger people trying to get into it, as well as a big push to urbanization and an increasing reliance on technology.

But her position is proof that the county thinks it can fight back, especially if it takes local food seriously.

Markowitz had been in the county since 1991, was an avid gardener and a passionate local food advocate who was on the board of the Grey Bruce Agriculture and Culinary Association. She had also been a freelancer for CBC for 17 years, done extensive marketing and communications work, and had taken a temporary position in the county's tourism department. So she was a shoo-in when she applied for the local food job.

"Supporting local farmers and keeping an authentic farm community makes sense here, and it is absolutely a pillar of what the county wants to do in terms of economic development," Markowitz says.

Grey's strategic plan identifies agriculture with its farms and local food as one of its seven key strengths. Among the actions outlined in the plan are "to create policies, procedures and tools to encourage on-site food processing, pop-up restaurants, a food business incubator, market gardens and farmers markets, and special events focusing on promoting local foods."

Other initiatives are underway too. On the drawing board are a multi-dimensional marketing program to promote local beer, wine and cider businesses, plus a unique conference in November that will bring the region's agricultural and technology sectors together to improve production and resolve on-farm problems.

#### THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN GREY

"If we are going to be an economically sustainable rural and farm community, we have to go where the rest of the world is going which is to tech innovation," Markowitz says.

In support of this direction, she's organizing a conference she's dubbed Ag 4.0. Her premise is that agriculture has gone through three stages: pre-industrial, industrial and biotechnological. It's now entering a fourth stage that's "all about technology — using data, sensors and robotics to come up with creative solutions to problems."

"We recognize that farmers are not shy about using digital products, but making them is a different thing," she says.

She's working with the county's information technology department on a plan — called the Ag 4.0 Plan — to make Grey the home of a technology business

The upcoming one-day conference at Meaford Hall on November 3 will explore how technology and digital solutions can help with everything from farm succession planning to building virtual food hubs. There will be workshops, panels and plenary speakers all aimed at coming up with ideas on how Grey can build a more robust agricultural and local food sector.

It will be followed the next day by a farm tour highlighting some of the more innovative farms around the county (see sidebars).

As well, the county is creating a "Maker's Space" where farmers and technology specialists can put their creative heads together to develop new digital tools, like customized monitors and sensors or automated processes.

A contest to develop an agricultural software application is also underway. It is meant to promote the conference, create real-life solutions to problems and bring attention to the technology sector in the county.

Markowitz hopes the conference will attract participants from universities and colleges as well as creative artists like graphic designers plus people from agriculture and technology.

Ag 4.0 seems bound to be a success, given her track record. For instance, recently she worked with Georgian College and the local public health unit to help farmers and entrepreneurs wanting to set up a food processing business learn how to work through all the myriad rules and regulations around food safety.

#### **FOOD SAFETY SCHOOL**

Markowitz started by conducting surveys with local farmers and talking to them during Grey-Bruce Farmers Week to find out their real needs.

Through that, she and her partners came up with a two-day comprehensive course that takes participants through everything from proper food handling and packaging to the best ways of co-packing.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 54** 

#### Farm-to-farm: The Dornoch Hops strategy

What started as an idea to set up a craft brewery turned into a thriving, innovative hops operation for Cherie Swift and her husband Richard Elder. Their business is on a 95-acre farm just outside Dornoch in Grey County, Ont.

"We realized during the course of gathering information for the brewery that there was a very large shortage of hops grown in Canada," Swift says. "So we decided to go the agricultural route."

Dornoch Hops was started in 2012. Rather than selling the hops to brewers, the couple decided they could help out the entire industry and do well for themselves by propagating and selling hop plants to other growers.

"We sell right across the country from B.C. to Nova Scotia," Swift says. They sell to large commercial enterprises and to backyard growers who want to brew their own homemade beer.

Swift says there's a huge interest in growing hops. The couple belongs to the Ontario Hop Growers Association, which attracts 200 to 250 people to their meetings.

The business is progressing again in 2016 with the installation of a micro-propagation laboratory. The lab will be used to grow plants from tissue instead of stems.

"Our plants will be of a higher quality, virusfree and disease-free," Swift says.

They will also be less expensive than the imports from the U.S., which can run to \$8 a plant. At the current exchange rate, that makes hops plant buying extremely costly.

With the new propagation method, Dornoch Hops are specializing in the five varieties of hops that are most used by brewers. Orders were being taken in 2016 for delivery in spring 2017.

Besides selling the plants, Swift helps new growers with production advice. She is a firm believer in getting three variables right:

- 1. Know how and where you're going to market the product. Talk to microbrewers and find out what varieties of hops they're brewing with.
- 2. Know the variety resistance to disease and get the right variety for the climate and geography where they'll be grown.
- 3. Select for yield. Productivity varies among varieties. It pays to do your research carefully.

"Hops are a perennial grown on trellises over small acreages," Swift adds. "We're talking five, 10 or 15 acres, so you have to be careful about what you're planting and make sure you get the most bang for your buck."

#### T&K Ferri Orchards goes up-market with super-dense plantings

Specializing in super-sized apples from super spindle orchards has been very good business for Tom and Karen Ferri of T&K Ferri Orchards and Apple Market located just outside Clarksburg in Grey County, Ont. They have 22 acres of orchards, with 20 of those planted in the high-density, super spindle system that's more common in Italy, where the land base is smaller.

"We have 57.000 trees on our property with 2,500 to 2,800 trees per acre," Karen Ferri says.

The next-highest density orchards are tall spindles, which have about 1,200 trees per acre.

The family's motivation for the business is that "we want to grow apples, not wood."

The system's advantages are many, including having the trees go into production sooner three to five years instead of the traditional five to seven.

The foliage is less dense, so they use only half the pesticides of other orchards - saving them money and better protecting the environment. The trees are tightly packed in rows, making automated pruning and harvesting possible, which reduces labour costs. Irrigation costs are also way down because of the reduced acreage size.

Finally, they can manage their crops better. They get 40 to 50 premium, large-sized apples per tree and, barring natural disasters - like they had with a late frost in 2012 — they can also predict crop yields earlier in the season. The banks and buyers and Ferris all love that aspect of the business.

But getting into the super spindle game isn't cheap.

"When you're investing \$40,000 an acre at startup, you want to see returns sooner rather than later," Ferri says.

T&K Ferri sells Honey Crisp, Mutsu, Gala, Ambrosia, Cortland, McIntosh and Golden Delicious apples to two wholesalers who then sell on into smaller markets. The orchard also has an on-site market where they

sell apples, press and sell their own cider and offer other local products.

Aside from the weather extremes nature throws at it, other challenges for the business are the lack of consistent commodity prices for apples, the high cost of insurance (at \$20,000 per year, they've decided not to get a policy), and cheap imports, mostly from the U.S.

Ferri has been actively involved in Grey County's economic development committee, representing agriculture. She's found the experience rewarding because of the networking opportunities and finding new markets she can tap into. Her business is part of the Apple Pie Trail, a year-round culinary promotion that includes orchards, bakeries and restaurants in the Georgian Bay area.

The business caught the attention of the province, and in 2014 was a regional winner of the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence.

For this project, Markowitz was able to leverage \$5,000 from the county into \$50,000 from the province, a local college and other sources. More than 70 people — mostly farmers looking to do on-farm processing — took the course initially.

"We taught them who you need to talk to and when and why," she says. "Our exit surveys said that participants felt more empowered and less anxious about the process."

The course was offered first in Grey and Bruce and is now part of the curriculum at Georgian College.

#### **SAINTS & SINNERS**

Another big project for summer 2016 was an agri-culinary marketing initiative involving 17 wine, beer and cider businesses, three museums and one interpretive walking tour.

"We chose this sector to promote

because the multiplier effect is 12 to one — every \$1 spent returns \$12 to the local economy," Markowitz says.

The promotion — Saints & Sinners — is tied to the area's colourful history of bootleggers and prohibitionists. Other elements include a tourist map showing the participating businesses, a passport that can be stamped at each stop, and a "growler" — a branded brown jug that visitors can carry from place to place. There will also be a dedicated website, book launch and pop-up events around the region.

#### **OTHER DUTIES**

Beyond the big events and projects Markowitz also provides businesses with advice and assistance in obtaining grants from places like the Greenbelt Foundation and the province.

While she's happy to speak to anyone, her efforts are concentrated on farmers and others who have a business plan, are up and running, and able to demonstrate that they have a viable business. Their plans also have to fit with the county's objectives.

"It's mostly about taking ideas to the next level," she says. "We support everybody — small mom-and-pop operations to those with 30 employees and 3,000 acres," she says.

She is also busy doing outreach and promotions twice a year - in June, during Local Food Week and in October during Agriculture Week.

The bottom line is maintaining viable rural communities, Markowitz says: "If you keep the farmers on the farm, you keep the farm kids in the local school, and shoppers in the local stores - and you keep communities alive and thriving." CG

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## Bad news for ag's Big 3

With three-quarters of machinery makers already planning lay-offs, Brexit's damage to the EU is creating more worry

BY SCOTT GARVEY / CG MACHINERY EDITOR

n the eve of Britain's June 23 vote, I was in Hungary eating supper with a group of journalists including a freelancer who is also part of a family farm operation in England. She was the one to correctly predict the "leave" victory.

That farmers would vote to leave the EU was astonishing to me. All farmers in the EU enjoy some pretty significant subsidy financing direct from Brussels, and her farm does too. Her family's sheep raising operation isn't particularly large by U.K. standards, but even they pocket annual subsidies worth nearly C\$70,000.

The general consensus — or possibly faint hope among U.K. farmers seemed to be that subsidies would continue if Britain left the EU, according to that journalist and various media interviews I saw. Future payments were expected to come directly from the country's own government. But realistically, will the British government



In an unusual move, AGCO president and CEO chose to introduce new Challenger tractors to stock market investors rather than at an agricultural event.

have the revenues to continue such generous payments?

In fact, farmers had already started pulling back. Machinery company executives told me British farmers had been keeping their wallets closed as the voting day neared, and farm equipment sales in that country had ground to a virtual snail's pace. In other words, Brexit uncertainty was already causing pain well beyond Britain's borders, as machinery orders at factories in other countries slowed.

The pending referendum was just one of a number of factors holding back equipment sales in Europe. An April survey conducted by Agrievolution, an industry association representing global farm equipment manufacturers, revealed many executives at equipment brands in Western Europe had a pretty pessimistic view of future sales volumes. Overall, 43 per cent said they expected sales numbers to decline in the next six months.

U.S. manufacturers weren't seeing a future any brighter either. The survey reported 58 per cent rated their current business climate as "unfavourable," and they were taking that pessimism to heart, with 77 per cent reporting that they were planning staff reductions.

With all that fatalism, the last thing the industry needed was the compounding factor of a Brexit.

Plus, the Big Three farm equipment manufacturers also shared in the stock market loss that followed the vote. Their stocks all declined, but AGCO suffered the most, losing US\$10 per share and taking the longest to recover.

Yet that could also be what was behind a very unusual ag machinery product launch this summer.

AGCO's president and CEO, Martin Richenhagen, appeared on CNBC's "Mad Money" TV show in early July to introduce the new Challenger tractors soon to be released into the North American market. They were being introduced not to farmers, but to stock market investors.

That had all the earmarks of a strategy designed to help AGCO stocks climb back out of the Brexit-induced doldrums.

"This is the pre-launch," Richenhagen told the show's host. "My guys don't like it so much."

The tractors were originally set to be unveiled to producers at the U.S. Farm Progress Show in late August, and the CNBC appearance was unexpected. Richenhagen's comments suggest his brand marketing managers have felt the thunder fizzle out of their industry introduction plans after his TV appearance.

On the show, Richenhagen spoke optimistically about the global equipment market, as if to sooth any investor fears.

"I think we are close to bottoming out," he said of industry sales numbers. "Hopefully, bottoming out this year. And I'm slightly more optimistic for 2017. We'll perform pretty well this year and, I think, deliver what we promised."

He also addressed the impact a Brexit will have on the equipment industry, explaining AGCO long ago pulled manufacturing operations out of Britain.

"Brexit is a no-brainer for us," he said, distancing AGCO from any manufacturing-related problems. "Europe is not doing so well, but we had that in our plans; therefore, for us it's not a surprise. There are certain areas of Europe doing better. We don't manufacture in England, because when they decided not to be a Euro country we had to move out. Because exporting from England with a very high pound was not feasible."

A post-Brexit survey of corporations within the U.K., reported by the BBC, claims many other companies are now reconsidering their decision to operate in that country. Without the assurance of access to the continental marketplace that Richenhagen mentioned, future corporate investment in the U.K. could fall drastically.

What's worse, the "out" result may threaten the U.K.'s very stability. It is already highlighted deep divisions within the population.

Unlike older Baby Boomers, roughly 75 per cent of voters under 25 years of age were in favour of remaining within the EU. Many young Europeans have been taking advantage of the freedom to move to other countries to study or work, a benefit that

could come to an abrupt end if the UK officially invokes article 50 of the EU membership agreement and begins the withdrawal procedure.

Scotland, which had barely survived a separation referendum a couple of years ago, voted overwhelmingly in favour of remaining within the EU. Now the "out" vote has prompted renewed separatist sentiment and the spectre of yet another referendum. Northern Ireland, too, voted strongly in favour of remaining in the EU. And that's a region that doesn't need another excuse to dislike England.

Other European countries, notably Sweden and France, also have growing hypernationalist political movements within them that have been calling for a withdrawal of their nations from the EU. The Brexit vote may give them added momentum.

What's perhaps most disturbing about the Brexit is many observers have claimed some of the politicians behind the vote itself and the "out" campaign didn't intend to actually trigger a withdrawal from the EU.

Instead, they were simply attempting to

position themselves as strong nationalist leaders for personal political gain, expecting a vote result maintaining the status quo.

If that's true, it appears to be no coincidence, then, that there has been a round of political resignations following the vote that has practically wiped political leadership clean in England.

Speaking at a media event in June just before the vote, Bernard Krone, president of Germany-based Krone, a forage equipment manufacturer, acknowledged that the global machinery market has slowed again

"The agricultural machinery industry is going through tough times at the moment," he said. "But, ladies and gentlemen, this was the case before. The market will recover... Because after every crisis, business starts to pick up again."

The question now is when is that likely to happen.

Uncertainty caused by the Brexit vote will continue to affect ag equipment manufacturers, global investors, and U.K. farmers for some time to come. CG



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## The target is glyphosate

It's time to worry. The real goal of today's anti-GMO movement is to kill the weed killer at the core of modern agriculture

BY GERALD PILGER

s farmers, we have a question to ask ourselves. Are we getting played? Are we getting taken in, just like an audience at a magic show that gets fooled into watching the distraction instead of what's really happening? Is agriculture reacting to the GMO debate when we should be focusing on protecting glyphosate?

These are questions we need to ask urgently. Here's why.

Earlier this summer, I received four very disturbing emails from the online activist network Avaaz.

If you haven't heard of Avaaz, do yourself a favour and go to its website today. The prestigious Guardian newspaper now says Avaaz (whose name means "voice" in several European languages) is the world's most powerful online network of environmental activitists.

In just five years, Avaaz has amassed a membership of almost 44 million people, and it is still growing, with thousands of dedicated volunteers overseen by core teams on six continents.

These emails didn't pull any punches. They outright told Avaaz members to push for a ban on glyphosate.

We mustn't take this lightly. The Avaaz website shows that of all their global issues, their third-highest priority is to "Break Monsanto's Grip - investigate, expose, and take on the corporate capture of our food and agriculture regulatory systems to ensure our health and the environment are put before profits."

If you think third isn't so bad, take a look at the company it keeps. The survey found 53.55 per cent of Avaaz members consider glyphosate a priority, only behind "Save the Seas" at 54.91 per cent, and the 53.74 per cent scored for "Drive the Paris Climate Agreement Home."

Nor is there any question that the pressure Avaaz is putting on governments to ban glyphosate is having an effect. In June, when the European Union decided against renewing glyphosate's licence for another 15-year term, as normally happens with pesticide license renewals, but instead only granted an 18-month "emergency exemption" for further scientific study of the 40-year-old herbicide, Ricken Patel, Avaaz executive director wrote to his members to claim credit: "Now, after over two million of us ran 20 campaigns, with millions of signatures, messages, phone calls, stunts, advocacy meetings and media stories... the future of the 'Monsanto model' is actually in question!!"

But here's the clincher, with a quote from Pavel Poc, vice-chair of the EU Parliament's environment committee: "Avaaz is indisputably the driving force of the fight for glyphosate discontinuance."

#### THE RISK IN PERSPECTIVE

Aside from its distrust of Monsanto, it seems Avaaz opposes glyphosate because of its supposed toxicity.

From a farmer's perspective, there is no question that there is a degree of toxicity to glyphosate. It is a herbicide after all. However, multiple studies by many reputable institutions rate glyphosate as only slightly toxic. The LD50 of glyphosate is 5,600 mg/kg. For comparison, the LD50 of baking soda is 4,220, and table salt is 3,000, both falling in the moderate toxicity range. Copper sulfate, a chemical used by organic growers as a fungicide, is rated as very toxic with a LD50 of just 300. And vitamin D is actually rated as extremely toxic with an LD50 of just 10 mg/kg. Yet people still purchase and ingest vitamin D supplements.

The toxicity concerns about glyphosate spiked last year when the International Agency for Research on Cancer designated glyphosate as a 2A carcinogen (i.e. probably carcinogenic to humans). IARC is the only global body to give glyphosate this rating. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers glyphosate to be non-carcinogenetic in humans. Even the European Food Safety Agency decided that glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans.

It is interesting to note what else is found in IARC's group 2A, including high-temperature frying, red meat, very hot beverages, and indoor emissions from combustion of wood (fireplaces).

IARC rates shift work too as probably carcinogenic.

This contrasts to Group 1 substances which IARC defines as carcinogenic. This list includes asbestos, estrogen therapy, ethanol (alcoholic beverages), solar radiation, diesel engine exhaust, smoking tobacco, and second-hand tobacco smoke.

The point is that lots of products in modern society can potentially cause cancer. It is not simply exposure to a product; it is the amount of exposure or dose which causes the problem. It is unjustified to ban glyphosate based on just three studies that have suggested there may be a link between this herbicide and cancer when hundreds of studies have found no link.

If prevention of cancer is the prime motivation, there are substances that have a much higher, proven risk

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 60** 



#### www.cafanet.ca

## If only I could get everything I needed at one place... BY KIM GERENCSER, CHAIR, CAFA REGINA CHAPTER

magine how beneficial it would be to be able to make one stop in town and find everything you needed? We all know what a hassle it can be:

- Equipment dealer for name brand parts,
- Farm supply for jobber parts (keep those repair costs down, right?)
- Fuel supplier for oil & lubes,
- Bank to deposit cheques, ...and it goes on and on!

It is more and more likely that you do this business in a larger centre since small towns are less able to sustain many of these businesses. And if so, you know that "a quick trip" very quickly turns into a half-day affair.

Each of these enterprises is trying to capture more of your business: equipment dealers sell oil & lubes, fuel suppliers offer credit... now if only the bank would sell parts!

Walmart has built an empire on the "department store" model. It has sustained a reputation on having (almost) everything you need under one roof. Now that it's expanded into groceries, you can grab a quick bite while getting tires on the car after you pick up your new optical prescription before grabbing a jug of milk once you've finished putting that cheaply made imported TV stand on layaway!

(Whew!)

It is often easy to put off meeting with your critical business partners because of the time it takes. Just like the first example, finding time to speak with the banker, lawyer, accountant, business advisor, etc. is often difficult because they are in so many different locations.

If only there was a way to find them all in one location, a way to learn who is committed to agriculture and willing to bring their expertise to the table...

If only...

Your local CAFA chapter has members that include accountants, bankers, lawyers, business advisors, insurance advisors, wealth & financial planners, etc. etc. They are all found on CAFA's website www.cafanet.ca and you know if they are a part of CAFA, they are committed to agriculture. Each month, all these professionals are found in the same place: your local CAFA chapter meeting. Why not come out for a meal or a coffee and see just what these experts can bring to your farm table?



Want even more horsepower? Make note of these top-shelf events and attend the one near you.

- Farm Succession Update: 3 Circle Model November 3, 2016 • Saskatoon, Sask
- Farm Succession Update: 3 Circle Model November 10, 2016 • Niverville, Man.
- Farm Tax Update

November 17, 2016 • Guelph, Ont.

The cost of admission to these events is nominal when measured against the value you can glean from the information presented. PLUS, you, as a farmer in Saskatchewan, may qualify for partial reimbursement of the admission fee...YOU CAN'T LOSE!

Contact CAFA for more detail on these conferences, and on how to become a member. **www.cafanet.ca** or 1-877-474-2871 or info@cafanet.com

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and which should be banned long before glyphosate. Yet society knowingly accepts the risks of activities like smoking and drinking alcohol without calling for a ban on these practices.

#### "ATROCITY AGAINST NATURE"

What disturbs me most about the Avaaz emails are the inflammatory statements that can be extremely misleading. For example in his June 13, 2016 email, Patel wrote: "Glyphosate kills \*everything\* except Monsanto's genetically engineered crops, transforming our planet into ecological wastelands where nothing can live but one GM crop. It's apocalyptic."

In the June 9 email Patel states: "We can also use the next 18 months to focus scrutiny on the global environmental impact of the Monsanto model, which is turning the surface of our planet into strange, toxic 'biodeserts' where only one genetically modified Monsanto crop can grow."

Then, on June 21, I received an email from Alice Jay, Avaaz campaign director, in which she said: "Our planet is one tremendously fragile, interdependent ecosystem, and Monsanto's wasteland agriculture is taking a wrecking ball to it."

To rally her troops, she then added, "We are the front lines of our people's response to this atrocity against nature, and our future."

For anyone not familiar with agriculture, statements such as these make glyphosate sound like the most toxic substance known

to man. Descriptions that say it kills everything, creates ecological wastelands and toxic biodeserts... are all factually incorrect yet seem credible to a gullible public.

Statements like these do nothing to inform people about glyphosate or GM crops but are simply used to mobilize an uninformed public. Reading the emails I am not even sure if the authors are more against GM crops, glyphosate, or Monsanto. A reader likely comes away equating all three as the same thing.

Worse yet, the emails ignore all of the benefits of glyphosate. They do not tell the readers how this herbicide has enabled farmers to reduce the use of much more toxic pesticides. They do not explain that glyphosate enables farmers to adopt conservation and zero tillage — reducing soil erosion and soil degradation. They do not mention how glyphosate facilitates continuous cropping thereby increasing CO2 sequestration, or how it has paved the way for massive reductions in fuel used by farmers, thereby slowing climate change. They do not mention that even organic farmers use this herbicide.

Nor do they tell their members that a ban on glyphosate would likely reduce global food stocks and result in higher food prices.

#### **AVAAZ BATTLE PLAN**

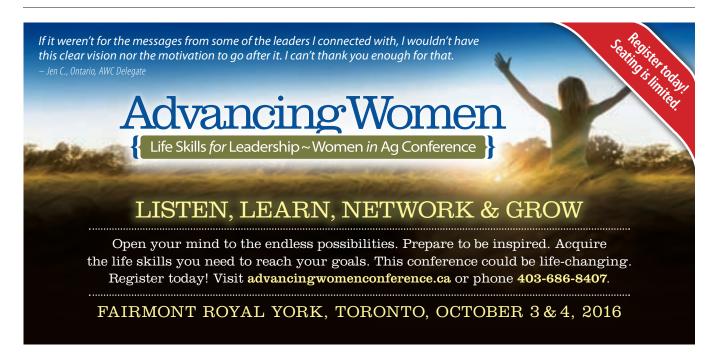
On June 21, Avaaz outlined its strategy for killing glyphosate. In its own words, it lists five needs for which it was soliciting funds:

With its four million members. Avaaz savs glyphosate "is turning the surface of our planet into strange, toxic 'biodeserts.'"

- Fund the independent science that is desperately needed to counter the industryfunded studies.
- · Build pressure on key countries and politicians to stand strong on glyphosate.
- Articulate the clear, sustainable alternatives to glyphosate-type herbicides (this is key to winning over farmers and politicians).
- · Mobilize rapidly for every committee, every council meeting, every backroom bureaucratic process where the EU tries to get out of making a clear decision.
- Start taking this fight global. The U.S., Canada, Brazil and a slew of other countries could decide soon whether they also ban glyphosate.

Every one of these steps should alarm Canadian farmers.

I really wanted more information on each of these points. I especially wanted to know what would be Avaaz's position if an independent study they funded found glyphosate to be safe and beneficial. I wanted to know what would make their independent study more credible than inde-



pendent studies which have already been completed and have found glyphosate to be a relatively safe pesticide. Would they reverse their position? It does not appear so, given the other four steps on their list.

I also wanted to know what are the "clear, sustainable alternatives to glyphosate-type herbicides" that they feel will win over farmers. If these alternatives are so good, why not just publicize them, so farmers could flock to them.

So I tried multiple times over 25 days to contact Avaaz by both email and telephone. Finally I had a call returned by someone who could only speak limited English but agreed to reply to emailed questions. I emailed my questions but I never received the promised reply.

As a writer I am extremely frustrated by an organization that provides multiple media contacts but then does not reply to media queries.

As a farmer I am angered by an organization that blatantly distorts the facts

and intentionally misleads the public into thinking farmers are using products which endanger not only the environment but also the consumers of the food we grow.

Farmers are continually told we need to connect with consumers. We are told to explain to the public what we do and why we do it, and we are told to demonstrate that we are producing safe, nutritious and healthy food.

I agree there is a real benefit to these one-on-one conversations between farmers and consumers. However, individual farmers cannot refute the attacks that groups like Avaaz are waging on modern agriculture.

Individual farmers cannot reach the millions of consumers Avaaz does in a single email blast.

Even worse, there is nothing individual farmers can say or do to change the mindset of Avaaz members who have been continually bombarded with propaganda that links glyphosate to "toxic biodeserts."

Governments, industry, and farm orga-

nizations must hold Avaaz accountable for what it is saying. Agriculture needs to demand Avaaz provide proof of such statements as "...where only one genetically modified Monsanto crop can grow."

We also need to showcase farmers (including organic farmers) who have never planted a Monsanto GM crop but who use glyphosate on their farms without the "apocalyptic" effects that Avaaz claims glyphosate leads to!

Scientists too must stand up and defend their work against such anti-science propaganda. On June 20, 2016, a total of 107 Nobel laureates signed a letter supporting GMOs. (The letter and information about GMOs can be found on the group's website supportprecisionagriculture.org.)

Hopefully, the stand this brave group is taking against the mob of the misinformed will encourage governments and agriculture to collectively stand up for the science that is necessary to feed the growing world population! CG

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## No-fear public speaking

With winter meetings ahead, more of us will get asked to take the microphone. These simple strategies will make you glad they did

ven though all of us in this day and age should expect to be called upon to speak in public at some point, for many of us the very thought of it causes us to feel queasy and to break out in a

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, a U.S. federal agency for research on mental disorders, almost three-quarters of us have a fear of public speaking.

Unfortunately, if our public speaking skills are less than stellar, it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. We make a poor impression on our audience, and we loss the opportunity to get an effective message across.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Really, it doesn't! Like most skills, public speaking is one you can hone. You don't have to love it, but you can get good at it. Whether it's addressing a board meeting, sharing the results of your on-farm trials at a grower meeting, or "advocating" for agriculture at a public forum, following these strategies from professional trainer, Patsy Marshall, will ensure you get the job done.

Marshall is the president of her own training and development company, Train on Track, and she teaches both at Conestoga College, and at the universities of Guelph, Waterloo and Brock.

To start, says Marshall, even before you begin to prepare what you will say, take some time to really research your audience. Ask questions of the organizer — who is expected to attend and how many will there be? How knowledgeable are they? How has the meeting been advertised? What is the audience expecting?

The more you can tailor your content to the needs and interests of your audience, the more effective it will be, says Marshall. The "Who's listening?" sidebar on the facing page has a great way for remembering to ask the right questions before you go.

#### RESOURCES

Join your local Toast Masters International club (www.toastmasters.org).

Many colleges, universities and school boards offer courses and workshops on public speaking.

There is a wealth of information on the Internet. Google "elements of public speaking."

"Remember it's not about you," adds Marshall. "It's about the audience." If you do your research on your audience ahead of time and customize the content to them, it will be evident to your audience and they will appreciate it, she says.

Once you have analyzed the prospective audience, the next step is to organize your ideas logically. Research any facts or stats you will need, says Marshall. If you are doing a visual presentation, look for graphs and figures to support your content.

When it comes to crafting your presentation, Marshall recommends keeping it simple. This will improve clarity. Choose everyday words and avoid using jargon, she says.

Then decide how you are going to introduce your topic. Be clear in your own mind about how you are going to start. It's OK to start with a quote. Starting with a question can be effective too.

But, says Marshall, "Avoid jokes. It's too easy to offend someone."

Short sentences are best, but do use bridging words to connect one idea to another to help your audience

This "keep it simple" approach also applies to Power Point. Marshall recommends following the 6 x 6 rule for slides. This means no more than six lines and six words per line per slide. For the most legible slides, use blue or black ink on a white background, or white ink on a blue or black background, and either Verdana or Arial fonts.

Also start your presentation right. Adjust your microphone to the appropriate height before you begin. Use the right volume, vary your tone and pace, and articulate your words so your audience can understand you.

Establish eye contact and look to the left side of the room, then the middle and then right side of the room for one to three seconds. Use natural movement but not too much, says Marshall. "Don't be the Energizer Bunny."

Avoid annoying mannerisms such as drinking too much water, adjusting the microphone, cleaning your glasses and saying "um." For people prone to saying "um," Marshall advises they put their tongue on the roof of their mouth instead. "And don't apologize if you leave something out," adds Marshall. "Your audience doesn't know."

Before concluding, Marshall recommends letting the audience know you are wrapping up by saying "in summary." This will draw the focus of the audience if their minds have been wandering, she explains. Marshall recommends taking about two minutes to recap

your presentation. Emphasize the key messages but also be realistic about how much you can expect your audience to remember, which is probably less than you think.

Marshall recommends following the Rule of Three, i.e. your audience will only retain three messages.

You can also increase your credibility by referring to comments made by other presenters.

Are you worried you can't memorize your speech? Marshall says there is no need to memorize your presentation, but you should practice it ahead of time being sure to change any awkward phrasing as you go and ensure that your presentation is the right length. Put key concepts on cue cards to help you if you lose track, she suggests.

Handouts can be given out at the beginning or at the end, or they can be emailed to participants. Find out if the organizer has a preference. Marshall prefers to hand them out

at the beginning so the audience can make notes on the pages.

Marshall believes it's usually best to leave questions for the end so you can stay on track. It's also best if the presenter repeats questions so everyone knows what has been asked. If you don't know the answer to a question, promise to find the answer or ask if anyone else in the room knows the answer. "Don't BS the answer," she says.

What should you wear? For a daytime meeting, business casual is most suitable unless it's a formal event, says Marshall. The University of Toronto defines business casual as "a classic, clean cut, and put-together look where a full suit is not required," which means slacks, khakis, or skirts; blouses, polo shirts, or shirts with collar but no necktie: some sweaters and closed-toe shoes.

Most of all, Marshall says to try to enjoy yourself and be enthusiastic. "This will come through." CG

#### Who's listening?

Understanding your audience is critical to delivering a successful presentation. Use this handy mnemonic by trainer Patsy Marshall to help you match your presentation to your audience.

**A** udience — who and how many will be present?

- **U** nderstanding what is their level of knowledge of topics?
- **D** emographics what is the age, education, and gender?
- I nterest why are they attending?
- **E** nvironment ask questions about the setup will it be classroom style or theatre style? Be sure to check out the room ahead of time.
- N eeds what needs does your audience have?
- **C** ustomized tailor your presentation to fit your audience, e.g. farm audience versus general public.
- **E** xpectation what do they expect? how has it been advertised? how can they apply what they've learned?

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### A LITTLE DAB will do you!

he saying "a little dab will do you" really is true when it comes to applying creams and ointments to your skin. These creams are termed topical agents because they are applied directly to your skin where they act. At any one time, an estimated 75 per cent of Canadians are using a cream or ointment, and most people have used a topical product at least once.

Creams and ointments are ideal to deliver medication to skin lesions and conditions, or alternatively to moisturize and protect your skin. They are the mainstay for the treatment of acne, minor skin infections, eczema, psoriasis, rosacea, and even contact dermatitis like dishpan hands or poison ivy.

#### Creams, lotions and ointments can work wonders for your skin. But which is right for you?

Creams contain more water than ointments, and feel less greasy. However, ointments like petroleum jelly remain on the skin and are less likely to be washed off. Thus, ointments have the ability to act longer and are considered more potent.

However, your choice can also be affected by where you need to apply the cream or ointment. For example, you probably want a cream for rosacea on your face, but an ointment for psoriasis on your elbow.

Gels are also topical agents, but have an alcohol base. They are suited to skin conditions that benefit from the drying action of the alcohol, such as acne. Also available are lotions that are liquid preparations either in an alcohol or water base. Lotions are best for areas of skin that are hairy, such as your scalp.

Choosing the right-size tube of a cream or ointment can be difficult because your aim should be to use the complete tube without any waste. Historically, a fingertip unit was the measure that was used, and in some parts of the world still is.

A fingertip unit is approximately 0.5 gram and is the amount of cream or ointment that you can squeeze from a tube and will extend from your fingertip to the finger crease next to it. This amount will cover both the front and back of your hand, including your fingers.

An arm will need about three times as much, a leg about six times as much, and a foot about twice as much. Then, you can use your math skills to calculate whether you need a 15- or 30-gram tube.

Most medicated creams and ointments are only recommended to be applied once or twice daily. Moisturizers are usually applied more often in order to treat dry skin, and some products such as sunscreen lotions need to be reapplied after sweating.

Mild corticosteroid creams and ointments are available without a prescription to be used for minor skin inflammation, such as a mild case of poison ivy. However, if no improvement occurs after about two weeks, you need to have your skin condition checked because it may need a more potent prescription medication.

Non-prescription antibiotic creams and ointments are useful for

minor cuts and scrapes, but should not be used in place of appropriate cleansing of the wound.

To obtain the most benefit from your cream or ointment, correct application is important. Wash your hands before and after application (unless, of course you are applying the cream or ointment to your hands). Apply a thin layer to clean, dry skin, and in the direction of hair growth if there is hair. Avoid application to broken or damaged skin because this can result in systemic absorption of the medication into your body.

Also avoid scented products because the additives can worsen skin irritation. As well, some types of creams and ointments are best avoided because they can cause skin sensitization, for example topical antihistamines. Remember to check for expiry dates, and also remember that opened creams and ointments can be contaminated. So don't save your old, rolled-up tube!

Skin creams and ointments are not replacements for commonsense measures to keep your skin healthy. If a skin rash or lesion happens, check for any activities or environmental factors that may have caused it. And if you know you are at risk for a skin problem, take steps to avoid it, such as wearing gloves when washing the dishes. Also know what poison ivy looks like, and keep away. Common sense may save your skin! CG



Marie Berry is a lawyer/pharmacist interested in health and education.

#### **NEXT ISSUE**

In recent news reports you've probably heard about the prescription cascade. That is when a drug causes an adverse effect, and a second drug is used to treat the effect, which in turn causes another adverse effect, and a third drug is used to treat this new effect, etc. Next month, we'll talk about strategies that you can use to avoid this domino effect.

he day had started off well. "Daddy, the sun came out! I better stay home and help!" Connor said, looking out the open front door. Jeff looked out over his son's head. After three days of mid-harvest rain, the sky had cleared.

"Looks good," Jeff agreed. "But you can't miss the first day. And it'll take a few days for the fields to dry up. You got everything in your backpack?"

Connor unzipped it and admired his new John Deere lunchkit one more time as the yellow school bus pulled into the yard.

"I got everything," Connor said. "Do you promise to come get me if you need me here?"

"I will." Jeff waved at the bus driver, then stood aside as Elaine ran out in her pyjamas to take a photo of her little boy getting on the bus. Then two-year-old Jenny passed Jeff, dragging her blanket behind her.

"I going school too," she said.

"Oh no you're not," Jeff said, scooping her up and carrying her back in to the breakfast table, followed soon by Elaine, flipping through the photos on her phone.

"He's getting so big," she said. "Me too," said Jenny.

"It's sweet, the way he wants to work on the farm," Elaine said.

"That's the way we want it," Jeff

"What are you doing today?" Elaine asked.

"I don't know. Maybe just sit here being thankful we got the combine fixed before the sun came out?"

The breakdown happened three days earlier. Heavy clouds had started to move in from the south when Jeff heard a sickening thud from the combine cab.

"What was that?" Connor asked from his perch on the buddy seat. The rotor shuddered to a halt and Jeff shut down the combine.

"I'm not sure," Jeff said. "Let's go down and take a look."

### What they didn't know...

Young Connor has some explaining to do. and it looks like his parents do too!

This problem was beyond an infield fix. Connor and Jeff made the sad trek back to the yard just as it started to rain.

"Never seen barbed wire wrapped up so tight," Jeff's grandfather Ed said, helpfully, once they had the machine in the shop and Jeff and his father Dale opened the side panels and started pulling the concaves out.

Unwrapping the wire took the men most of the day.

"Never seen concaves smashed up like that," Jeff's father Dale said

ach flu. "Must have been all that driving around," he told his wife.

That left Jeff and the now onehanded Mark to wrestle the new concaves back into the combine and put things together again. Midway through the operation, Mark forgot about the bandage on his hand and let the concave clatter down to the shop floor.

"Well, it's not dented too badly," Jeff said, after they were over the shock and sure Connor hadn't been too close to the commotion.

Midway through the third day,



#### I didn't realize he was paying that much attention," Jeff said to Elaine in the car

the next morning. "We're going to need to replace them."

That afternoon, Dale went to town for replacement concaves.

"Just sold the last ones," said the parts man at the dealership. "You could try Regina."

While Dale drove off, Mark, who by this time had been working on the Hanson farm for a few months, scraped his hand, tearing his skin on the rusty wire.

"We'd better get you in to town for a tetanus shot," Elaine said.

"Can I come?" Connor asked. Mark needed four stitches.

"You should've heard what Mark said when the doctor stuck her needle in!" Connor told his father. "I got to watch!"

The second rainy day didn't require a trip to the hospital, but it wasn't ideal.

Dale came down with the stom-

Mark and Jeff finally had the combine back together and Dale was feeling better.

"Now we're ready to go and we can't get to work," Jeff said sadly, staring out the shop door at the drizzling rain.

"It's not that bad," Dale said. "It's supposed to clear up tomorrow. The wheat will hold on until Wednesday. The canola's swathed. And those soybeans aren't ready to go yet anyway."

Still, Jeff was irritable. He spent most of the day puttering around the shop. Picking things up and putting them back down. Taking things apart and putting them back together. Connor followed his dad around the shop, trying to find ways to help.

The Monday morning sun put Jeff in a better mood, "Connor's

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#### GUIDE LIFE



RETIRED ANGLICAN BISHOP

gone for the day," he said when Elaine and Jenny finished breakfast. "Why don't we take the day off? How about going to Williston for lunch?"

They left Jenny with Jeff's parents, stashed their passports in the glove box and made it to the border by 10 a.m. They'd just passed through U.S. Customs when Elaine's cell phone rang.

"Make sure it's someone worth paying roaming charges for," Jeff joked.

Elaine checked her screen. "Uh oh."

Two minutes later they were waving at the confused customs agent and crossing back into Canada. Once they cleared the border Jeff picked up speed.

In under an hour they screeched into the elementary school parking lot.

They found Connor in the school office, swinging his legs as he sat alone in a chair by the photocopier. The principal came out of her office, frowned at Jeff and Elaine, and beckoned them in to sit on hard plastic chairs.

"That was embarrassing," Elaine said afterwards, on the way back to the car.

"I don't understand why I can't stay," Connor said.

"I'll explain when we get home, Connor," Elaine said.

Connor first got Miss Holland's attention at recess. It was too muddy in the playground for the kids to go out. Miss Brown thought Connor was playing in the corner with a couple of other boys when she heard a clatter. "You can twist these bolts right out," he explained. Connor had taken an entire bookshelf apart and was now surrounded by shelves, picture books and impressed first graders. "I think we could put it together a better way," he was saying.

After recess, in line at the water fountain, Nathan stepped on Connor's foot. It was an accident, but it hurt. Connor let out a string of curse words exactly like the ones Mark had used in the doctor's office. "That helps make it better," Connor was telling the other boys when Miss Holland came running around the corner.

When it was time to try printing, Kyra got her long hair tangled in the class pencil sharpener. Connor was on the scene with his safety scissors before the teacher knew what was happening.

"I can fix this," Connor said. "It's going to be way easier to fix than that %\* &\$ barbed wire." By the time Miss Holland got to the scene, Kyra was free. She looked admiringly at Connor, until she felt the bald patch on her head and saw her blond curls dangling from the sharpener. Then she let out a screech.

That was when the teacher led the confused boy out of the classroom and straight to the office.

"I didn't realize he was paying that much attention," Jeff said to Elaine in the car.

"He is," Elaine said. "He wants to be just like you guys."

"Yeah," said Connor. "Can I help in the shop again when we get home?" CG

Leeann Minogue is the editor of Grainews, a playwright and part of a family grain farm in southeastern Saskatchewan.

ello Rod. I am sorry to have to send you this news. Bob, the eldest of us Hall children, was killed Sunday night." The message came from Robert Hall's young-

Bob is the person you read about on the news earlier this summer. He had been kidnapped and held hostage for months by ISISaffiliated terrorists in the southern Philippines. I am angry with the people who decapitated him. They deprived him of retirement, of time with family, the love of his fiancée, and life itself.

Sunday dinner of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding with the Hall family was welcome when I was a bachelor minister. Dinner conversation with Harry and Mable and their four children was stimulating. Harry was a volunteer leader in the Scout movement. His two boys, Bob and Bill, were Scouts. When the meal ended, the boys would head out with their friends. Harry and I would enjoy an after dinner drink. Mable and the girls would join us.

Trudi, the eldest daughter, led the Sunday School. She hoped to be ordained and serve God in the church. Trudi was ahead of her time. The ordination of women was not on the agenda of our church. Her father Harry, tending to conservative views, did not approve. The youngest daughter Bonnie was constantly twirling a baton.

Harry Hall was an Englishman. Arriving in Calgary he joined a church choir where he met Mable. He worked as a draftsman. When I first met Harry he seemed grumpy and cautious about change. It took a while to discover his wisdom and depth. He became a close friend. I relied on him for advice and assistance.

If you had told me then what the future held for the Hall family I would have replied, "When there are seven moons in the sky..."

The children left home. Trudi was eventually ordained. Harry and Mable moved to Vancouver Island. Mable died shortly after. A couple of years later I visited Harry. He was living in a mobile home park near Victoria. He confided, "I have a young girlfriend." A year later I visited again. Harry, who was 70, admitted, "I have another girlfriend. This one is younger." My family and I attended the wedding. Harry and his bride Cathy came to visit on their honeymoon. His new wife shared her conviction that God was calling her to be an Anglican priest. They went to seminary where Harry became the caregiver for Cathy's young daughter. Cathy and Harry served churches in British Columbia. It was a time of change. Harry embraced change thoughtfully. He discovered a new life as a clergy spouse, a role I would never have visualized for him.

Nor would I have visualized how and where Bob died. After his death, the Hall family issued a statement affirming: "We stand with the ideals that built this country; strength of character, resilience of spirit, and refusal to succumb to the demands of the wretched in order to satisfy the bloodlust of the weak." The statement continues: "Bob was rooted in the philosophies of responsibility, integrity, and respect." I reflected "Like father, like son" ...

I remember two ordinary people whose lives took extraordinary turns. None of us can know where life will take us. We need, as the Hall family statement said, to live with the idea you only have so much time. "Only so many heartbeats" as Bob put it.

I read Bonnie's message three times, then I picked up my Prayer Book. I read a prayer that God would bless us "amid the changes and chances of this life."

Suggested Scripture: Psalm 4, Galatians 6:2-10 Rod Andrews is a retired Anglican bishop. He lives in Saskatoon.

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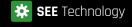
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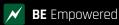
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