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Farms that have a plan are more likely to succeed.

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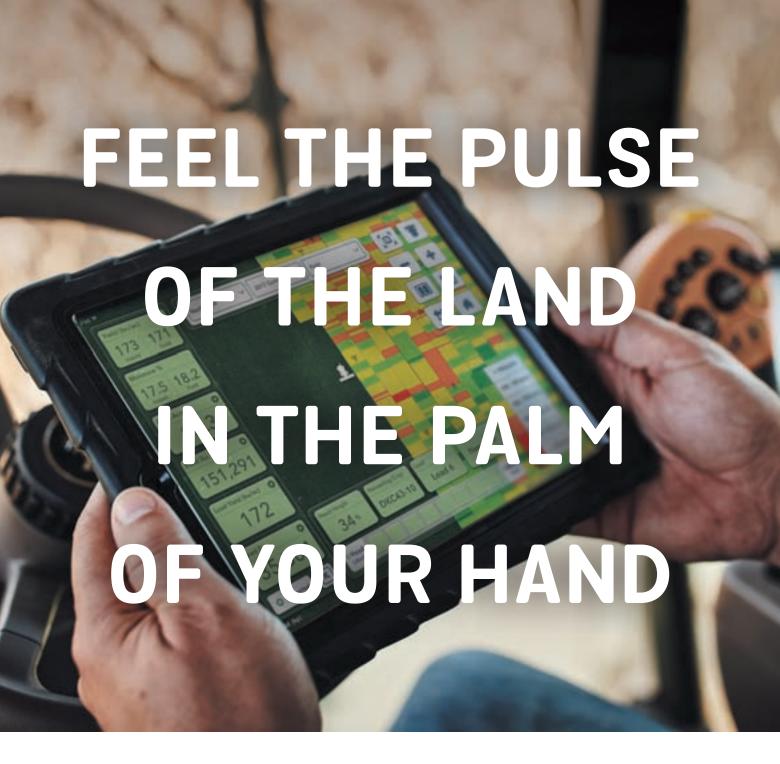
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MACHINERY

Dawn of the 'smart' combine

Automatic, on-the-fly combine adjustments are the hot new technology for 2018.



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Farms with multiple enterprises need even more focus on family, says Darrell Wade.



Two Minds

Like a growing number of farm couples, Marty and Krista De Groot opted to attend their advanced business course together. Yes, it made for some complicated scheduling and it also added to the cost, but the payoff comes with a healthier business and a stronger marriage.

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'Skills revolution' picks up pace



More than ever, the core asset on any farm is the decision maker in the middle, and how they harness the incredible array of technologies and talents around them into a cohesive whole

We've all grown up with the idea that agriculture progresses by step changes, and that these step changes are identified by the technologies that have driven them.

Think of the breakthroughs in farm machinery and how they have made it possible to harvest more acres of higher-quality crops per person than could ever have been imagined before.

Or think of the chemical revolution, with the development of fertilizers, crop protection and animal health. Or think of genetics, or electronics.

Today, though, the biggest step change we're in the midst of is the change in the nature of farmers themselves.

Partly, this is a change in the economic wherewithal of our farms. Despite some worrying trends that we will write about in more depth beginning next issue, our farms are able to make more decisions than ever before based on choice. not on financial constraint.

More, though, the change is due to an evolution in the farmer as the person with the capability of taking multiple sources of world-class scientific, financial and management input and moulding it into one high-performance family business entity.

I don't mean to denigrate previous generations of farmers. There have always been brilliant farmers, and there have always been farmers with extraordinary vision and with an incredible determination to succeed.

But today's farmers are different. They are more capable.

Nor is it just because the technology is more capable. Instead, it's that the farmers in the middle of it all are able to understand what the technology can do and what the technology can tell them, and they are putting it all together for the good of the whole.

Similarly, farmers understand much more about financial management and all the tools that come with it, and they understand much more about family dynamics than ever before.

I shake my head in disbelief sometimes that we are running stories in this issue that range from "Success Story" at the beginning to "C'mon, Get Happy" at the end, with "Two Minds" in the middle, all because these are the kinds of stories that our readers tell us they want to read.

It wasn't that way at the start of my career.

Not every reader sees the same value in every story, of course, but we hope our focus on business is supporting some of your thinking on the farm.

Yes, this most recent step change is creating its own challenges. We'll look back at some of the things we've done and wonder why. But this is a great moment in farm history.

As always, I hope you'll take a minute to let me know if we're getting it right or where we may be off the track. I'm at tom.button@ fbcpublishing.com.

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Contents of this publication are copyrighted and may be reproduced only with the permission of the editor COUNTRY GUIDE, incorporating the Nor'West Farmer and Farm & Home, is published by Glacier FarmMedia LP. Head office: Winnipeg, Manitoba Printed by Transcontinental LGMC

COUNTRY GUIDE is published 13 times per year by Glacier FarmMedia LP. Subscription rates in Canada Farmer \$45 for one year, \$67 for 2 years, \$95 for 3 years. (Prices include GST) U.S. subscription rate — \$35 (U.S. funds). Subscription rate outside Canada and U.S. - \$50 per year. Single copies: \$3.50.



Publications Mail Agreement Number 40069240.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.

Canada

Canadian Postmaster: Return undeliverable Canadian addresses (covers only) to: Circulation Dept., PO Box 9800, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 3K7.

U.S. Postmaster: Send address changes and undeliverable addresses (covers only) to: Circulation Dept., PO Box 9800, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 3K7.

Subscription inquiries:

Call toll-free 1-800-665-1362

subscription@fbcpublishing.com U.S. subscribers call 1-204-944-5766

COUNTRY GUIDE is printed with linseed oil-based inks. PRINTED IN CANADA Vol. 136 No. 12

www.agcanada.com

ISSN 1915-8491

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Dawn of the 'smart' combine

Automated and self-adjusting threshing systems become the norm

BY SCOTT GARVEY / CG MACHINERY EDITOR

ombine manufacturers have made giant strides toward machine automation. Yes, there still needs to be an operator in the cab (and we're likely some distance away from changing that), but a growing number of today's combines are making their own decisions about how to adjust their operations on the go for maximum threshing efficiency and minimum field losses.

That's why, during the preview press conference for Germany's Agritechnica show in early September, the questions were so pointed. A couple of ag journalists wanted to know why a German manufacturer had won one of the show's prestigious Innovations medals for an automated threshing adjustment system, when other brands from other countries are also incorporating

something similar in their commercial designs. Was this national favouritism?

Not so, said the head judge, who defended the panel and said it was comprised of judges from several countries. But really, the big take-away for anyone with ears to hear was that "smart" features are no longer a surprise in new combines. In fact, it would be surprising to see new designs without them.

Here in North America, we saw John Deere debut the S700 Series combines in June with Auto Maintain to keep combine adjustments maximized without operator input. Using information from what the brand calls ActiveVision cameras and other sensors, an onboard computer analyzes images of the kernels and makes up to five different threshing system adjustments on the fly.



AGCO's new "IDEAL" combine will debut in Germany in November. Built on a global platform, it will incorporate the highest level of digital technology of any combine to ever wear MF, Challenger or Fendt nameplates. ΡΗΟΤΟ: ΔGCO



Claas, the German company that garnered that controversial Innovation award, uses a similar system built into its Lexion combines, relying on a "grain quality" camera. The camera is positioned in the clean grain elevator. Just like the Deere system, operators can see real-time images on the in-cab monitor. And the computer sees them too. (Although Deere also has a camera on the returns elevator.)

Once operators set the harvesting parameters, Claas's CEMOS automated system can make automatic changes to

INTERNATIONAL

cleaning and separating systems to keep the brand's hybrid and straw walker combines threshing at peak performance, despite changing field conditions.

Not to be outdone, AGCO too had an early announcement to make about an entirely new combine platform that will be fully unveiled in November at Agritechnica. The "IDEAL" Series combines will be built on a "global platform design," which means they can easily be equipped to suit the needs of farmers almost anywhere on the planet. (These class 7, 8 and 9 models

will wear Challenger, Fendt or Massey Ferguson clothes, depending on which dealer lots they are delivered to.)

According to an early European press release, the company's new combines will have a "constant speed" function. Operators will set the preferred ground speed and the combine will work to maintain that. And these combines will also have an "automatic crop setting feature," which offers operators pre-set threshing system parameters for up to 15 different crop types. Then the system automatically places key functions such as the threshing cylinder speed, concave setting, sieve setting and fan speed to default positions. Header reel speed is also automatically co-ordinated to ground speed.

The North American announcement claims the IDEAL platform will also incorporate "an automated combine adjustment system, and Real Time Crop Flow visualization," which sounds exactly like the Claas and Deere systems. That is why this announcement made just a couple of days before the Agritechnica preview press conference sparked those skeptical questions.

AGCO's North American press release goes on to suggest, "[The IDEAL] is the most innovative combine we have ever produced and... will change the way harvesting is done today."

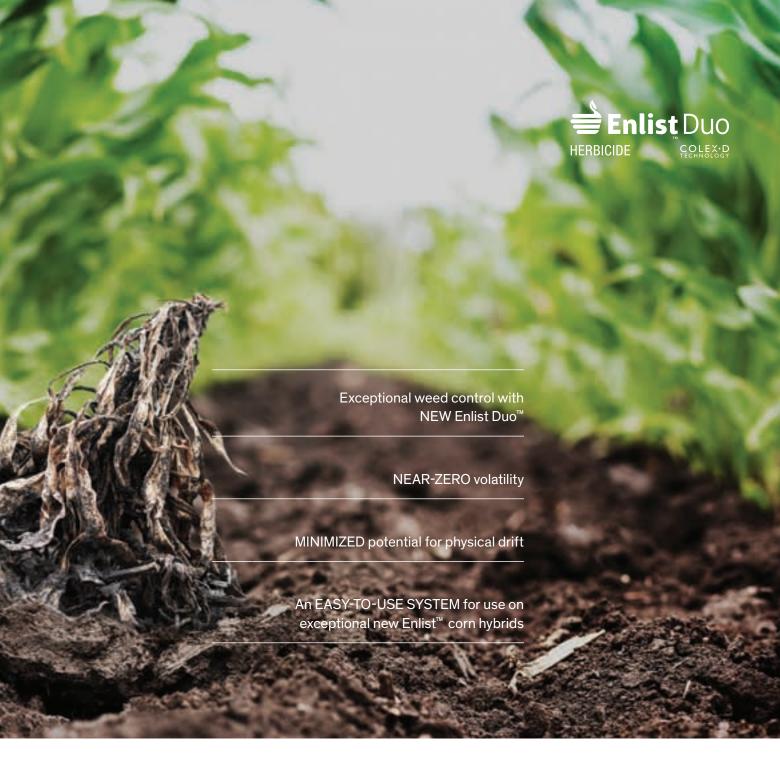
While that may prove to be true once we learn all the specs, with the pace of change in harvesting technology, incorporating automated features might better be described as just keeping up with the way harvesting is done today. **CG**











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SUCCESS STORY

A new survey shows our farmers actually are finding ways to transition their farms to the next generation

BY TOM BUTTON / CG FDITOR

here's encouraging news from a fresh survey of multi-generational farms in Canada and the

Amid all the debate that the 2016 ag census has generated about whether farmers are actually getting serious about Canada's huge farm succession challenge, this survey shows that many farms are getting on with the job just fine, thanks.

No one said it would be easy, and it isn't. No one ever said that every parent and every son and daughter would always agree with every decision, and they don't.

Young and old aren't the same, and never will be.

But the farms in this survey tell us that in many families, succession is often more a matter of setting a direction and getting on with the job than of laying out a detailed script and sticking slavishly to it, or of deciding exactly how many dollars will go to which specific family members before you even start to transfer any of the operational decision-making.

It turns out most families agree on a lot more than you might have expected, if they give each other a chance.

The irony is that the survey, which was conducted by Agri Studies, based in Guelph, Ont., in conjunction with Scott Downey, economist at Purdue University, was set up to look at decision-making patterns on multi-generational farms, not to specifically study succession.

Agri Studies is a consulting firm, and they wanted to be able to help farm supply companies sharpen their sales strategies for dealing with the growing number of multi-generational farms that are becoming a bigger share of the market north and south of the border, especially in the wake of the 2008 boom in grain and oilseed prices. (Full disclosure: Glacier Farm Media, which publishes Country Guide, helped Agri Studies identify the farmers for its survey.)

Ag supply companies are already picking up on the fact that change is underway, says Justin Funk, Agri Studies managing partner. But it hasn't always been easy for them to tell exactly what's behind the change. They're finding, for instance, that on a lot of farms, it's harder to know who they should be talking to. Should they make their pitch to the senior generation, or to the junior?

And on a growing number of farms too, they just haven't been as sure about what the family is looking for. Is it the product that is dependable year-in and year-out, or the one that's most competitively priced?

And who makes the final call?

The survey team wanted to know who

is actually making the decisions on these farms. And what kinds of sales messages are they likely to give the highest priority to.

It turns out the answers paint a useful picture of how these farms are navigating their day-to-day business while keeping their eyes on their long-term future.

In all, the survey team polled 406 farms, about two-thirds in the U.S. and one-third in Canada. Roughly three-quarters of the farms had at least two generations on the farm, although the survey team also polled another 100 single-generation farms as a kind of check.

Next, the team went back to 50 farms, doing detailed, separate interviews with the two generations (on most farms, this meant father and son). In these more detailed interviews, the average age of the older generation was 60 and the young generation 33.

Key traits of farms that are succeeding at succession appeared to be:

- Fairly clear succession timelines and goals.
- · Shared but not overlapping operational decision-making (see below).
- At least some ownership for the young generation.
- · Parents retaining final say on financing and marketing until late in the process.
- · A willingness on everyone's part to accept some level of conflict and frustration, while using farm meetings to discuss differences in an objective format.
- A focus on the long term.

The other big finding was that these farms are treating transition as a phasedin, multi-year project. In the farms with detailed interviews, (where, as noted, the average parent was 60 and the next generation 33), the two generations independently told the research team it would take an average of eight years for the farm's management to fully transfer.

However, the change has already started. "Much of the transition is happening a lot quicker than we thought," Funk says.

As anticipated, multi-generational farms were larger than single-generation farms, but not by so much. A third of multi-generational farms had annual sales over \$1 million, compared to a quarter of singlegeneration farms, and roughly a quarter in each group had sales between \$500,000 and

A clearer difference was in education,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



In separate interviews, when Funk's team asked who makes cropping decisions, parents and "children" both put up their hands. And both were right

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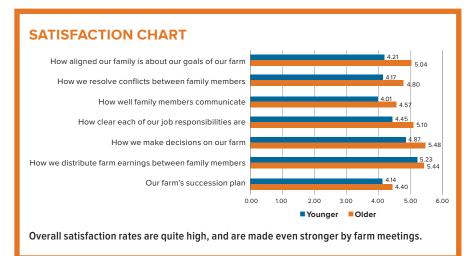
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where the younger generation on multigenerational farms shows a strong shift to university degrees (nearly 60 per cent), compared to 12 per cent with a college diploma and 16 per cent stopping after high school. (Comparative numbers for the parent generation were 30 per cent university, 35 per cent college and 25 per cent high school).

Researchers also found differences in succession planning tied to farm size.

In particular, they found that in longterm planning, large farms put their priorities on:

- Financial security.
- Providing a sustainable way to transition the farm to future generations.
- Transparency.
- Clarity of the succession planning process.

By contrast, smaller farms were much more likely to focus on preserving the current owner's flexibility than on financial security or fairness among siblings.

SHARED DECISION MAKING

Two decision-making conclusions jump out from the study.

First, as farm size increases, so does the likelihood that the younger generation will play a larger role, in contrast to their almost "hired-hand" status on smaller farms.

To put it another way, the larger the farm, the more involved the younger generation will be in decision making.

But there is a crucial twist to this. When the research team went to farms that appeared to have a healthy approach to succession and asked who made specific decisions, whether it was about input purchases or even machinery, both generations put their hands up.

And it turns out both were right to do so, because on these farms, the younger generation often sorts out the details about seed genetics, for instance (in fact, the study found that decisions about seed choices are among the first to be transferred). The younger generation may also be who talks to salespeople about crop protection, or to the local supplier about fertilizer.

But the senior generation (mainly "Dad") still retains a kind of "the buck stops here" authority to approve the younger generation's decisions, whether that's on a decision-by-decision basis for young and relatively inexperienced entrants, or on more of a field-by-field basis as the younger generation earns more confidence.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, this proved an area of tension on some farms if the young generation felt Dad was slow to give up what they saw as micromanagement. But generally, if the overall direction of the succession seemed to be in place, the conflict was kept within limits.

On many farms, the younger generation also had more authority for hiring and managing employees.

As they gained more experience, as well, it appeared to be understood by both sides that the younger generation would have more input into machinery and marketing and even financing and land rental/ purchasing decisions, although these were among the last to transfer. Still, the oldest generation tended to hold onto primary responsibility for dealing with lenders and landlords.

DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

Part of the success of these farms seems to come from accepting that the two generations have different biases.

For instance, when it comes to choosing which crop-input dealers to work with, young generation farmers give more weight to issues including convenience, service and access to wide range of options.

Their parents, by contrast, are likely to value trust and loyalty.

Across many areas too, older generation farmers are more likely to opt for consistent performance while the young may gravitate toward competitive pricing.

There was a gap regarding machinery purchases as well, with younger farmers focusing on the technology and capacity advantages of new equipment, while older farmers preferred to repair rather than replace (and to say that their young partners need more caution about the impact of machinery purchases on the bottom line.)

THE SATISFACTION CURVE

Overall, the young and older generations told the survey team they were quite satisfied with their progress, although the older generation was likely to rate their satisfaction higher, perhaps because of their memories of tough times in earlier decades.

Even so, the news wasn't all good, with notes of dissatisfaction from both generations on communication and on succession planning.

As well, the young generation are more likely to express dissatisfaction over the farm's progress on goal alignment, role clarity and conflict resolution.

Yet at the same time, more farms are adopting formal meetings and other tactics to keep the lines of communication open, so family members know they will get a chance to make their case.

Not surprisingly, larger farms are more likely to have formal meetings. Roughly 40 per cent of very large farms (i.e. sales over \$2 million) meet at least once a quarter, and another 40 per cent organize an annual

Increasingly, however, even mediumsized farms (sales of \$500K to \$1 million) are adopting the meeting format, with almost half (approximately 45 per cent) having a formal farm meeting at least once a year, and nearly 20 per cent also having weekly or monthly meetings. CG



A different school

For Vance Lester and Sue Echlin. getting a non-agricultural education proved a big help when they returned to the farm

BY LISA GUENTHER / CG FIELD EDITOR

raduate degrees in ecology and international relations don't seem the kind of education that would be likely to help on a Canadian farm. But that's where we might be wrong.

For Sue Echlin and Vance Lester, that kind of schooling has been instrumental in their launching a fruit-growing and winery business, and in keeping

Any advanced education is a benefit, whether or not it's in ag, Lester now says. The hard and soft skills that a person learns in one field often transfer to other industries.

And there can be an advantage: "If you are educated in a field other than agriculture you will learn to learn in a different way than if you were immersed in only the agricultural world," he says, based on their experience. "This can encourage unique problem-solving and out-of-the-box thinking."

Plus, Lester adds, even on a traditional grain or livestock farm these days, it doesn't hurt to have the flexibility that an alternate education and an alternate set of networks can give you, or even to have a Plan B, given the ebbs and flows of agriculture.

Echlin grew up on a ranch in Alberta's foothills. Her family ingrained a passion for politics in her, which is why, after earning a bachelor's degree in political studies from the University of Calgary, she moved to Saskatoon to complete a graduate degree in international relations at the University of Saskatchewan.

Her plan, at the time, was to become a professor. But that changed once she started her graduate degree.

"It was just too much sitting in an office and not being connected enough to the day-to-day realities of the world," she says.

That's how, after finishing her degree, Echlin found herself setting off to work. For a while, she worked as a temp, and it was while filling in as a receptionist at an environmental consulting agency that she met Vance Lester.

Lester originally hailed from Allan, Sask., a town southeast of Saskatoon. He completed a bachelor's degree in biology, and a master's in ecology, at the University of Saskatchewan. For several years, he worked in his field, as a duck biologist.

As time went on, Echlin landed a job in marketing and communications with the University of Saskatchewan. It wasn't exactly in the field she'd studied, but her education proved useful. "It taught me how to write well and communicate effectively and research."

Meanwhile, Lester moved into a human resources position at the University of Saskatchewan — the ecology of humans, as Echlin says.

"And then," says Echlin, "we decided we wanted to figure out what we could do to stay on the farm."

If you never develop the skills to solve problems and approach things from different angles," Lester says, "vou won't succeed in agriculture or any other field."



STARTING FROM SCRATCH

When people think of agriculture in Saskatchewan, what usually comes to mind are the province's brilliant yellow canola fields under wide blue skies. But Echlin and Lester wanted to do something value-added instead of strictly commodity based.

"Being a ranch kid, I'd gone through BSE," says Echlin. "And I'd done enough training on futures and options to realize that you only have so much control over your income as a farmer. Even with the best weather and everything else, you're sometimes at the mercy of traders."

A trip to B.C. provided inspiration. During a wine tour, they visited a fruit winery, and thought there was no reason they couldn't do the same type of thing in the middle of the biggest grain-producing province in the country.

So they bought a farm near Perdue, a couple hours west of Saskatoon. The previous owners had raised goats, and those goats left a lot of amazing fertilizer, Echlin says, and the young couple dug into their work, converting a former triticale field into the orchard and planting about 45,000 trees for fruit and hedge rows.

In 2010, they opened Living Sky Winery, growing everything from rhubarb and cherries to currants for fruit wines. It was the second winery to open in the province, following only Marty and Marie Bohnet's Cypress Hills Vineyard and Winery.

And, once again, their educations came in handy, Echlin says, as they set about researching everything from the chemistry involved in winemaking to government policy.

"The backgrounds we had in the sciences and social sciences were so important to have the ability to find the knowledge we needed to do this."

SCIENCE ON THE FARM

Sustainability is a big part of Living Sky's brand — Echlin and Lester talk about it on social media and during interviews and presentations. The winery's logo is a single duck in flight, which is appropriate given Lester's background.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Welcome to High-efficiency Seeding

Precision Disk[™] air drills deliver optimal yield potential from every seed

ir drills are the seeding implement of choice when it comes to meeting cropping challenges across northern climates. Air drills offer the versatility to handle varying soils and terrain while also allowing producers to quickly react to changes in crop selection.

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"Seed-to-soil contact is critical in helping nearly any crop realize its yield potential," Long says. "Our closing wheel is designed specifically for closing in a wide range of conditions — from conventional tillage to no-till."

CONSISTENT SEED DEPTH AND SPACING

Regardless of tillage regimen, soils and conditions can change dramatically across the field or from pass to pass. And that can throw off seed placement.

"Precision Disk air drill row units feature a parallel-link system. The upper and lower arm ensure even depth placement across varying soil conditions," Long says. "In-cab down pressure adjustment and down force springs provide consistency at each row unit." The result: superior depth control at higher speeds.

This consistent seed placement carries across multiple crops, too.

"More and more, producers rely on a diverse crop mix — from wheat and other cereal grains to corn and soybeans. And then, there's the rapidly growing interest in cover crops," Long says.

"Precision Disk 500 series air drills accurately and consistently seed a wide range of crops."

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Seed handling and metering comprise the heart of any air drill. Case IH offers two options, each designed for high-efficiency seeding:

• The Precision Disk 500 air drill provides high-capacity air seeding when paired with Case IH Precision Air™ 5 series air carts. Tow-behind or tow-between configurations and capacities ranging from 350 to 950 bushels form the perfect match for today's larger drills and higher-horsepower tractors. Precision Air 5 series air carts feature an innovative modular metering control system that accurately places seed and fertilizer. The air carts

also feature AccuSection™ section control technology for more efficient crop input use.

 The Precision Disk 500T air drill features an on-board mounted 70- or 100-bushel tank with seed metering, four-section overlap control and unmatched maneuverability.

"AccuSection section control and section shutoff reduce or eliminate overlap at headland turns, point rows or around field obstacles to help avoid expensive overapplication of seed and fertilizer," Long says.

The technology doesn't end there. Precision Disk 500 and 500T models are compatible with ISO 11783 technology and the AFS Pro 700 display.

"Whether working with small grains or pulse, cash or cover crops, you can accomplish more, more precisely, with a Precision Disk 500 series air drill," Long says.

RESOURCES:

¹Shroyer J. Wheat seeding tips for good stand establishment. Kansas State University Extension Agronomy eUpdate. https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/eu_article.throck?article_id=332. Published August 29, 2014. Accessed September 28, 2017.

²Johnson P. Spring Wheat Planting. South Dakota State University Extension iGrow website. http://igrow.org/agronomy/wheat/spring-wheat-planting/. Published March 5, 2013. Accessed September 28, 2017.





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Echlin also thinks their focus on sustainability was a big part of the reason they were named national Outstanding Young Farmers in 2012.

Every decision they make on the farm is rooted in an ecological standpoint, she says. And Lester's training as an ecologist grounds those decisions in science, leading them to protect riparian areas, plant willows to catch snow, and protect ducks and bees.

Lester sees how each farming practice fits into the bigger picture. For example, they seeded alfalfa around the orchard to fix nitrogen and provide bumblebee habitat, she says. "He thinks of all the systematic parts of the environment and how they fit together."

Echlin says there is a honeybee producer nearby, and those bees are attracted to the orchard. But they also have "a pretty spectacular" wild honeybee and pollinator cluster. In the spring, the cherry trees are full of the honeybees as well as the wild pollinators that often go unnoticed.

"They're teeny, teeny, and some of them will have a little yellow stripe," says Echlin. They're as important as the big bees, she adds, and she credits Lester with the healthy population on their farm.

Lester's science background also comes in handy when it's time to make wine. There's no shortage of chemistry involved in winemaking, and Lester has a good handle on that aspect. They also have a wine consultant, Dominic Rivard, who co-owns a winery in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley.

That focus on winemaking craft has paid off for Living Sky. Echlin and Lester's wines have racked up 16 national and international medals.

NAVIGATING POLICY CHANGES

Echlin's marketing and public relations experience has been an obvious asset for the business. So have the networks she built during her work experience.

Her political science background has also come into play with the business. A large part of Echlin's job in the last few years has been working with provincial legislators to change policies around craft alcohol production.

Some of those policies were not exactly conducive to starting a small winery or distillery. For example, when Living Sky first opened, they could only sell wine from their on-farm store or in government liquor stores. Farmers' markets and private liquor stores were offlimits.

Living Sky joined forces with other early adopters, including Lucky Bastard, Last Mountain Distillery and Cypress Hills Vineyard and Winery. Together, they formed the Saskatchewan Artisan Wine and Spirits Association, which advocates for small-batch wineries, distilleries, and meaderies.

Echlin's education gave her an understanding of how governments work and the process that policy changes must go through. She knew the different ways to apply pressure to different sectors of government.

"It's a different world and the processes can't be rushed. But you need to know when to push, too."

Today, craft wine and spirit makers can sell their products at farmer's markets, in private liquor stores, in each other's stores, and online, delivering it directly to customers. The Sask Liquor and Gaming Authority now gives them a better markup.

"I can't speak on the beer side because that's a whole different world, but as far as wine and spirits go, it was the work of just a few of us that opened it up for the frankly huge — industry it is now."

Echlin is still involved with the Saskatchewan Artisan Wine and Spirits Association, currently serving as chair.

BIG BELIEVERS IN EDUCATION

Both Echlin and Lester are big believers in education, whatever the focus is.

"All subjects and disciplines teach you how to think and develop the ability to problem solve," says Lester.

Lester points out that while university teaches students how to research, apply the scientific method, and process information, even the ag specialty doesn't do a great job of teaching all the practical aspects you'd need to run any farm.

That means the ability to acquire hands-on learning will inevitably be vital too, he says, and it will be at least as important as a university education. But there's this difference, he says.

"You can always learn the technical aspects in the field, but if you never develop the skills to solve problems and approach things from different angles you won't succeed in agriculture or any other field."

Echlin adds that it's important to meet other people from outside your own experience or community, and post-secondary education can facilitate that. Their own educations and work experience continue to yield benefits.

Many of those benefits are related to long-term friendships. Lester still talks regularly with the friends he made during his days as a duck biologist, Echlin says. Others are career-related, such as Lester's continuing work as a human resources consultant.

Echlin still phones up people she used to work with when she needs advice. She remains in contact with some of her classmates and professors. She's also kept in touch with grad students from other programs, such as psychology and economics, as they all mixed in the geology building basement.

"Even though we weren't necessarily studying the same speciality, I think just that experience of going through grad school was as important as what the specialty was."

Echlin's focus on international relations also gave her a larger world view. She traveled extensively and studied in Moscow for a semester. Experiencing different cultures made her think differently, she says.

"I would never change any of it." CG

"World foods" in high demand from Ontario's diverse population



kra, Chinese eggplant, halal meats – these are some of the delicious foods that are increasingly in demand in Ontario. Ontario is Canada's most culturally-diverse region, with one-quarter of the population born outside of Canada and 100,000 newcomers arriving in the province every year. This demographic reality is a tremendous growth opportunity for primary local food producers – and for processors as well.

Two processors in the Greater Toronto Area have taken advantage of this opportunity and leveraged investments from the Greenbelt Fund to increase their efficiency and capacity to deliver locally grown "world foods", while

creating additional jobs, in the region.

NMK Foods in Mississauga specializes in ready-to-cook halal meats, and couldn't keep up with



growing demand for local halal chicken and turkey products. The company invested in automated packaging equipment to increase output, and partnered with Cami International Poultry in Welland to secure more locally-sourced chickens to meet demand.

"We freeze and then vacuum seal halal kebobs to maintain a fresh taste for the longest time possible," says owner Adnan Khan. "We make our food as ready-to-cook items and we pride ourselves on not using any added preservatives. The packaging machine is a much better process for the kebobs – we would be able to be much more efficient and generate more products." The equipment will also make meeting the HACCP Food Safety Protocol easier for NMK Foods. "Once we can start packaging with it, it will increase the shelf life of our product. Also production is set to increase by four times if not more, which means that we can create more job opportunities," say Khan.

NMK applied to the Greenbelt Fund to help support its expansion. "The Greenbelt Fund gave us such a great response," says Khan. "They sent a team member down to visit our operation and find out more about what we do and what we need, and to help decide if an investment would be beneficial. The one thing that I really loved about working with Greenbelt is that they didn't just write the cheque and then take a backseat. They were so hands-on; they were hosting seminars with buyers and potential clients, meeting with people, and provided great networking opportunities for us."

Sheik Halal Farms in Etobicoke is also in the halal duck and chicken business, and similarly saw increasing demand for its chickens and ducks, which are sold locally in independent grocery stores, specialty stores and large chain stores.

The company started about 20 years ago, when owner Sheik Khan (no relation to Adnan Khan) had only one grocery store. "I wanted

to offer fresh local duck, so I contacted a local farmer," he recalls. "I grew from 10 ducks a week to three or four hundred ducks a week. My company is now Canada's largest halal duck processor. We have also been processing halal chicken for the last three years, now about 15,000 birds a week. We plan to double that in next three years and hire more staff."

The Greenbelt
Fund gave us such
a great response.

Part of that expansion strategy is using a \$75,000 investment from the Greenbelt Fund to purchase ice-making equipment, which will make his plant much more efficient. "Right now, we have to buy ice and with lots of our own ice on hand, we can chill and pack right away with much less handling," he explains.

The economic opportunity also extends to poultry farmers interested in new market opportunities. Since halal certification is all about how the poultry is slaughtered and prepared, it's not incumbent on farmers to change their on-farm practices when raising poultry for this market.

"I've heard of quite a few people being able to improve and expand their businesses with the Greenbelt Fund," adds Sheik. "Local food is important. Consumers like to eat fresh and safe local products instead of imported food. They are more comfortable knowing it's from Ontario and are happy to see jobs being created."

The Greenbelt Fund changes the way we eat by investing in projects that bring more Ontario food to Ontarians' plates, with financial support from the Government of Ontario.



TWO MINDS

More couples like the De Groots are taking advanced farm business training together, and report that it's good both for the farm and for their marriage

BY ANGELA LOVELL

o say that Marty and Krista De Groot have their hands full is an understatement. The young couple are in the midst of taking over the third-generation family farm from Marty's parents. Although his dad, Jack, still helps out, Marty does the bulk of the daily work, taking care of the 40,000 broiler chickens, 2,500 nursery pigs and 450 acres of cash crops as well as the book work on the farm near Stratford, Ont.

Krista, although she'd love nothing better than to be out driving the combine, has temporarily relinquished the combine driving to Marty's mom, Francine, while she takes care of newborn son, Jacob, five-year-old daughter, Adelle and son, John, who is almost two.

In the midst of it all, however, the De Groots still found time to take the Advanced Farm Management (AFM) program this past winter, offered by the Agri-Food Management Institute of Guelph.

Importantly, too, they found a way to take the course as a couple.



ALL THE PLANNING WORTH IT

The De Groots admit it took more than a little planning to find a way to clear the time for both of them to attend the five-day course — one day in December followed by more sessions in January and February.

"It took us three years to get there after we first started talking about the course," Krista acknowledges. The first year, they'd only heard about the program a few days before the application deadline, and the next year they had a newborn to look after. "But last winter I was pregnant, so we took the opportunity to go. Marty's parents were great because they knew this would benefit them too, so they took care of the kids while we were gone."

Whatever it took to get there, the couple decided the course was something they needed to do.

"For us it was a good chance to actually think about our business a little bit more," says Krista. "We got married and had a baby right away, and I was working and we never had taken the time to look at our financials and think about our vision and do all those things we knew were important but hadn't prioritized.

"It really made us get on the same page about what we wanted for our future and for the business."

Marty (35) and Krista (36) both grew up in the Strat-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22





Just doing the homework and talking it out and being open" were among the key benefits, Krista and Marty agree

ford area and attended the University of Guelph, taking agricultural degrees. Marty came back to the farm in 2004 after a few years away working in trades and also for other farmers to gain some different skills.

By 2005, he had decided he wanted to stay and became a partner in the farm with his parents. At the time, the farm raised about 300 sows farrow to finish, but by 2008, with pig prices not great, and with new housing on the horizon and older barns that would soon have to be renovated or replaced, Marty and his dad decided to make a switch and Marty purchased broiler chicken quota.

Today, they are in the process of transitioning the farm, so it was an opportune time to get some additional training.

Although AFM didn't specifically cover the succession process, it gave them some additional tools to help it along, and equally importantly, acted as a catalyst to strengthen communication between all the family members.

"It's helping us with succession planning by defining our vision, our plans and what we want for the future, talking and writing down our priorities for the business," says Krista. "Then knowing what questions to ask so we don't get into succession planning and find some skeletons in the closet or something that one person didn't know. We've asked Marty's parents too about what role they see for themselves in the future and then defined the things that they need as they spend more time in retirement. It's been good for all of us to have those conversations."

MORE AND MORE FARM **COUPLES TAKING TRAINING**

Educators report a definite trend toward farm couples and different combinations of farm partners taking advanced management courses together.

The De Groots first heard about AME from another farm couple who had taken it, and their group included a father and daughter team. "There were quite a few of us that were in that same place of transitioning the farm, so although it wasn't a specific topic covered, it came up a lot in conversations with the rest of the group," says Krista.

Having more than one person also means they will get different things out of a course like AFM. Marty and Krista were naturally attracted to some components that interested them more and which they feel will have tremendous value for their business.

Krista, who worked in marketing and communications for almost 10 years, found a lot of value in sessions about branding the business. "I never really knew how to apply it to the farm or if it mattered," she says. "It's different for every operation but branding is so important because it affects your reputation in the community and the industry. A nice sign up with our farm name or some coats with our farm name on them, things like that all say something good about your operation. It was great to be able to take this course with Marty so he could understand too why your family brand and your business brand matters."

The farm has no employees, so Marty has always looked for ways to improve efficiency wherever he can, from installing a large, continuous flow dryer that cut drying time by several weeks, to upgrading the sprayer and corn planter to save him time at planting. So it wasn't surprising that he was intrigued by sessions about LEAN — a concept that began in the manufacturing sector and is designed to eliminate waste and make processes more efficient.

"A dairy producer spoke about how he had used the principles of LEAN to save him a lot of milking time. He basically compared how long it took to milk each cow and then batched the slower and faster milkers together, which ended up being more efficient," says Marty. "It really prompted me to question why and how we do things and to think about how I could make things I do every day more efficient.

"One of the first things I did when I came home was cut the cleaning time for our 800 feed pans from four hours to an hour-and-ahalf just by changing the process a little bit."

IMPROVED FINANCIAL SKILLS A MAJOR GOAL

When it came to the financial aspects of the training, the couple were completely onside. A major goal for each was to better understand the farm financials, and it's paid off because now they are much more comfortable having conversations with their banker.

"Marty sat down and did all of our financial ratios, and he went back six years through our financial statements and put everything into a spreadsheet so we could actually track it," says Krista. "We've taken that to our banker and talked about what they're looking for in ratios, what ours are, where we need to improve, and which ones are good. We know what our banker is looking for before they can lend us money and we know what we need to work on, so that's been really helpful to help us all be on the same page."

Being more confident with the numbers means it's easier to show his parents the return on investment for purchases and to make the right equipment decisions, says Marty. When they bought a new sprayer last year they knew it was saving them time and money because they'd calculated the total costs of having to bring in a custom sprayer, as they'd had to do previously.

"Knowing the numbers better, I was able to show Mom and Dad that it does cash flow," says Marty. "We have figured our new sprayer is going to be paid for in five years just from savings on the custom work and the time savings. It used to take us six hours to spray our corn ground and now that's down to three hours. Every time we go to the field now, it's saving \$10 an acre, which we can put back towards the loan. And we're saving on nitrogen costs by storing it, so there's another premium there too."

TAKING CARE OF TODAY SO THEY CAN GROW TOMORROW

Marty and Krista want to continue to expand the farm business, maybe adding employees at some stage when their par-

ents finally retire completely, and building a second chicken barn or even purchasing some more land over the next decade or so. "It will depend on the growth of the industry, but for the time being we are looking at everything that makes us money right now and seeing if we can tweak everything," says Marty.

Krista and Marty are glad they took additional training together because it forced them to have the conversations they hadn't gotten around to having.

"Just doing the homework and talking it out and being open with each other and asking why do we do things this way, saying 'it drives me crazy when this happens' and 'why does that happen?'" says Krista.

"Being able to have those conversations, to know what's going on and be on the same page so that you can go forward together... Most farms are multi-milliondollar businesses and you need to keep your marriage, family and business intact, so you have to be able to share all those things together."

Their advice for other couples who might be thinking of taking some advanced management training is to go in the winter, go together, and make it a

Says Krista: "Life's just going to get busier, so do it as early as possible when you're taking over a farm or business." CG



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Smart stuff

Do parents really recognize the skills their children are bringing back from college and university, and how those skills can make the farm stronger?

BY SHANNON VANRAES / CG FIELD EDITOR

kip the smiley faces and the acronyms. In the new age of digital soft skills, agricultural schools are embracing the same modes of electronic communication as their students, albeit with a dose of finesse, professionalism and, at times, trepidation.

"Don't use emojis, they're cute, but they're not professional," Mark Fournier of Alberta's Olds College tells his students. The school offers applied degree and diploma programs in agribusiness and agricultural management, respectively, and has made the decision to include texting skills and strategies as part of its curriculum.

Texting is a skill?

Like many post-secondary instructors, career counsellors and professors, Fournier has found it isn't just students, it's also industry that is increasingly relying on electric communication.

Texting is changing Fournier's teaching patterns. "If we were to go back even 10 years ago, students would come into the instructor's office to talk to the instructor to get a little extra help or get some clarification on some issue. Then we moved over to email, so students became more comfortable with emailing instructors, and now we've actually found that phone conversations have almost dropped off. I think I could probably count on one hand the number of students over the last three years that have actually phoned me," says Fournier. "Text messaging is taking over."

But the important point for Fournier is that industry is also shifting to texting for its communication needs, and agribusinesses want employees who can communicate effectively in short bursts of text.

Texting isn't just a teenage way of keeping connected. Increasingly, it's a business strength too, and it's creating a communications environment that farms will need to excel in as well.

The pressure will only grow, he says. "A producer will text message their supplier or text message the dealer to say they are having a problem, so more and more industry members are working with the general public through text messaging."

Other technologies, like video conferencing and FaceTime, are also becoming invaluable tools for farmers, Fournier says, and they too require soft skills or "people skills" to be effective.

Just because two people are speaking over a video link or text, it doesn't mean they can stop paying attention to social cues, be vague about important details or let professionalism slip.

Even educators, however, are trying to figure out how these new skills contribute to success, versus when they may be a distraction, or actually get in the way.

"Maybe I'm old school, but I refuse to believe I'm old," says Pascal Thériault, a lecturer with McGill's faculty of agricultural and environmental sciences. Even so, the 40-year-old Thériault finds himself leaving phone messages that aren't returned, and counselling students against communicating through Facebook.

"A student, instead of leaving me a phone message in my office, will actually send me a Facebook message when we're not even Facebook friends," Thériault says. "So I'd open up my Facebook message from such and such and it says, "I won't make it to class because I am sick." Of course my first reaction is to say, 'send me a real email."

But while Facebook remains taboo in business communications, the text message has become an acceptable, if not favoured, form of communication. Thériault adds that the convenience of texting has now won him over, but agrees that professional text messages must be kept short, concise and free of abbreviations.

"How can you manage a business with just text messages?" he asks. "I'm slowly trying to get there. Even for our internship businesses, because (our students) all do internships over the summer, we found over the years that even if we don't want to give them our personal cell phone numbers, it's just so much easier to do that. Text me if there's something, I'll text you. They reply to us right away and it's done."

What texting can't do is replace face-toface communication, something that many — if not most, students — need to work on when they begin college or university.

Fournier agrees that some of his agriculture students are genuinely unnerved by having to speak to people in person.

"The students that are coming into postsecondary now are very used to having their cell phones out, are very used to communicating in very short bursts through text messages, and we're actually finding that there is almost a level of being uncomfortable when they are forced to engage for too long a period face-to face," Fournier says, adding that giving or receiving critical or constructive feedback seems to challenge them the most. "They haven't had that as much as they've had in the past, because of the technology being a buffer, that's some thing that we as educators are trying to adapt to and overcome."

At the Ontario College of Agriculture at Guelph University, students are pushed to expand their soft skills by organizing events, networking and participating in the larger community. Melinda Vanryn, program counsellor for the school's bachelor of science in agriculture degree, says that soft

skills are often developed on campus, but outside of the classroom.

"We have a job fair for students and in some ways it's not about getting a job... these opportunities give students the soft skills that people are looking for, they go to the job fair and come back saying, 'Oh, hey, I learned to network a little more, I felt a little more comfortable walking up and introducing myself to a stranger,' so I think a lot of those opportunities are important... and I'm hoping students are recognizing what else they are gaining from those experiences."

Andy Robinson is the college's professor of teaching excellence and has been involved in a number of new experiential learning initiatives at the school, working to integrate real world lessons into an academic setting.

"Basically, I'm identifying areas where students have a significant learning opportunity that's outside of a traditional classroom type of environment," Robinson says. It's a different education than their parents had, and uses independent-learning course codes to allow students to get credit for some, perhaps, non-traditional activities, Robinson explains.

A simple example is an event called College Royal, the largest student-run university open house in North America. It started as preparation for the Royal Winter Fair and is in some ways an expansion of the 4-H

Students who participate learn to show livestock and display forages, while also honing their time-management and leadership skills.

Maybe it sounds like old-fashioned school projects, but there's more to it than that. Students must also write a reflective piece on the experience that outlines what they have learned and gives advice to next year's participants. Importantly, too, they must formulate a decision-making timeline which they present to their peers.

"In this particular example it's primarily leadership skills they're taking away, and it also gets at how to train others to do a skill that you're very familiar with," Robinson says, adding that these skills are important for those who hope to manage their own farm business one day.

The initiative also gets students sharing information through in-depth writing projects, and away from the short bursts of text they are so often accustomed to.

"We've put an emphasis on making sure they can write reports," said Paul Gumprich, an associate professor of agriculture at the University of the Fraser Valley. "We feel it is important that they are able to communicate to their staff, to employees or other businesses they deal with... in detail."

The school also works to prepare its agriculture students to be their own public relations managers, as consumers become more interested and outspoken about agriculture and food policy.

"We teach classes on how to handle the media in less than ideal conditions as well," says Gumprich. Whether it's responding to zoning changes or animal welfare issues after an undercover video surfaces, the professor says today's farmers are called on to have a public persona and public response like never before.

"I'd like to say that they'll never have to deal with conflict... but we all know that's not true, so we try to put some focus on that," he says. "We try and put them into those situations, or at least get them thinking about those things, things like GMOs and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

I'd like to say they'll never have to deal with conflict," says ag prof Paul Gumprich, "but we all know that's not true."



Is this technology right for this farm? Such questions are at the heart of today's ag education.

animal welfare. If they are growing those crops or raising animals... they will have to deal with consumers and their perceptions."

Students at Fraser Valley also practice speaking on camera and do test runs of audio interviews to gain the confidence they need to become leaders in representing their industry.

Theriault says responding effectively to criticism or concern, both in person and online, has become an increasing focus of skill development for McGill's agriculture students as well. He says students benefit from stepping back from their family farms and looking critically how they operate and how some of their practices might be perceived by those without an agricultural background.

"Because if you were brought up on the farm and all you do is farming, then what you're doing is right... but you need to be able to express it in a way that consumers understand," says Thériault.

However, this also means our young farmers need the soft or fluid skills to listen to other points of view — even if they find them offensive — and then build a discussion around them, rather than a confrontation.

"I had one student who is vegan and is a supporter of PETA and 60 per cent of the class are dairy farmers... to her milk is murder," Thériault says. "But my dairy farmers claim that you're going to die if you don't drink milk, of course because that's what they were brought up to believe. So there's lots of belief being challenged."

But the students in his course handled the situation with more aplomb than he anticipated.

"I was surprised because they are more polite than I was expecting them to be. I was ready to walk in with a fire extinguisher to put down those fires," he recalls, adding that even with two fairly entrenched views, there is room for debate and understanding. "The more food information you know the more you can communicate to the consumer what you're doing. And that's not technical, you could be running a campaign, you could be running things that might or might not work."

Robinson also stresses that communication with folks off the farm has become an increasingly important soft skill for agriculturalists.

"We do have a course in communication and they definitely cover how to use social media effectively and other techniques for



Basic agronomic facts are still important, but complex decision-making gets more emphasis.

communicating the agriculture message," he says. "We also, certainly within the 4H program we're running on campus, have guest speakers that talk about using social media effectively to get the message out. And not just social media, but other media as well."

Critically analyzing and interpreting incoming information is also key for students looking to return to the family farm, start their own enterprise or work at another agribusiness. Just as consumers can be targeted by misinformation, so are farmers.

"We are teaching them various critical thinking skills — how you conduct analysis — and throughout the program they will build their skill in complex decision-making in all their courses," says Michele Rogalsky, director of the School of Agriculture at the University of Manitoba. Students get exposed to new technologies in agronomy, livestock and business management, for example. But once they learn what the technology can do, they also look at whether it would be a good decision to integrate it into a particular farm or agribusiness.

With agricultural research evolving so rapidly, it's more important than ever to be able to critically evaluate such opportunities, Rogalsky adds.

"We are no longer just looking at seeding rates and soil fertility practices," Rogalsky says. "Those will change, so we need critical thinking skills to assess new information... What are the biases? How do you determine where you are getting that agronomic information from? Then, more importantly, how to you make sure it applies to your farm specifically?

"I think all of our courses are recognizing that production information and practices are changing so quickly, we've got to prepare the students."

The ability to carefully and critically evaluate new information and claims is also something that employers are looking for, she adds, noting it has come up repeatedly in consultations with industry.

"So three years from now, whatever that new crop is, they are going to have the skills and resources to gather that information and make appropriate and effective financial management decisions," says the director.

Thériault agrees. To him, at the end of the day, teaching agriculture is about bringing well-rounded, thoughtful people onto the farm, into the workforce and into the community.

"We are teaching them to manage multimillion dollar businesses, so it's not just about having the skills to milk a cow or deciding the right machinery for you," Thériault says. "I like to think it's about life in general." **CG**



ALWAYS FOLLOW GRAIN MARKETING AND ALL OTHER STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES AND PESTICIDE LABEL DIRECTIONS. Details of these requirements can be found in the Trait Stewardship Responsibilities Notice to Farmers printed in this publication. ©2017 Monsanto Canada Inc.

Working (and learning) abroad

More young Canadians are looking to gain wider perspectives by working on farms in other countries

BY HELEN LAMMERS-HELPS

sk almost anyone who has spent time abroad and they'll tell you it was a lifechanging experience. Inevitably, their faces will light up as they talk enthusiastically about how they gained confidence, developed friendships with people from around the world and emerged with a broader perspective.

Not surprisingly, this was precisely the reaction I got when I contacted three participants who worked on farms in Australia and New Zealand, all arranged through Saskatchewan-based International Rural Exchange Canada.

Each year International Rural Exchange Canada (IREC), a non-profit organization, finds seasonal fulltime placements for about 40 young people aged 18 to 30 from across Canada who want to gain practical farming skills while working in Europe, Australia, New Zealand or the United States.

These participants usually live with a host farm family for between three and 12 months, which allows them to fully experience the culture and food, says IREC communications co-ordinator, Allison Sarauer.

IREC collaborates with about 30 partners in the U.K., the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands. These organizations represent host families who operate a wide range of farm types including livestock, crop, horticulture, vineyards and more.

The number of Canadians seeking experiential learning opportunities abroad through IREC is on the rise, says Sarauer.

Bringing IREC into play removes many of the risks and difficulties often associated with travel, says Sarauer. Once a potential participant has applied to IREC and indicated the type of experience they are looking for and when they want to go, IREC finds a suitable placement. Host farms are screened to ensure they are safe and follow the labour laws.

In the event a problem arises during the placement, both IREC and the partner organization in the host country can intervene to find a solution.

Host farms pay wages and provide accommodations to program participants, which makes this an affordable way to experience another culture. "It gives you a job and a home base," says Sarauer. IREC also helps with the paperwork, arranging work permits and insurance. Participants are responsible for paying the IREC program fees, fees for travel documents, insurance premiums and travel costs.

However, the placements aren't only about working. Many program participants — or trainees as they are called in the program — take advantage of opportunities to travel before, during or after their placements.

Ryan Clark, who farms with his family near Brandon, Man., worked on a small mixed farm on New Zealand's South Island in 2016, soon after finishing an agri-business diploma at the local college. Clark spent October to May in New Zealand, taking advantage of the reversal of seasons. "It was summer there. I missed our winter and was back in time for spring planting."

While he was eager to start a career after graduating he knew it would be much harder later on to get away for seven months. "It would have been easy to stay home but I wouldn't trade that experience for the world," he says now. "I gained a different perspective and learned about agriculture in a world sense."

In addition to broadening his perspective of the world, Clark says he learned a lot about himself. "I learned how to work with others, and it's easier for me to talk to people I don't know now. I had to get by where I didn't know anyone."

It was Clark's first time living away from home, but that wasn't as challenging as he thought it would be. "The family I lived with was very nice and extremely accommodating," he says.

It was a cost-effective way to travel, adds Clark. "My room and board were covered. I only had to pay for my car, fuel and phone plan."

International Rural Exchange Canada is a non-profit organization that facilitates exchanges through the federal government's International Experience Canada (IEC) program, a class of work visas that allows for short-term (up to one year) placements in Canada and in many countries around the world. IRE Canada works in partnership with the International Agriculture Exchange Association (IAEA) and is financed through program fees.

Like Clark, Spencer Maxwell took advantage of the reversed seasons to work on a farm in Australia from November 2009 to May 2010. Maxwell went between the first and second year of his university program.

In Maxwell's case, he wanted to gain experience doing something completely different from the family's grain farm in northeastern Saskatchewan. He chose to work on a remote 3,000-acre farm with 7,000 head of cattle. "It was really gratifying to do something different and learn new skills like rounding up cattle on horseback."

And because the farm was far from town, he learned to fix and maintain the equipment himself. The experience gave him a confidence that has stayed with him, he says. In his time off, he tried things he didn't think he'd ever do such as bungee jumping and sky diving.

Maxwell says it also made him realize the world is a lot bigger than he thought. It helped him see how everything is interconnected and the impact these connections have on international markets.

By working on a cattle farm, Maxwell developed a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Former participants in the International Rural Exchange program share their tips for getting the maximum benefit from your working-abroad experience.

You get out of it what you put in, says Mark Schurmann. Be open to experiencing a different culture and having different experiences.

Spencer Maxwell agrees. "Ask lots of questions and take every opportunity that's presented to you. You'll learn lots."

Make sure you go long enough to really experience the culture, says Schurmann.

"If you're thinking about it, just dive in," adds Ryan Clark. "Don't be afraid of it not working out."

And, adds Schurmann, "Go before you get tied down to the farm or get married and can't get away."

After trying the program himself, **B.C.'s Mark Schurmann insists his** own children must travel before they come back to the farm



Mark Schurmann who owns a dairy farm near Abbotsford, B.C., with his parents and brother, worked on a 300cow dairy farm in New Zealand in 2004-2005. It was the year after he graduated from university and he was gone for nearly a year with the extra time he took for travel.

Dairy farming in New Zealand is very different from Canada, says Schurmann. "New Zealand dairy farms are all on grass with seasonal production. After nine or 10 months the entire herd is dried off."

Schurmann says he is so convinced of the benefits of this type of experience that he tells his children they must go away to school, travel or some combination of the two before they can join the family farm.



Interested in becoming a host farm?

While there are already enough grain and beef host farms in Canada, IREC's Allison Sarauer says they could use more dairy, sheep, poultry, swine, horticulture or other specialty operations.

Host farms complete an application describing the farm operation and the trainee's working and living conditions. This is followed by an interview. Host farms pay a fee to belong to IRE and also a pay a fee to the federal government which manages the reciprocal International Experience Canada program.

The staff at IRE regularly visit ag colleges and organizations to promote the program. For more information, check out www.irecanada.ca.

"It rounds out an individual to live and work somewhere else," he says. "It broadens your perspective. You see different ways of doing things and you question how you do things at home."

Like many trainees, Schurmann says he did experience a little homesickness but found it helped if he kept busy. He says he had been thinking of going home for Christmas but with his host "father's" encouragement decided to stay and is glad he did. "It was a different experience because it was summertime. We went to the beach."

Schurmann lived in a house separate from his host family with one other farm employee but ate his suppers with the host family. This gave him a little more space and privacy than living with the host family. He bought a car while he was there so he could travel around on his own and then sold the car before returning home.

Like other trainees, Schurmann values the friendships he made. He got involved in a Young Farmers group and still keeps in contact with many of the other trainees. Some of them have come to visit him at his Fraser Valley farm.

Each year IREC also makes arrangements for about 150 young people to come to Canada to live and work on Canadian farms. According to Sarauer, students in post-secondary agriculture programs in Europe are required to get practical farm experience in order to complete their degree requirements, so the demand for Canadian host farms has been steady.

Host farmers benefit by gaining not only an extra pair of hands, but also by broadening their perspectives of the world by learning about the trainee's home country, says Sarauer. Many of them form lasting friendships with their trainees, she adds.

Anita and Foster Warriner, who farm near Alameda, Sask., have hosted trainees for the past 15 years. Foster says they like having young people around, and his experience with trainees has been mostly positive. "About 80 per cent of the trainees have been terrific and can do just about everything," he says. "Most of them have come from Europe and they have had an excellent work ethic."

However, on a couple of occasions, the trainees have lacked the necessary maturity or had unrealistic expectations of the work they would be doing, he adds.

To minimize problems, Anita, who also works as an administrator for IREC in addition to farming, says IREC tries to match the trainees and host families as closely as possible with regard to both capabilities and personal interests.

With more than 1,000 agricultural exchanges to their credit, Sarauer says the 30-year-old IREC is very proud of the part they play in enhancing the agricultural community. Participants not only benefit from experiential learning, but also gain a broader understanding of the challenges faced by agriculture around the world and they develop a network of cross-cultural contacts. "These young people are important to the future of agriculture." CG

What does a career in agriculture promise? Opportunity.

BY RENE VAN ACKER, OAC DEAN, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Preparing the next generation of agricultural leaders has been the Ontario Agricultural College's mandate for over 140 years. To make sure we continue to fulfill this mandate, we recently commissioned an employment trends survey called "Planning for Tomorrow 2.0". This followed a previous survey conducted in 2011. As we did then, we wanted to know what agriculture employers in Ontario need in their current and future workforce.

The result was a quantification of the opportunity that we knew exististed in agriculture. There are four jobs for every one of our graduates entering the food and agriculture sector. It's not surprising. Our sector is growing and changing and with that comes an increasing demand for highly qualified employees.

One of the most interesting findings was the high demand for post-secondary education. 57% of agriculture employers surveyed stated that more than half of their employees require or have post-secondary education. The survey also found that 79% of agriculture employers prefer formal training in food and agriculture.

So, how do we fill these roles and lessen the gap? By recruiting top students and training them in specialized programs.

Unfortunately, there continues to be a reoccurring barrier getting students into our sector: the career opportunities continue to

be at best misperceived or at worst, invisible. And this mis-perception is even held by many farm raised students and their parents. This mis-perception represents profound missed opportunities for potential students and the agriculture industry.

"Graduating students can work in major urban centres like Toronto, Chicago or Shanghai, or in a rural setting close to home." - Rene Van Acker

Our collective challenge is a complex one: sharing the story of a diverse and varied sector and shedding light on the thousands of jobs that exist. A career in food and agriculture can look drastically different depending on a person's interests and skill-sets. That's one of the key selling points; graduating students can work in major urban centres like Toronto, Chicago or Shanghai, or in a rural setting close to home.

As a start to combat the invisibility of the career opportunities, visit our website *uoguelph.ca/oac/career-options* which highlights just some of the careers that await our students.

If we all work together to showcase and promote our sector's outstanding and even surprising careers opportunities, we will better serve its growth and prosperity.



Transition to better communication

BY MAGGIE VAN CAMP / CG SENIOR BUSINESS EDITOR

oo many times, farm succession planning starts with a series of useless, dead-end and sometimes volatile meetings. Someone erupts into tears, someone else mutters some nasty words in anger and frustration and all our hopes crash in flames.

No wonder we are afraid of stirring up this toxic mess of emotions. We're supposed to be doing team decision-making. Instead, we're making things worse.

Yuck.

But it doesn't have to be that way, even on farms where it can sometimes seem this is the path you're on.

The process of succession planning requires families to make some big decisions together, and this means learning how to communicate and have meetings.

Even the best communicators have bad days, and some of the closest families and most successful farmers don't know how to have productive meetings.

But it can be done, and it can really pay off. Learning how to have regular business meetings can be the switch that changes how the farm is run overall.

Admittedly, there are challenge in terms of scheduling and setting up some kind of agenda. And it can also be a challenge to balance the personality styles and deal with

But instead of putting it off, the message from long-time family farm coach, farmer and author, Elaine Froese from Boissevain, Man. is, "Don't wait until a crisis to start the conversation."

Jeff Davies from Davies Legacy Planning Group based in southwestern Ontario agrees, saying that emotions do come up when you're dealing with people's behaviour and their expectations, but it's still worth it.

Says Davies: "You get from a succession plan what you put into it."

Just getting everyone to the table to start the conversations and getting them listening to each other can be powerful for some families. Darrell Wade from Farm Life Financial (a farm family succession specialist) based in Peterborough, Ont., usually sees an increase in "familiness" after doing succession planning.

It comes from learning how to communicate, and from sharing stories, he says, and also from sharing the financials and giving everyone a chance to be heard at the

It's a time when non-farming members can voice their concerns but also begin to understand that tradition alone doesn't run a business — it takes smart committed, risktaking people prepared to adopt change.

Succession planning requires setting clear long-term goals for the business and the family. These goals become very powerful when they're co-created, says Wade. It is also a time to connect and share information and to come to grips with the stark reality of farm returns and lifestyle. "Create a participatory culture where everyone has a voice," says Wade. "It builds unity."

It all starts with being prepared and willing to share, and also with understanding other people's perspectives while setting some rules of conduct. Here are some ways that three succession planners — Froese, Davies and Wade - have helped their farm family clients communicate better.

BE PREPARED

For many families, communicating openly is new, scary territory, and it shouldn't be sprung on anyone without letting them think (not worry) about it ahead of time. So before starting the succession planning process Wade asks his clients (i.e. everyone in the identified family) to reflect and answer the following questions:

FARM LIFE'S REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What are our hopes for the family and the business? Do we all want to keep it in the family? Will we all have a role in the future of the business?
- 2. How will we make decisions and overcome differences?
- 3. How should the family be organized around the business? Roles and responsibilities? Remuneration? Holidays? Homes, etc.?
- 4. What are the rules of participating in the farm? How do we select and train people to govern the business?
- 5. How do we educate the next generation about ownership of the business and family governance? Who's going to be part of it?
- 6. How do we ensure that these standards (set from the answers to these questions) continue?

The answers to these questions become a set of standards for the family to live by sort of a family constitution.

It's a constitution that teaches the family how to work collaboratively and share their opinions, says Wade. Some families even create an advisory board (board of directors) to ensure this set of standards is followed and continues for generations to come.

These questions can also help form a framework for how the family can have succession discussions. "This can be the cornerstone of succession and continuity planning," says Wade.

UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

Most advisers have interviews with the individuals ahead of a family meeting. Some want to speak to those involved in the farming operation and others want to talk to the whole family.

The conversations deepen during the one-on-one interviews, says Froese. "As the coaching call interview proceeds, the farmer usually discloses which folks he is close to and who he fights with, and gives insight into personal styles," she says.

Froese takes that information and using the Ken Keis model (see page 36) draws a family map. This helps her understand the roles and skills and how people will interact in meetings (www.crgleadergroup.com). She shares the information privately with each person first, and then moderates a group discussion at the family meeting.

If she feels it would be helpful for the extended family to understand the styles of other team members, then they also do online profiles. She'll share that information in the form of a chart with the name of their style, and their scores for behavioural action, cognitive analysis, interpersonal harmony, and affective expressiveness.

"If the family is highly conflicted, I use the conflict dynamic to identify their conflict constructive behaviours, destructive behaviour and their hot buttons," says Froese.

Similarly, Jeff Davies initially interviews each of the family members separately ahead of the meeting. His questions are open-ended, usually beginning with what, where, when and how, and he asks about them in way the encourages the family members to share their experiences and give examples.

In other words, he's looking for responses other than "yes or no" answers. He wants to know the reasons why. "You would also hear me frequently use words like: assumptions,

We are not there to be convinced by anyone who or what is right or wrong within the family and the farm," says **Davies**

expectations, feelings, perceptions, fears, implications, consequences, hopes," he says.

Davies only shares this information with his father, Len Davies (who's involved in the strategy process), so he similarly understands the individuals.

The rest of the family gets to see the high level, overarching themes that emerge in the family's responses, which are shared in a careful context. It's not about winning favour with the advisers or trying to prove that they are right or someone else is wrong. This is not about identifying villains or heroes, which many people get stuck on.

"We are not there to be convinced by anyone about who or what is right or wrong within the family and the farm," says Davies. "Rather, we are interested in what it means to that individual and how it has impacted his/ her behaviour and decision-making."

When he's given a roadblock, instead of trying to create his own resolution, Davies asks what that person feels they can do, themselves, to create change for the positive. It's important, he says, that they begin to think about how they can own the problem rather than lay blame.

Usually after Davies' interview the feedback from family members is that they're pleased to be offered the opportunity to share and be asked how they feel with regard to the family and farm. "This is the moment when those individuals feel that we are not just there doing Mom and Dad's bidding," says Davies.

Communication is rarely a strong point in the families he works with. In this, they don't score lower than other families. They're just at a point where it's critical to tackle the problem.

Davies will ask family members, "What will happen if this continues and everyone doesn't try to make it better?"

"Not everything is negative," Davies says. "Sometimes I am stating that there is great leadership within the family core and therefore my recommendations revolve around how to maximize or exploit this."

To jump-start the discussion Davies might ask what it looks like to individuals when the family is working side by side on the farm, or what individuals expect for the farm ownership down the road. Using their answers, Davies probes deeper to get to their own reactions. For example, what do you think are the implications of Dad reacting that way, or what are your hopes when you hear Mom wants you to take on more of a role in the finances?

Davies uses the Kolbe A system to analyze each individual's instinctive strengths, much like a personality or attitude test, and he uses the Kolbe Index to accent what they've discovered about that person. However, they don't do Kolbe testing initially because Davies feels that kind of testing early on can be misleading if family members try to influence the outcome by how they respond.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

Grainews CountryGuide Manitoba Co-operator **Alberta Farmer** Cattlemen 4re you a member ye

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THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

One of the first things Elaine Froese does is to get her clients to read and sign a coaching agreement, which says they are basically open to being coached and accountable to the process. Confidentiality and scheduling (a classic evasive manoeuvre is to not show up) are laid out for everyone to understand.

In more conflicted situations she might use the mediation process document referred to earlier to help everyone understand that she's neutral.

Over the many years Froese has been helping farm families, she has dealt with all sorts of bad situations, from addiction to divorce to stubbornness to rudeness. Honesty can be difficult, but if managed correctly the end result is usually worth it, she

Having a skilled, no-nonsense third party help set the time, place and agenda, and then to run the meeting can really help some families. "I emphasize safe, respectful language," adds Froese.

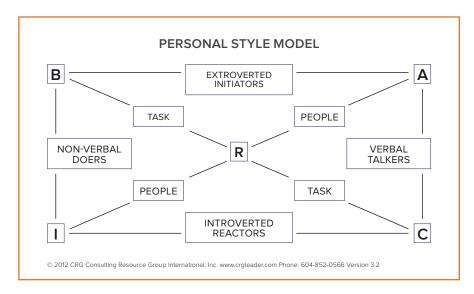
Froese sets the meeting schedule, taking into account the needs of other professionals to be at the meeting. "Some wealthy farmers seem to think they can boss me around," she chuckles. "One family had gone through litigation and they seemed to want to tell me how and when to run the meeting, which I will not put up with."

She has found that some parents think the family meeting was a disaster, but the adult kids all think the same meeting was great, because people actually talked about their true feelings. "The parents couldn't hear the message," says Froese.

She says even the closest families can have difficulty with succession and discussing what she calls the "undiscussibles," and she sometimes uses a talking stick that gets passed from one person to the next around the table so everyone gets a chance to be heard.

Froese also finds it helps everyone relax if they know there are all sorts of families going through something similar or worse, and she can tell them there's usually a way to get through it and they'll emerge better for the effort

Wade helps the family create a code of conduct for the meetings so that it becomes more organized and professional. "... Not at Mom's dinner table, not talking business on Sunday when the nieces and nephews can overhear," says Wade. "I show them how



I emphasize safe, respectful language." Froese says. She also helps the family see where they are making progress

to do a good job at the first meeting, with a code of conduct." Every family struggles with communication — so they need help getting a good start with family business meetings."

The family meeting code of conduct is based on the ideas from the reflection questions and subsequent constitution, and on what Wade sees as problems that the family needs to overcome to have effective meet-

Examples for best practices for meetings include things like everyone gets an opportunity to speak, and they go around the table and are limited to five or 10 minutes each. When someone is speaking everyone else is listening, and after each speaker, the facilitator paraphrases and asks questions.

Everyone needs to know that it's a safe place to speak freely. No one should feel threatened or be interrupted. This can mean including rules in the code of conduct to respect everyone's styles and there will be no name-calling or other rude behaviour. Or that no one brings up the past, and everyone must commit to the process.

The process of meetings should not only build your farm or your plan but build everyone's confidence, self-worth and trust.

Some families Wade has worked with even hire him to come back once a year and

chair the farm's annual meeting. It keeps the process ingrained and is a way for the family to stay formally engaged with an outside, informed third party to gain an objective perspective on their operation.

Similarly, when Davies facilitates family meetings, he often suggests they work together to create a "System of Norms" for family meetings. These norms are about day-to-day respect, which is especially important when it is time to meet and be productive in family farm succession situa-

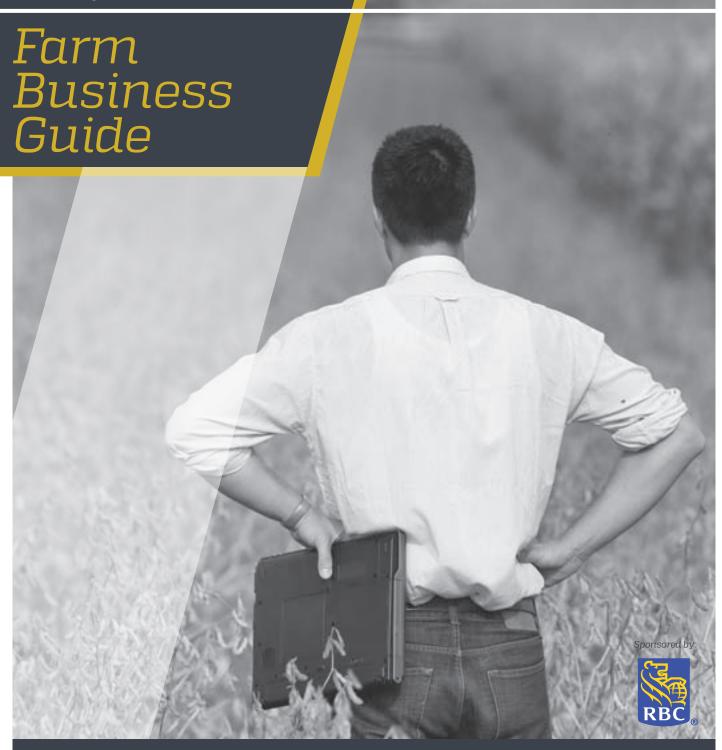
It can take some families less then five minutes to go astray if someone has taken something personally, says Davies.

It will never work if it is being forced on someone, says Davies. He starts by brainstorming to identify issues plaguing the family meeting, and then categorizes these into larger themes to determine how to prevent them from derailing the meeting.

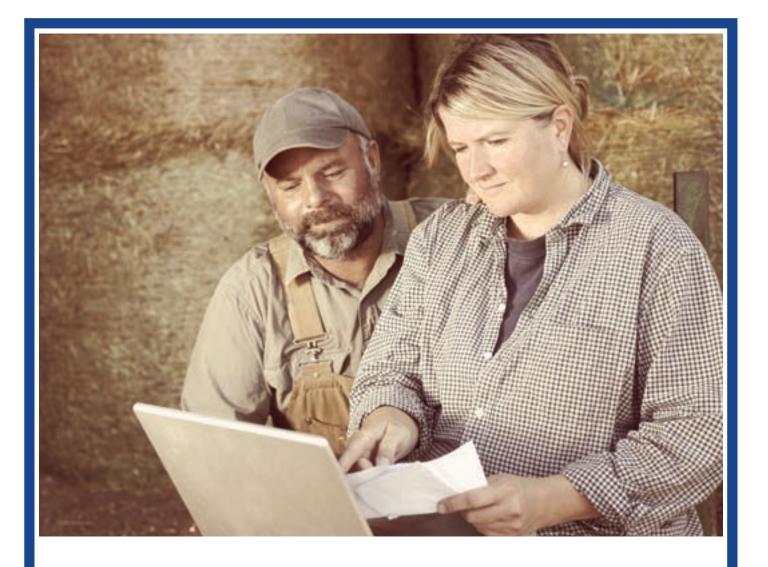
It turns out that if you write it down, it's taken more seriously and not forgotten. Recording minutes is another part of the meeting equation and improves account-

"Naturally anytime you do something like this," Davies says, " you get it documented and even signed to provide some accountability to such terms." CG

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By the numbers

For the past many decades, farm advisers have been telling farms to operate their farms as businesses without delivering ways to do it. Thankfully, that is changing



TOM BUTTON, EDITOR / COUNTRY GUIDE

n almost any conversation today, you can't be surprised if someone shakes their head and tuttuts that there's a big difference between facts and knowledge.

The comment is usually related to the abundance of information that is so easily accessible on our phones and computers, while we all can't help knowing that if we really want to operate at our best, and if we really want our thinking to be clear, we have to internalize the knowledge before we do any thinking with it.

It turns out there's a similar phenomenon in farm financial management, where a farm can feel almost submerged because it can call up so many dollar-sign data points, yet still not have a pattern of effectively utilizing the information to assist farm management.

Maybe the better example is yield monitors in the field, where again the question is whether we can actually use even a fraction of the numbers we can produce.

Except, there's this big difference. In the office, unlike in the field, there are actually proven techniques for putting the numbers to meaningful work.

Most readers will know that in the pages of Country Guide, we routinely talk to farmers and advisers who excel at this, and my over-arching observation is that, as farmers, they really aren't all that different from any other farmers we know. They just happen to have an extra level of respect for numbers, and to have discovered new ways that their numbers can integrate with their overall approach to farming.

Every farmer I know is somewhere down the same path. In fact, the biggest change I've seen in agriculture in the last 10 years hasn't been the growth in field technology, impressive though that has been, it's been the growth in financial literacy, largely because recent farm incomes have made it practical for farmers to access much better accounting advice.

Still, we thought it would make sense to pull together some of the advice we have been hearing in a brief and concise report, with input from well-regarded advisers, which is what led to what you will read on the following

Our hope is that you will find opportunities to grow your own financial capabilities there. Or perhaps you will find it useful as check list to see whether you have made the progress that you think you've made.

It's always good to compare what you hear from your own advisers with what you can read here, and to go to your next meeting with your accountant with a couple of questions in your pocket. "I've been wondering," you might say, "does it really make sense for me to be carrying this much working capital?"

For all of us, though, a goal is to develop standard decision-making processes on the farm that involve early and routine spreadsheet analysis, actually making use of cost of production and related numbers that until now have been important but limited in their application.

Are we getting it right? Let me know at tom.button@ fbcpublishing.com.

GWEN PADDOCK NATIONAL DIRECTOR, **AGRICULTURE**

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TURN UP your power

Too many farms have let their financial planning slip after years of good cash flows

BY MAGGIE VAN CAMP, SENIOR BUSINESS EDITOR / COUNTRY GUIDE

n golf language, top farms use financial planning to drive their businesses farther down the fairway, while also keeping out of the rough. Also like golf, taking time to analyze the lay of the land and to decide which club to use can make all the difference to your game.

Amanda Hammell, a senior financing specialist in southwestern Ontario for RBC Royal Bank, has mostly crop, hog and beef producers as clients. She also farms with her husband Steve and says the power of financial planning is linking beyond the previous year's net income to know what's happening with cash flow.

Hammell says financial planning isn't just for the larger farms. In fact, she finds younger farmers overall tend to be very good at crunching their numbers.

"It's not the size or scale of the operations that dictate the quality of information," says Hammell.

Nor is Hammell alone. "While bigger can sometimes be better, it's guaranteed that better is always better," agrees Kim Gerencser, from Saskatchewanbased Growing Farm Profits.

For six years Gerencser has been helping Prairie farmers connect their agronomic and operational decisions to their whole farm financial plan through his consulting business. After a career in the financial services industry and a stint farming with his family, he's driven now to help farmers go from good to great in financial planning, or at least to avoid falling into financial trouble.

Gerencser says it's rare for farmers to consistently crunch numbers beyond cost of production. However, the ones who do have a distinct advantage.

"Most farms aren't planning beyond making a crop rotation. But the landscape is changing so much, so fast," he says, words tumbling out of him.

And, he adds after a pause to let his emphasis sink in, the advantage for those who get serious with their financial planning is getting even bigger.

Unfortunately, many farmers have slowly let their financial planning slip during the times of strong cash flow.

Often, looking at the numbers he crunches, gives his clients a clearer pathway, they become more proactive and it helps them see beyond the local markets and recognize the impact of bigger cycles, he says. "Every choice we make has a consequence, and to truly be better, we must evaluate each business decision on its merits, not how it makes us feel."

Here are nine ways Hammell and Gerencser have seen progressive farms use financial planning to take it to the next level

ALWAYS KNOW CASH FLOW.

Once a year Hammell meets with her clients to discuss their plan for the next year and how it fits into their whole-farm plans and finances. Although it seems impossible to find an average price for fluctuating commodity prices, if you look at prices over the last five, seven or 10 years and your farm's average yields, they can be a powerful basis for thinking about the sustainability of changes you want to make.

There's a wide variation in how farmers use their numbers but the progressive ones are able to take basic income and expense information and create budgets and cash-flow projections for the next 12 months, sometimes creating projections and budgets for the coming two to five years, says Hammell. "A cash-flow projection gets the client to think ahead of the day-to-day tasks."

This type of financial planning moves them away from reacting to asking up front how a decision will fit in with the whole operation. It also helps to think about how change can have an impact on cash flow. For example, on her family's dairy farm the price of milk dropped from \$0.87/litre five years ago to \$0.73 in the last year, even though they were allocated more quota. They're carrying more cows to net the same income.

2 DON'T TREAT COSTS AS INVESTMENTS.

Gerencser has found that many farmers he has dealt with don't understand that machinery is not an investment. It's a direct operating cost. Equipment is a depreciable cost, a tool we must have in order to operate, he says. "But it's no better or worse than the hammer we have laying on the shop bench, except it's a way to make money and the government will let us depreciate it over time."

As a cost of operating, equipment needs to be included in cost-of-production calculations, in addition to input costs like seed, fertilizer, and pesticides.

In fact, top farmers include all their costs when calculating cost of product and gross margins.

Planning should be based on accurate comprehensive cost calculations, Gerencser says. And annual cash costs include everything, direct and operating. "Including even the paperclips," he says.

It takes more than knowing your costs to make good financial decisions.

Top farmers connect the dots between production agronomy and gross margins, and know the difference between costs and investments.

3 CREATE CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLANS.

"A capital expenditure plan is not a Christmas wish list," says Gerencser

It's a strategic framework for what equipment is needed based on the historical results of the business. Although we can't predict production results, if you take your production over the last 10 to 15 years, you're going to have a good idea of a worthwhile pro-



To truly be better, we must evaluate each business decision on its merits," says adviser Kim Gerencser

duction average from which to plan, he says.

Good financial planners don't base ironclad decisions on one good crop year because they know it's a long-term purchase or lease. Instead, lowering cost-per-acre and costper-bushel should drive the decision.

It also has to be practical and not based on habits developed over the last super cycle. "Before that, duct tape and welding were holding a lot of equipment and farms together," says Gerencser.

After 2008, the value of used equipment was high so farmers traded, often flipping tractors or combines every two or three years, enticed by financing at zero per cent and by multi-unit discounts. It became possible because the profits were there. But now, when someone says they need to trade equipment because it's off warranty, Gerencser ask them if they did that in the early 2000s.

Has it become an industry habit to have newer equipment? "All the technology is great, but is it making you more money?" he asks.

Farmers need to look at today's diminished realized profits buying new equipment versus the possibility of cash savings if they keep with the old machinery, and the final decision has to fit into the whole farm, operationally and financially. "Numbers don't lie," says Gerencser.

BUY ASSETS WITH HIGHER ROA.

Top farmers understand that return on assets and not total equity value should drive debt position, says Hammell.

"Equity is not cash flow," she says. "Appreciated asset value doesn't mean the farm can sustain higher spending."

Adding debt should drive revenues, she says, and spreading out payments to make it work still adds to total debt. On

their own farm, Hammell has found equipment sales people know how tempting it is to amortize new equipment over far longer terms rather than keeping equipment longer.

Understanding the difference between the revenuegenerating capacities of different farm assets helps with deciding about expansion and purchases, says Hammell. However, when they look at buying new equipment such as buying a new skid steer, it doesn't generate any increased income. Their farm only owns a tractor and a mixer and hires custom work so they can focus on managing for higher returns per litre of milk while only carrying overhead that contributes to that goal.

Top farms actively plan for change. They see the impact of purchases on the total farm operation and how it might limit other needed spending.

Often strong, financially high-performing farms look at options other than buying more new assets. Hammell sees swapping of services between farms, with one mowing the other baling, for instance, while on other farms the farmers may trade two tractors to buy one bigger one.

PREPARE FOR CYCLES AND MANAGE ACCORDINGLY.

In agriculture, having a big picture perspective is really important for financial planning, says Gerencser. Reality is that we can't control the weather or international markets but what we can do is recognize the ups and downs and resulting risks and opportunities.

"Every business is cyclical, including farming," says Gerencser. "Ignoring that is dangerous."

The trick is to recognize where you are in the cycle, and that it could change at anytime. "The great farmers know where they are in the cycle and make adjustments," he says.

Working capital is calculated as current assets minus current liabilities, so it includes grain inventory and cash as assets. Gerencser says on grain and oilseed farms working capital should be at least 50 per cent of cash costs, and that he prefers 100 per cent.

Lenders, supply companies or financial institutions are generally comfortable with 25 to 30 per cent working capital. However, working capital becomes more important in cyclical industries, agrees Hammell. If a farm has strong working capital, then it won't have to revise their plans if prices change.

Operating lines are only for short-term expenses that should be turned over in less than 12 months. Also, top farmers make sure all their lines of credit are on the balance sheet, not just the one at the bank. People can get into trouble when they start using their operating lines for capital purchases.

CREATE SPREADSHEETS OF CHANGE.

"The best is when a client creates their own Excel spreadsheets," says Hammell. "They really know how to interpret the data, can rebuild it to accommodate change, and it's specifically for their own farm."

With some accounting programs you can load your budgets right into the program and see monthly how you are doing right after reconciling.

"Great farmers connect the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

dots between the production decisions and financial decisions," adds Gerencser. "That connection is often found in a decision spreadsheet".

Great financial analysis has multiple layers, but most people don't get beyond knowing COP, even though the value of those COP numbers increases when they are crunched into a spreadsheet analyzing the costs and benefits of changes.

Then the next layer of thinking involves adding in the long-term effects of the change, and estimating whether the change will generate higher return on investment to the bottom line

For example, cutting crop input costs tends to be a reaction to lower margins, but this may affect your production, which will lower profits for the year and may be the worst thing you can do. "Cutting direct costs can mean shooting yourself in the foot," says Gerencser.

Next, for expansion or improvements, you need to add in the cost of efficiency gains on the operation and structures of the business. For example, if you expand, do you need to buy another tractor?

Now you have a better number that you crunch back into a projected new gross margin. Does it still make sense?

7 SEEK OUTSIDE HELP.

The best, most progressive farmers grow slowly, steadily and consistently, and they plan ahead. They use their trusted ag accountant to help create projections; they talk to their bankers who have seen many ideas, all the time.

"They go to people who have helped them get where they are today," says Hammell.

"Reality is that change will happen, it's always is happening," says Gerencser. The problem is we tend not to adjust to change until we feel pain and it's too late by then.

Having an external adviser can really help.

That outside person can be your banker, accountant, or financial adviser, but it needs to be someone with your best interest having an impact on his or her success. Since they aren't emotionally tied to keeping things the same, external advisers can often

see to the heart of the matter, and focus on the financial interests, says Gerencser.

"We all have hit a wall of too many choices," says Gerencser. "It helps for someone who is independent and yet very familiar with the financial and operational aspects of your business to have a look at those choices. They tend to be able to see the pathway through the problem more clearly."

Top farm managers also recognize their weaknesses, with a strong focus on thingsthey're not strong or passionate about, yet the farm can't afford to let lapse. They hire this done, whether it's marketing or scouting or doing the books.

"Do what you do best and hire the rest," Gerencser says.

ORILL DOWN EARNINGSTO A PER UNIT.

Hammell says the banks love knowing the EBITDA — earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization — because it's a way to compare between companies and it takes away the effects of financing and accounting decisions.

What she likes about calculating EBITDA is that it gets her clients thinking about what they're spending to generate cash. For example, one of Hammell's farm clients had a top EBITDA until the draws for the farm were included, then the EBITDA was average.

Another level of thinking occurs when gross margins are looked at over a single unit. Then it becomes very powerful when the farmer starts trying to maximize the returns on their asset base on a per unit basis, she says. Then they really start seeing the impact an investment or change might make on the gross margins.

For example, Hammell recently read a dairy rule of thumb stating wages for one full-time person should generate 430,000 litres per year. It's an efficiency benchmark that sometimes gets stretched during succession when an additional family draw is added to the books.

9 OFF-FARM INVESTING.

Progressive farmers tend to take money out of their businesses, says Hammell. That's because they tend to be more forward thinking and numbers-oriented.



Equity is not cash flow.

Appreciated asset value doesn't mean the farm can sustain higher spending," says RBC adviser

Amanda Hammell

Also, succession planning and managing employees are part of their business so they are always thinking about the human part of financial planning.

"They do a good job planning for nonfarming children," says Hammell. "Some set up their non-farming children in other businesses or help them with their homes using the equity they have in their farms instead of waiting for the inheritance."

This way of thinking often comes from baby-boomer farmers who want their kids to enjoy life because they want to enjoy life. Hammell estimates about five per cent of her clients have investments other than their farms, and maybe 30 or 40 per cent have some kind of trading accounts, but it varies greatly and often depends on the stage of business.

Watch your working capital

A low current ratio can sap the energy from your operation

BY JOHN GREIG, FIELD EDITOR / COUNTRY GUIDE

lack of working capital can be fatal to a farming operation, but even just flirting with insufficient working capital can hamstring your farm's ability to make sales when prices are most profitable, and interfere with other decisions too.

"If you don't have enough working capital, what I find is that it doesn't let you make the management decisions you need to make," says Nevon Faucher, senior account manager in commercial banking and agribusiness with RBC in Regina.

"You just can't operate without it," agrees Wayne Ryan, CEO of Allied Associates LLP, a London, Ont.-based agriculture accounting firm.

Working capital, for all its wide-ranging implications for farms, is a simple calculation. Take current assets — anything that can be liquidated or turned into cash in the next 12 months — and subtract current liabilities — anything that is due for payment in the next 12 months. That gives you a concrete number that can then be evaluated and monitored.

Dividing current assets by current liabilities yields the current ratio, a measure of the health of working capital on the farm that can be benchmarked against other businesses. It is also helpful for lenders and business partners.

Faucher says that having less working capital means having to rely on lines of credit,

or other lending products with less favourable terms, which in turn affects the farm's ability to make the best decisions for its financial health.

For grain operations, this is especially critical because of the advantages of being able to market grain when the market

"It's been proven time and time again that the lowest price is off the combine. If you can hold and price strategically, you hit higher profit markets," says Faucher.

If your working capital reserves are tight, then marketing decisions aren't based on profitability, but on what bills are due to be paid.

A lack of working capital can also mean an inability to make agronomic decisions that are needed, such as an in-season insecticide application.

Monitoring working capital is the key to understanding how much is needed and its status on the farm. Being able to monitor working capital is especially important during the production season, as that's when expenses are incurred and income is earned for many farmers.

Most farms will be comfortable operating with a ratio of 1.5:1 of current assets to current liabilities, says Ryan. "At 1.25 you are cutting it close," he says, but adds that when a farm is scaling up, getting to 1.5:1 can be "a huge number."

Operations that run 2:1 are the very successful, well-run businesses, and their working capital position helps them cash-flow strategic decisions.

Some farms may be able to manage with a lower ratio. Supply-managed farms and others that turn over their inventory more frequently might be able to manage at closer to 1.25:1, says Ryan, but because of their price volatility, cash crop farms "might want to have more of a cushion because you just don't know."

Many bankers, including Faucher, like to have a postharvest review in the autumn. It's a time to look at how working capital functioned on the farm, and it could be a time to sort through whether everything bought via working capital made sense. Did a tractor die and was it replaced using a line of credit? That purchase could be moved to longer-term financing and that could free up more working capital.

"It's much easier to fix a problem in October and November than in March or April, 30 days before seeding," says Faucher. That's also the time when Faucher says he "arm-wrestles" with some farmers over their levels of working capital. If the farm has managed to get to 3:1 or 4:1, as can happen especially in a good year on a well-managed farm, then that's the time to look at paying down longerterm debt and reducing working capital.

So, what if your numbers say you're short of working capital?



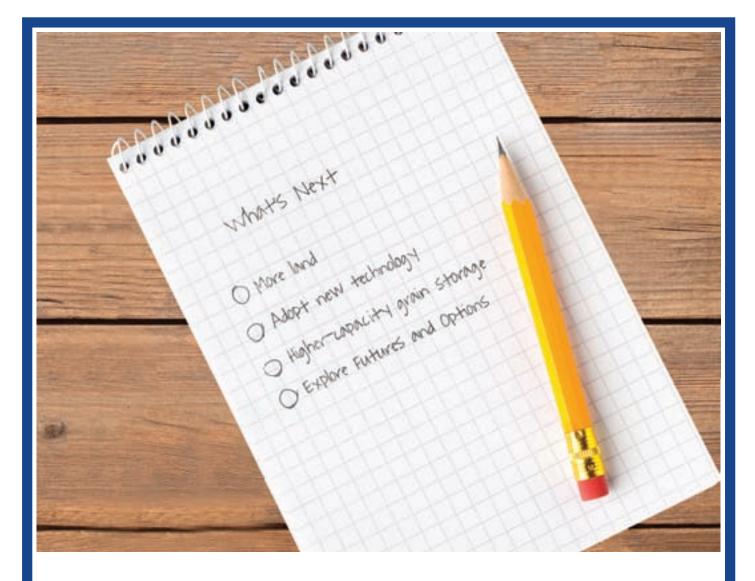
POST-HARVEST IS A SOLID TIME TO EVALUATE YOUR WORKING CAPITAL, SAYS RBC'S NEVON FAUCHER.



MANAGE YOUR WORKING CAPITAL, WARNS ALLIED'S WAYNE RYAN, OR YOU CAN GET TOO BOXED IN.

There are ways to free up cash, says Faucher. Land can be remortgaged to create more cash, for instance, or assets can be financed longer term. Cash may also be raised from other business partners or from other farm or non-farming businesses.

There are ways out of cashflow challenges, Faucher and Ryan say. But making the decision to deal with them, and to get advice, is key.



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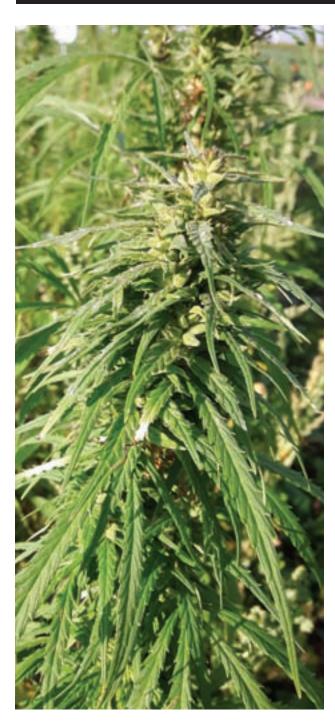
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PG. 41 New drainage regs aim to save wildlife at the expense of farmers.

PG. 44 Can you feed oats stained by nightshade?

CROPS GUIDE



On a national basis, hemp production is more advanced in Western Canada than in the East, but that may change.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KEANAN STONE VALLEY BIOLITI

Incredible hemp opportunity

Could the time be right to add hemp acres to your rotation?

BY RALPH PEARCE / CG PRODUCTION EDITOR

or more than 20 years, advocates have promoted industrial hemp as a near-perfect crop for Canada's farmers. A source of fibre for construction, plastics and textiles, not to mention the myriad food uses for its grain and oil, hemp's potential is extraordinary. It has sparked interest and even excitement in the marketplace with promises of solid domestic growth and robust exports.

Then the reality hits home, like the 19 years of missed acreage targets and the numerous startups that have ultimately stumbled and fallen, all under the watchful eye of the Controlled Substances Act.

It's enough to dampen the spirits of many hardy entrepreneurs, developers and farmers.

Keanan Stone isn't one of those, however. She and her husband Reuben operate Valley Bio Ltd. near Cobden, Ont., and have been working on hemp since 2009, first as an alternative crop, and then in the hope for something more.

It was 2009 when Reuben first contacted Dr. Gord Scheifele, then at Ridgetown campus of the University of Guelph. Scheifele had been a long-time advocate of industrial hemp production in Ontario, dating back to the early 1990s, promoting it as an annually renewable source of fibre, suitable for textiles, animal bedding and stationery. He also worked to develop varieties, and took samples to exhibitions and fairs.

It was also 2009 when Reuben joined the Ontario Hemp Association (OHA) and grew a crop of hemp. That crop yielded well enough that he purchased the OHA breeding program that had originally belonged to Scheifele.

From there, Reuben and Keanan developed the program into UniSeeds Inc., a hemp genetics development and marketing business, owned and operated as a partnership with two other shareholders in the company — Céréla Inc. of St. Hugues, Que., and Centre de Criblage Marc Bercier in St. Isidore, Ont. Between the three sharehold-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38



Hemp production does not require specialized equipment for planting or harvesting.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM SHUKLA, CANADIAN HEMP TRADE ALLIANCE



There's a lot going on in terms of developing the fibre market."

Keanan Stone, Valley Bio Ltd.

ers, they're producing a large share of the hemp seed grown in Eastern Canada.

"We work with food processors in Ontario and in Western Canada to sell the grain to go in various food products," says Stone, adding that sometimes, it's hard to keep pace with all of the different uses. "There are other industrial manufacturers that are starting to ramp things up in paints and stains made from hemp oil. There's a lot going on in terms of developing the fibre market, where there's a company in Quebec that makes insulation similar to pink fibreglass with a hemp mat made of the bast fibre. There are also people working with hempcrete in building houses."

CHANGE IS COMING

It's important to differentiate the many distinct traits found in hemp. The plant can be broken down into two types of fibre — bast and hurd. The bast fibres are suited to the fibreglass-like insulation while hurd fibres give hempcrete its strength for use in construction. There are also examples of hemp being used in biocomposites, and for making plastics and car parts.

Hemp is still a niche crop in terms of

acreage across Canada, especially measured against the juggernauts of corn and soybeans in the East, and canola and wheat in the West. Yet Keanan maintains times are changing, not only in Canada but around the world.

"Particularly with the United States, where they're changing their regulations and allowing research programs through the universities and state departments of agriculture that have legalized hemp in those states," Keanan says.

The law in the U.S. only changed in 2014 and progress isn't what some might call rapid, as not all states have loosened their regulations. "But the work that's being done there is really pushing the industry ahead quite quickly," Keanan says. "We exported quite a bit of seed to the U.S. for planting this year, so we're encouraged by the market growth."

Growth in seed sales to New Zealand is expected too and the Stones are working with a food processor in Australia as well. They're also working with the largest co-operative of hemp growers in Europe — Fédération Nationale des Producteurs de Chanvre (FNPC) — which has a long history of developing hemp products and using the hemp in different markets, all for fibre. It's a small but dedicated market in Europe, and the Stones maintain there are signs of growth.

Food and fibre are also finding a kind of parity on the two sides of the Atlantic. In the past, North America's focus for hemp was on food production while Europe's was on fibre use. Today, there are signs that North America is working towards more of the fibre usage, while Europe has started showing interest in the food sector.

That points to another important evolution in the hemp trade — i.e. fibre versus food varieties. Kim Shukla, a professional agrologist and executive director of the Canadian Hemp Trade Alliance, cites the emergence of differentiated varieties as a significant change in the hemp industry in the past few years, allowing farmers to focus on food markets, where there's less need for investment in processing equipment and infrastucture.

Another reality that's hard to discount is that raw fibre can't be moved more than about 100 km before the economics begin to run out. The alternative is to have primary processing close to the farm, with secondary and tertiary processing at a greater distance, but Shukla acknowledges such a solution leaves economies of scale to deal with, and that issue never disappears.

"For the fibre sector to take off to any great degree, there's significant investment capital that's required and producers would need to have the confidence there would be a market exclusively for the fibre," says Shukla, who's based in Manitoba. "So it's a chickenand-egg situation. Which comes first, and who's prepared to take the risk?"

The other challenge is that not all fibres are created equal. Environmental conditions can affect the quality, as can different varieties, and not everyone wants the same kind

"There's a significant amount of research that needs to happen," says Shukla. "We're getting much closer to being able to characterize the fibre that's required for the different specific markets, but there's still a long way to go."

Shukla also mentions a change in regulations and increasing demand in China and South Korea, but it's all food-based.

As for the quality of hemp, Shukla maintains Canada is the preferred source for hemp, particularly food-grade varieties.

THE LEGALITIES

Of course the other hurdle is hemp's association with marijuana. Granted, it's the same species (Cannabis sativa L), yet the cultivation and end-use are considerably different. Hemp's field density is closer to wheat, since it's grown for the stalks and the seeds. Marijuana, by contrast, is grown with much lower populations to encourage bud and leaf growth.

As well, in order to be considered "industrial hemp," the concentration of delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) must be lower than 0.3 per cent.

Both Shukla and the Stones hope the legalization of marijuana in Canada will loosen restrictions on hemp.

"This year, they did make some adjustments to the industrial hemp regulations and the processes, which made it a little bit easier for the growers, and for new farmers to get involved, which was nice to see," says Keanan.

In past, farmers were required to grow at least 10 acres, plus submit field maps with GPS co-ordinates, planting dates and seed varieties, all before planting. But Stone says that's been changed in the past year: a grower can apply for a general license, which Health Canada will grant. Then they have 15 days from the time of planting to make their Declaration of Cultivation, including the acreage, maps, GPS co-ordinates and variety.

"There's a significant amount of paperwork, and the markets are probably not as transparent as they would be for the corn or soybean market," adds Shukla. "It's really the need to bring the processors and the manufacturers and those who are contracting the crop together with the farmers. We've done a really good job of that in the West, but it's really just starting in Eastern Canada."

The West is also well ahead in marketing,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40

Duick facts about hemp in Canada

- Hemp industry began in 1998 (with the Industrial Hemp Regulations under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act).
- Currently more than 100,000 acres of hemp grown across Canada.
- · Canada is the world's largest producer of food-grade hemp.
- Exported \$146 million worth of hemp products in 2016.
- 1,200 jobs related to hemp production and processing in Canada.
- · Processed hemp sales forecast to exceed \$1.0 billion in value in the next seven years.
- · No public safety issues in 19 years of production.



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processing and promotions. Shukla notes that western production has increased more steadily in Manitoba and Alberta, thanks in part to government support. There's a willingness to look to the future and invest, albeit with some added funding.

"What we found is that there are certain regions where hemp can be grown quite successfully," Shukla says, referring to the Gilbert Plains, Man. region, where hemp was rediscovered. "Their concept was that if they could have a co-operative there, it could grow enough acres that could sustain a fibre-processing facility."

But there are also more western-based champions who commit to the cause of hemp production and are working to drive the market forward. Agencies and businesses such as the Composites Innovation Centre and Parkland Industrial Hemp Growers can provide valuable lessons. Yet Shukla points to the Stones as the only producer champions that she knows of for the hemp industry.

NOT THAT DIFFERENT

The other bit of good news is that hemp is a relatively simple crop to grow. Planting, harvesting and soil management are no different than for most crops that are favoured in either Eastern or Western Canada. The Stones, for instance, use a seed drill to plant hemp and a combine to harvest it, with the big difference being that the crop must be harvested while there's still a large amount of green tissue visible. Waiting for it to dry down like corn or soybeans will cause the fibres to bind like baler's twine, making harvest very difficult.

In that sense, the Stones say growers who have experience with a higher-maintenance crop such as edible beans or identity preserved (IP) soybeans might find hemp an easier fit. The Stones themselves do a dualpurpose harvest where they'll cut the top two or three feet off the plant for grain, then swathe it and bale it to get the stalks for fibre.

"Hemp can grow on almost any kind of

land, but the more you put into the hemp crop, the more you get out of it," says Reuben Stone, adding that some herbicides have been registered, with more on the way. "If you pay attention to it, give it fertilizer and take care of it, and help it out-compete the weeds early on, you can maximize your yield potential, both for grain and for fibre."

"Give a Canadian producer a crop to grow and they'll grow the hell out of it," says Shukla. "That has never been a challenge for us, whether it's something obscure such as ostrich or emu or something traditional like corn. The biggest challenge is in getting the infrastructure in place for processing, both fibre and food and, secondly, how to market the product." CG

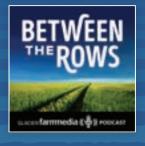
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Species versus drains

Farmers, contractors and municipalities are trying to cope with Ontario's new Endangered Species Act

BY RALPH PEARCE / CG PRODUCTION EDITOR

rom time to time, farmers can find themselves caught by a development or issue that sneaks up on them. At first, it can seem trivial, even ridiculous. But it's like ignoring a train in the distance: before you know it, it's speeding up on you and it's too late to react.

Changes to Ontario's Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the manner in which they are being enforced may be viewed in much the same way. With little information or fanfare, municipalities and counties have been told that if endangered species are found in the drains and drainage ditches adjacent to farms, they will have to protect those at-risk species.

Failure to do so could result in fines up to \$1 million for municipalities or \$250,000 for individuals, not to mention possible imprisonment for up to one year.

What's distressing beyond the penalties is that farm-

ers are being told that what they're doing or what they've done to improve water quality from their fields is not a priority: saving endangered species is.

In spite of all they have invested in tile drainage installation and maintenance or the timely removal of water from their fields (and what that means to normal operations), any endangered species found adjacent to their fields take priority. And it's not just the investments or the water flow off the fields, it's also the enhancements to the entire wildlife chain in those adjoining waterways that are now secondary to the protection of endangered species.

Much of the current furor surrounding the ESA, and the confusion that has resulted, began early this year. In January, a story in the Chatham Daily News highlighted the changes and their impacts on the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, in the southwestern corner of Ontario. Chatham-Kent stands to be affected most by these directives from the Ministry of Natu-

ral Resources and Forestry (MNRF), of those found in Ontario.

for now is the cost and administration levels that will affect farmers as well as drainage contractors.

What isn't known



ment with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, the changes that have been most daunting actually took effect July 1, 2015. Prior to that, there was an agreement signed between the municipalities and MNRF securing a series of best management practices that the municipalities agreed to follow when doing drain maintenance and during projects to repair or improve existing drains. After that date, the Ministry cancelled those agreements.

"Where we believe we're headed with this approach is to resurrect a lot of the concepts already hammered out through those agreements, building on them if possible and adding in any new species which either weren't covered or have been added since that time," says Dick.

EASIER SAID THAN DONE

Part of the challenge, however, is that reaching any final solution is like aiming at a moving target: the registry of endangered species is always being redefined and reworked. But the MNRF isn't helping identify practices needed for safeguarding those species, new or existing. It is now the job of the municipality or the county to find the biologists or environmental specialists with the necessary expertise to develop a workable framework that gets MNRF approval.

That it might add to a municipality or county's operating budget does not appear to be part of the consideration. Instead, the local government is directed to find the right person with the appropriate expertise, develop a plan that will safeguard an endangered species, and then wait for MNRF approval of the project. The guidelines under the ESA apply to both land-based and aquatic species, so this really does affect any and all farmers, whether or not they have drainage ditches adjacent to their land.

"Which act takes precedent?" asks Dick. "Do the two acts (the Endangered Species Act and the Drainage Act) get along with each other? The answer is that we're expected to comply with both acts, so the expectation is that we will merely comply and in doing so, we have to somehow come up with a strategy to see to it that we can comply."

Complying with the Drainage Act can be a challenge at times, but there's a history and knowledge base of how to manage within its confines, so there isn't a lot of concern with it. The Endangered Species Act is something entirely different.



Tile drainage helps with field operations and in establishing habitats for many varieties of life in ditches and streams.

We're expected to comply with both acts... we have to come up with a strategy to see to it that we can comply."

Tim Dick, Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Within the ESA, there are different species, with mitigating measures, timing window restrictions, and best management practices (BMP). Extra complications include identifying the particular species involved and understanding its potential vulnerability to the crop growing nearby, its growing season and its water cycling needs. Then, planners have to ask, how does the Drainage Act have an impact on all of this?

"The reality is that the two acts may work against each other, so trying to manage all of this is what it comes down to," adds Dick, stating that there are also concerns relating to additional costs and administration of timelines. In the past, Chatham-Kent drainage staff has managed as many as 600 drainage projects in one year. Now the department has to include an additional administrative layer, including finding the specialist (or specialists) needed to work within the confines of the two acts. "There will have to be new and different people brought in for consultation, and somebody's going to have to pay that cost. So the question is: Who are the right people to pay?"

The other point that Dick emphasizes is that in spite of any opinions on who should pay, the costs may be levied to all the drains that are worked on in a given year. Or it might be paid by the drainage contractors or

from out of the general funds of the municipality. Or maybe the grower will pay into the final costs. But the more those costs are shared among a larger community, the less the impact it should have on the individual. And Dick believes that since everyone theoretically benefits from protected species, the cost should be borne by everyone.

That leads to another question: Who's behind this? Is this a matter of offloading or downloading costs from the province on to the budgets of municipalities? It's hoped that the province isn't purposely trying to make it harder to be a farmer. But maybe the provincial ministry involved is being pressured by environmentalists and special interest groups to protect species that 20 years ago were little more than afterthoughts.

Dick believes that changes implemented via ESA may be achieving results contrary to the act's intent. The goal of the act on its own is to protect species that are deemed to be in danger. The problem is the impact of how it's administered, which could have the opposite effect of protecting a species, especially when it appears to be carried out without consideration of the participants or the practicality of the impact or the costs. That could prompt landowners to simply eliminate the habitat of the endangered species to avoid added costs and management.

THE LICO PERSPECTIVE

How this plays out across the province is of particular interest to the Land Improvement Contractors of Ontario (LICO), the association overseeing drainage contractors. More than increasing the value of an acre of farmland, LICO has been involved in research into habitat improvement and maintenance, and research into water quality and phosphorus-loading of soils. The organization has also promoted the benefits of tile drainage with respect to wildlife, and how smaller species of fish in a farmer's drain can affect the life cycle of larger lake-based species that are valued by commercial fishermen and sport fishing enthusiasts.

Matt Williams is the past president for LICO and, operating as he does in Perth County, has yet to encounter any resistance through the ESA. With the history of the Drainage Act dating back more than 100 years, Williams says the impetus is to keep professional contactors just that - professional — and to stand up on behalf of contractors and the work they do.

"As a contractor, communicating to our customers is the first step," says Williams, who operates Williams Drainage near Listowel, Ont. "The sad part of the whole thing is when you get a situation like this where there is a poor working relationship, you find people do what they want, knowing the problems that await by doing it by the book. That's not the answer; a proper working relationship is the key to helping all parties."

Williams adds his voice to Dick's contention that added costs and the potential for delays in projects will result from the design changes necessary to accommodate the demands of the ESA. In some cases, he suggests, the project may not even go ahead at all.

Peter Johnson, an agronomist for Real Agriculture, is also the environmental advocate for LICO. While he acknowledges that protecting endangered species is always a priority, the challenge comes when that goal is promoted as the only outcome to be considered. Drains were installed to improve or increase agricultural production, he says, which helps build the economy and creates jobs, along with reducing watercourse pollution.

"High levels of production in agriculturally productive areas actually protect endangered species in other areas," says Johnson. He adds that in vast areas of less productive land, natural habitats would be destroyed for food production if sufficient food were unavailable. "Acts such as the Endangered Species Act need to work in concert with the Drainage Act, but not supersede it," he says. "In many cases, the endangered species might not have even been in the area if it were not for the drain. The two acts need to come together in agricultural settings in a seamless manner, not in a head-on collision."

Johnson agrees with Dick that such a clash of legislations could be damaging to drainage contractors. Where and how ditches are cleaned up may become a barrier to certain projects, considering the extra costs, timelines and even the practicality of completing the work.

For now, it's hoped that the issue can be resolved to determine the best outcome for everyone involved. In an ideal setting, LICO — along with the Drainage Superintendants Association of Ontario (DSAO) and the land drainage committee of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) — will also become a part of the process, to help avoid potential and costly conflicts.

But the key is getting more people involved. Drainage contractors and farmers must do more to familiarize themselves with the directives that they're expected to incorporate. This will hit all parties involved in drainage activities, not just the contractors.

"I would reiterate the importance of drainage to sustainable agriculture and the environment," says Johnson.

"The value of drainage cannot be overstated, and the value of the agricultural sector to this province is massive. We need to work together to protect endangered species, but not be hamstrung by a narrow vision that costs too much or where the bureaucracy essentially grinds all things to a halt." CG

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#PEST PATROL

with Mike Cowbrough, OMAFRA

Q: Find enclosed a sample of oats that I harvested with a considerable amount of eastern black nightshade berries. Is it all right to feed this to my beef cows?



If your desire is to have no risk of negative health impacts on your livestock, then do not feed the contaminated oats to your beef cows. However, we can draw on past experience with feed samples contaminated with eastern black nightshade to provide some indication of potential risks.

Plant species from the nightshade family often contain glycoalkaloids, which are



FIGURE 1: Sample of oats sent in that contained "nightshade" berries.

bitter tasting and poorly absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract, causing gastric irritation and symptoms that range from "tummy rumbling" to vomiting and diarrhea. Many of you have seen green parts of a potato, or a potato chip with a tinge of green. When a potato has green skin, it contains the glycoalkaloid "solanine." Many of us though, don't toss out a potato with green skin but rather cut the green part off and use the rest. After all, a University of Nebraska, Lincoln report indicated that one would have to consume one per cent of our body weight in green potatoes to get sick1, which, for many of us, would represent much more than one pound of green potatoes.

In 2015 an oat sample was sent to me that contained dried-up eastern black nightshade berries at one per cent of total sample weight (Figures 1 and 2). Previous reports have indicated that dried berries of black nightshade do not contain toxic alkaloids while the immature green berries of eastern black nightshade may contain small amounts of toxic alkaloids², so presumably the risk of feeding this sample would be low given that the berries in the sample were mature and dried. Nonetheless, the feed sample was sent to a diagnostic lab to see if any toxic alkaloids could be found.

While awaiting results from a diagnostic lab, the farmer decided to feed a small amount of the contaminated oats to his cattle. He reported back that "the calves' manure became loose and some bloody, so (I) backed off the amount fed and have slowly increased the amount but not to the levels I would normally feed with and have seen no side effects."

When the lab report came in, it had tested positive for toxic alkaloids, which

FIGURE 2: Berries were sorted out of the oat sample and weighed, revealing that the nightshade berries comprised one per cent of the total sample weight.

would seem consistent with the side effects observed by the farmer. Once again, this illustrates that "the dose makes the poison" but the challenge with poisonous plants contaminating animal feed is that there is little information available as to what dose will cause problems. Therefore, it's best to be cautious. Either compost the oats so that you have a chance at killing the viability of the weed seeds or clean the seed as best you can to remove the berries and re-purpose as cover crop seed, keeping a keen eye on any germinating nightshade plants so that you can remove them when young. CG

² Canadian Biodiversity Information Facility. (n.d.) In: Black nightshade (common name). Retrieved December 3 2015, from www.cbif.gc.ca/eng/species-bank/canadianpoisonousplants-information-system/all-plants-commonname/black-nightshade/?id=1370403267063



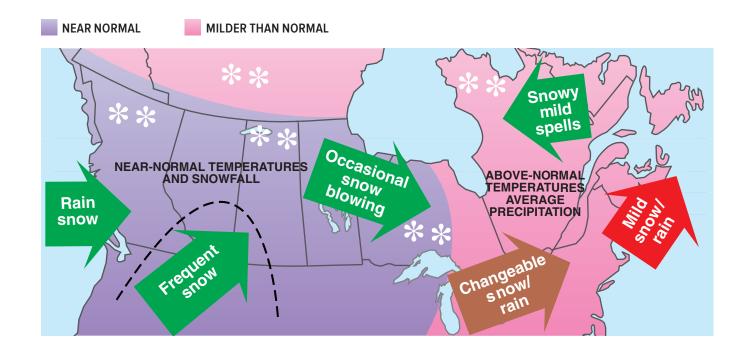


#PestPatrol on twitter.com @cowbrough or email Mike at mike.cowbrough@ontario.ca.

¹ O'Connor, A. (2007, July 3). The Claim: Green Potatoes Are Poisonous. New York Times. Retrieved from: www.nytimes com/2007/07/03/health/nutrition/03real.html.







Ontario

- Nov. 19-25: Temperatures vary from seasonable to colder this week. Frost pockets in the south. Brisk winds. Fair skies alternate with snow, heavier in central and northern areas but mixed with rain in the south.
- Nov. 26-Dec. 2: Often fair and blustery but two or three unsettled days with heavier snow central and north. In the south look for frosty nights and occasional snow, mixed at times with daytime rain. Blustery with higher wind chills.
- Dec. 3-9: Mostly fair but on a couple of days look for snow or rain in the south changing to heavy snow in central and northern regions. Often windy. Freeze/thaw temperatures in the south. Colder and snowy central and north.
- Dec. 10-16: Seasonable to colder. Brisk winds bring a few higher wind chills to many areas. Occasional snow throughout, mixed with rain south. Heavier snow likely in many regions, especially in the north and near larger lakes.

Ouebec

- Nov. 19-25: Expect a couple of wet days this week with intermittent rain or snow in the south turning to heavier snow in central and northern regions. Temperatures vary through the freeze/ thaw cycle. Occasionally blustery.
- Nov. 26-Dec. 2: Frequently fair but on two to three days look for unsettled conditions with heavy snow, mixed with rain in the south. Windy days bring fluctuating temperatures with cool and frosty nights. Higher wind chills.

- Dec. 3-9: Seasonable to colder temperatures this week with a few higher wind chill days. Windy at times. Fair skies interchange with occasional snow, heavy in a few regions, especially near open waters and in the north.
- Dec. 10-16: Snow is common in many localities with some regions receiving heavy amounts, especially near lakes and northern areas. Seasonable to colder along with brisk winds and higher wind chills on several days.

Atlantic provinces

- Nov. 19-25: Highs reach well above zero by day except cooler with nighttime frost patches inland and in northern areas. Generally fair but rain falls on a couple of days mixed with snow in the west and in the north.
- Nov. 26-Dec. 2: Weather swings rapidly this week as temperatures fluctuate from mild to cool under blustery conditions. Fair skies interchange with rain or snow, chance of heavy precipitation in a few areas.
- Dec. 3-9: A large system brings unsettled weather on a few days this week. Windy at times with occasional snow or rain, possibly heavy in places. Temperatures on the mild side but frost in inland and northern regions.
- Dec. 10-16: Often fair but expect two or three days of stormy weather with strong winds and intermittent heavier snow or rain in the east, changing to heavier snow in western and northern areas. Nighttime frost except along coasts.

National highlights

November 19 to December 16, 2017

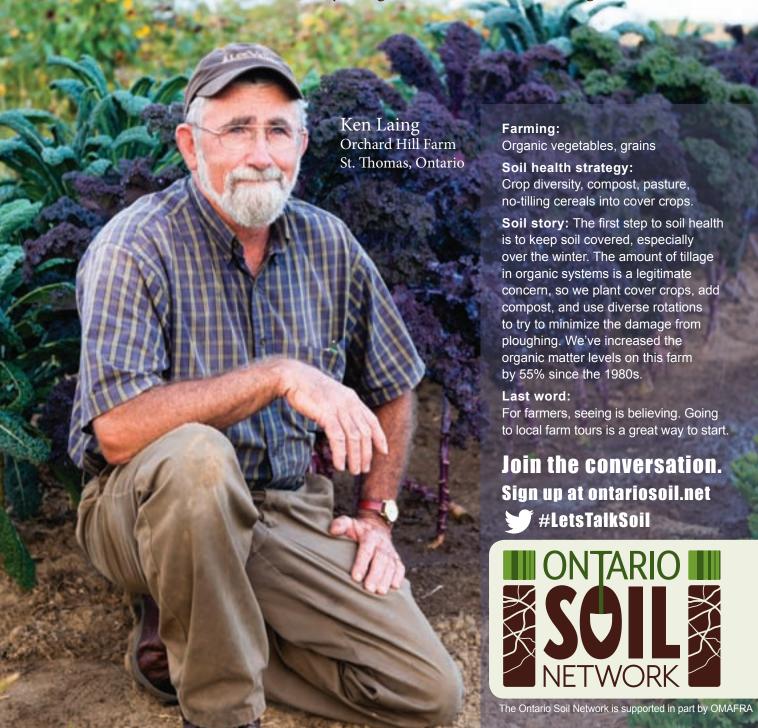
Snow, high wind chills and storminess will be on the menu in many parts of Canada in this four-week period as we get our first real taste of winter. These harsh conditions are expected to be most prevalent across the western half of the country from British Columbia eastward to the Prairies and northwest Ontario. Cold outbreaks in these areas will be offset by a few milder days, however, so we should see overall average temperatures. Snowfall is likely to average near or slightly above normal with locally heavier amounts in a few prairie regions. By contrast, a relatively mild weather pattern from central Ontario eastward to Quebec and the Atlantic provinces should delay wintry weather somewhat as temperatures average above their normal values. Overall precipitation in the region is expected to run close to normal, in spite of locally heavier amounts.

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.

Passing on the knowledge. Let's talk soil.

"Agriculture has always been about building and improving on the past.

We're learning a lot about how to advance farming these days and I'm proud to pass this farm-grown knowledge on to others — especially to my daughter now that she's taking over the farm."



A FLARE for agriculture

For FLARE magazine, it was an idea to attract readers. For Amanda Brodhagen, it was a chance to shatter so many farm stereotypes

BY ANGELA LOVELL

dvocacy to Amanda Brodhagen means taking action. It's not just about sharing her farm experiences on social media lalthough she does plenty of that — it's about taking time to volunteer at the Beef Farmers of Ontario booth at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair each year as well as serving on the executive of the Junior Farmers' Association of Ontario and talking up programs that celebrate farms.

So it shouldn't have been a surprise when Brodhagen couldn't resist the opportunity to raise the profile of agriculture by entering the recent Go Get Featured competition hosted by Fido Mobile and online lifestyle magazine, FLARE.

The competition to find nine millennial women "Go-Getters" to feature on FLARE.com asked entrants to share the story of their "passion project" for a chance to win \$1,000 towards their project and a trip to Toronto for an all-expenses paid networking dinner, photo shoot and video shoot for the online version of the magazine.

Brodhagen had no difficulty picking her passion project. "It's to create a mentorship program for women in agriculture," she says. "I'm a big proponent of that, having had a lot of really good mentors in my life who have helped me get where I am today."

I wasn't exactly sure how." Brodhagen said, "but I was going to farm and make a living at it." And it turns out she was going to create new opportunities for ag advocacy too

BUILDING A NETWORK

Brodhagen grew up on the family cow/calf operation near Stratford, Ont. and never forgot the transformative experience she had as a mentee with the Cattlemen's Young Leaders (CYL) Program. She had wanted to learn more about how to advocate and lobby for agriculture, so CYL paired her with mentor Dr. Lorne Hepworth, an Agricultural Hall of Fame inductee whose track record included several portfolios as a Saskatchewan provincial government minister, and 20-year head of CropLife Canada.

"I attended a formal Genome Canada board meeting, and we would go to events together, and he connected me with people of interest," Brodhagen says. "We discussed different things and a lot of it was exposure for me to key influencers. I could not have had a better mentor than Lorne."

Originally, Brodhagen was intent on a career on the policy side of the agricultural industry. She earned a political science degree at the University of Guelph, but after working as an intern for the federal agriculture department in Ottawa one summer, she realized the life of a political staffer wasn't for her, and that she missed the farm and her rural roots. "That's when I had more of a strong desire to go back home to the farm and realized that somehow, I wasn't sure exactly how, but I was going to farm and make a living at it."

Brodhagen went back to farming alongside her dad and also picked up some off-farm work — a contract position with the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA). "At the time it fit in well with my lifestyle," she says, but there were realities to consider too. "With our farm succession plan, we're not quite ready to have me home full time, and the type of farm and size also requires some off-farm income."

When the contract position ended, OFVGA created a part-time position for Brodhagen as digital marketing manager for its publication, the Grower News. "I grew up on a beef cattle farm and here I am working in edible horticulture four days a week, but I really love advocating for farmers on the other half of the dinner plate too," she says.



THE ONLY FARM GIRL TO ENTER

It was that drive to advocate for agriculture that made Brodhagen sit down this past April and pour her heart out in the FLARE submission.

Still, she was surprised to get an email the following week saying she was one of the top applicants.

It turns out she was the only farm girl out of the hundreds of applicants from across Canada.

"They were intrigued about the story of a young woman who's just five foot tall and doesn't fit the stereotype of a primary producer," says the 29-year-old at the family beef farm near Stratford, Ont., that she runs with her dad, Martin.

Brodhagen's mom Brenda, is a school teacher, who does the farm books and certainly knows how to drive a tractor or pull a calf, and her younger brother Bryan, helps out when needed, but it's Brodhagen and her dad who are the primary farmers. "We are a father/ daughter team that work and make decisions together," she says. "When we are looking at equipment or stuff like that, he'll often say 'I'm going to consult my daughter too.' That's important because he's telling them you're not selling to me, you're selling to her too."

Brodhagen is proud of her independence and knows she is lucky to have such tremendous support from her parents. She knows other young women are pressured to find themselves "a man" in order to take on the responsibility of the farm.

"My parents say, 'Do what makes you happy and don't date for the sake of dating or marry for the sake of just marrying. If you find someone, great, if not, do your own thing," she says. "Sometimes in a rural com-







Of the hundreds of women who applied to the "Go-Getters" competition across Canada, Brodhagen was the only farmer.

munity there's a social expectation, people assume that you're married or have a boyfriend and infer that you need a partner. I am going to take over the farm one day and I am totally confident in that. If I meet the right person, great, but I'm quite content as I am."

A DILEMMA, THEN A SOLUTION

That independent streak, as Brodhagen is ready to admit, does make her a bit overly zealous at times, which is why, although excited by the news that she was a finalist in the FLARE competition, she now faced a dilemma. Her submission said she would like to create the mentorship program in collaboration with the Ag Women's Network (AWN), a Facebook-based network of almost 2,000 women involved in agriculture that Brodhagen had joined.

The problem was she hadn't actually talked to them

"I wanted to create this mentorship program through the AWN because the structure is already there," said Brodhagen. "You have this motivated, energized group of women... (but)... I had overstepped because I never asked for approval from them. I just literally threw this idea out there."

She needn't have worried. When she called AWN founder, Jen Christie, to tell her about her submission, Christie thought it was an incredible idea and was fully supportive.

When FLARE called to tell Brodhagen she was a winner, she was working at the small feed mill on the family farm, and she sensed the irony that as she dealt with the high-gloss world of Toronto media, she was worrying about whether she had enough data left on her phone to take the video call.

TEAMING UP WITH AWN

After letting AWN know her project had won and that she now had \$1,000 to kick it off, Brodhagen connected with one of its leadership team, Joan Craig, a beef farmer and retired schoolteacher who is passionate about mentoring and offered to help her plan and develop the mentorship program.

"I had the opportunity to be mentored and mentor both informally and as part of a formal mentorship program with a new-to-teaching teacher and have always been interested in mentorship," says Craig. "AWN's mission statement is to cultivate and connect leaders for a strong agriculture and agri-food industry. This project is a different way to approach that. One of the main goals is empowerment: helping people to get better at something, or grow professionally and personally which fits in well with our vision."

Although they had lots of big ideas they decided that realistically the project would need to be a pilot program in Ontario for AWN members. They hope it will give them experience and feedback that will allow them to attract more funding and resources in the future and lead to an ongoing mentorship program for ag women.

GRASSROOTS INPUT

They began by surveying AWN members' level of interest in a mentorship program, asking what the women considered the most important aspects of mentorships in agriculture and looking for suggestions. Expecting maybe 20 or 30 responses, they were happily surprised to get 100.

"We got very concise, thoughtful responses," says Craig, "We got very grassroots information from people about what kind of information they would want before applying, what they were excited about, or concerns they had, and that really helped us build the program."

They also got a large percentage of respondents who said they were interested in being a mentee or a mentor, says Craig. "I think that speaks very highly of the AWN and the kind of community we've built."

After analyzing the survey data, Brodhagen and Craig came up with a draft framework that they then discussed with a small focus group of primary producers and other women from the agricultural industry.

A PILOT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

From there they came up with the final pilot mentorship program to run for eight months from November 2017 to July 2018. Applications closed in September, and mentees were matched with mentors in October. A big emphasis of the program is accessibility and diversity.

Brodhagen drew upon her experience as a graduate mentee of the Cattlemen's Young Leaders (CYL) program, and borrowed a few ideas like the roadmap that helps mentees set their goals. "AWN mentees will work with their mentors to establish key areas of interest, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52

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That's why the FLARE competition was really huge," Brodhagen says. "To get a non-ag media platform like that, and connect with other young women is really big."

those will be outlined in a roadmap document provided by AWN," says Brodhagen. "The intent of the roadmap is to assist with goal setting and what they are going to do to achieve those goals, and how the mentor is going to specifically help them do that. It's going to look different for everyone."

Many respondents asked how much time they would need to commit, so the program design is flexible. Mentors commit to activities within a predetermined period of time to help mentees work through their roadmaps. Mentees must have the determination to make the most of their experience in order to complete the program, and be open to sharing their mentorship experience through AWN communications, including a blog post at the end of their mentorships.

"Even though this is a self-led program, we wanted to create some things that were structured," says Brodhagen. "Because AWN is facilitating this and putting the effort into pairing mentors and mentees, we need to have a benefit for us as an organization. And what better way to communicate all of these things that are happening than in terms of how that mentee and mentor relationship evolved and some of the benefits of that."

IF NOT ME, THEN WHO?

Now that all the planning and hard work of developing the mentorship pilot is over, Brodhagen continues to enjoy her communications career and her role as a parttimefarmer. One day she will take over the cattle side of things, which is her true passion. "I always say, if not me then who? I think of the types of people that I want producing food and somebody like myself and my family, we really care about what we do," she says. "I know a lot farmers do, but if we don't have young people wanting to make a go of it, we're going to be in trouble and we're going to be having to rely on other areas or other countries to produce food for us."

Brodhagen knows there is a whole different generation of consumers out there and sees a lot of potential in connecting with the millennial consumer, and in particular women, who are still proportionally the ones who make the grocery decisions for their families. "That's why the FLARE competition was really huge, because to get a non-ag media platform like that, and connect with other young women is really big," she says. "That's really important and is part of the reason I do what I do, because I really believe in it." CG



Nuffield Canada scholarships expand the horizons of innovative Canadians involved in the business of agriculture. Nuffield scholars travel internationally to research their chosen study topics, building networks and relationships and learning best practices that can be shared in their own sectors and across agriculture in their respective countries. Originally funded by Lord Nuffield of Britain after the Second World War, the program has sent more than 1,700 scholars from the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Holland, Ireland, Brazil and Africa around the world in search of the best information available in agricultural technologies, policies and practices.

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Interested in learning more? Join us at the Nuffield Canada annual general meeting, Nov. 24 and 25 in Ottawa. Activities include presentations by reporting scholars Tony Balkwill, Clair Doan and Tim Smith. This meeting is held in conjunction with Farm Management Canada's Agricultural Excellence Conference, at the Brookstreet hotel.

Become a Nuffield Canada scholar candidate by applying for a scholarship! The annual application deadline is April 30. For more information about Nuffield Canada, the AGM or the scholarship application process visit www.nuffield.ca or contact executive director Shannon McArton shannon@nuffield.ca.

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FLOOD WARNING

Will Canada's land market drown in a torrent of new listings as more farmers get to retirement age? The truth is... nobody knows

BY LISA GUENTHER / CG FIELD EDITOR

e've all heard the predictions. They say that with so many of our farmers reaching their 60s and 70s all at the same time, we're soon going to see the biggest rush of land onto the market that this country has ever

Will it happen? Will the land market get flooded sometime in the next 10 years? And if it does, will prices sink, or surge?

Some farmers and some market watchers are betting the flood will come, and it's easy to see why. Just as Canada's overall population is aging, so are farmers. According to the latest Ag Census, over 148,000 farmers across the country were 55 years or older in 2016, representing well over half the farming population.

But Louise Stuart isn't convinced. The trends are national, but they're composites. It's what happens in countless localities that creates the market, so Country Guide interviewed Stuart, who is a real estate broker and owner of Lake and Country Realty in northwestern Saskatchewan. Her husband, Leigh Stuart, farms in the area, and we met both recently in Louise's bright, highceilinged office building in the nearby town of Glaslyn.

Given the aging farm population, Louise had thought there should already have been more farmland coming onto the market over the last 10 years. But instead of selling, she sees many farmers renting to neighbours.

"And then, as they're ready to sell, it seems like the people renting it have been buying up a lot of that land,"

In other words, the land is slow to come to the market, and when it does, it comes with conditions.

In her area, Stuart explains, such sales tend to come from retiring farmers who don't have a successor but still want a buyer who is going to move into the community and "love their home just like they did."

In 10 or 15 years, when many more farmers will be getting ready to retire, she wonders, "who's actually going to be there to take over those tracts of land?"

Today's non-farming landowners are another consideration. Quite a few of Stuart's clients inherited their farmland and have never farmed it themselves. There are also people who bought farmland years ago as a longterm investment.

"If they've had it as an investment and they've been using it as their retirement, they might be more willing to sell that land as they're getting to that age," she says, meaning they might not hang on to it as long as farmers.

Or, they might look at land as a strong investment vehicle, and decide to weather any tough markets.

But others have different perspectives. Ben Van Dyk, for one, thinks there will be quite a bit of land on the market in the next five to 10 years.

Van Dyk immigrated to Canada from Holland in 1980 to start a dairy farm. In 1989, he started working as a realtor, and today manages the farm and ranch division of Real Estate Centre. Van Dyk works out of Coaldale, in southern Alberta, and also handles real estate transactions in central Alberta. Some of his team members are also licensed in Saskatchewan.

Farmers buying land in Van Dyk's area are mostly competing against other farmers, he says. There are still some investment companies in the market, but outside investors only make up 1.5 to two per cent of the market, he says. Hutterite colonies were the largest farmland investors for a while, but "that has slowed substantially." Urban expansion is also a factor in southern Alberta, but he says it's slow and steady, rather than dramatic growth.

Van Dyk thinks farmers who have been renting out land for years after retirement will be selling quite a bit of land in the next five to 10 years, and he suspects there will be more supply than demand.

"Most farmers can expand only so fast and... they only will be buying so much land," says Van Dyk.

And then there is Tom Eisenhauer, based in Toronto and president and CEO of Bonnefield. Bonnefield buys farmland and leases it on a long-term basis to farmers. Bonnefield's mandate is to invest in farmland and preserve it for farming, says Eisenhauer.

Eisenhauer says the company doesn't invest in pastureland, or in areas dominated by supply management. But otherwise its holdings are quite diverse, including land used to grow potatoes, canola, wheat, pulses, corn, soybeans, vegetables, and orchards, and it owns land in most provinces.

Back in 2008, when Bonnefield's founders were getting started, they did the same math on the aging farm population that we're doing today. If you look at the average age of farmers, cross-reference it with the land ownership numbers, province by province, "you come

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Business of Food

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up with some ridiculously large numbers for the amount of land that has to change hands over the next decade," Eisenhauer says.

But farmers have been aging a long time, he says, and we haven't yet seen a flood of land on the market.

"I think the reason for that is that farmland is such a different asset than housing or commercial real estate or infrastructure," Eisenhauer says.

The emotional pull that farmland exerts on the generations is strong. A quality farm can take decades to assemble, so farmers are reluctant to put them on the market and their first choice is usually to keep them in the family. Or the land might be sold to the young farmer down the road who's expressed interest.

"The best farmland in this country generally trades without being listed publicly," Eisenhauer says, and it might only become official after the handshake deal is done when the formalities need to be taken care of.

Eisenhauer says he's one of the few at Bonnefield who wasn't born on a farm, but he sees strong parallels with the small Nova Scotia fishing community where he did grow up, particularly in the work ethic, pride in

There will always be opportunities." says Louise Stuart. "It's just whether or not you're ready to jump."

ownership, and sense of value in one's work. Rural communities are "tight, tight," Eisenhauer says, and just as fishermen know where to catch the best fish, farmers know where the best land is in their areas.

But what about non-farming landowners?

Statistics Canada doesn't track the demographics of non-farming landowners, but as Leigh Stuart points out, tongue in cheek, they age just like farmers.

Stuart thinks we should know more about them. "That demographic breakdown is going to determine whether there is a glut or a dearth of farmland coming on the mar-

Stuart's gut feeling is that farmers in their 60s and 70s don't own as much land as we might think.

"Just because they've farmed for 40 years doesn't mean they grew exponentially during their careers," he says."

OUTLOOK FOR STABLE PRICES

Like many farmers, Stuart wouldn't mind seeing slow and steady growth, rather than leaps in farmland values. More stable land prices overall are good for farmers who want to improve their debt-to-equity ratio, he says.

And realtor Louise Stuart does think farmland prices are more likely to be relatively stable over the next few years. Commodity prices and margins would have to change for farmland values to surge.

The numbers back up Stuart's understanding of farm-

land prices. For instance, Farm Credit Canada's (FCC) latest farmland values report notes that Saskatchewan farmland saw an average gain of 7.5 per cent last year. A good lentil harvest pushed farmland values up 16.6 per cent in the southwest, and expansion of larger operations was a factor in the 10.3 per cent increase in the northwest. But adverse weather dropped land prices in some municipalities. And the slowed oil and gas industry suppressed prices in the southeast and east-central regions.

It's a pattern Eisenhauer sees as well. For the most part, farmland values are driven by farm profitability, he says. It's a "remarkably efficient market."

The very high farmland appreciation rates in recent years were driven by "big, big jumps in farm profit," he says. Eisenhauer expects farmland values to go back to a long-term, reliable uptick.

Southern and northern Ontario saw the biggest prices increases in 2016 (6.9 per cent and 6.2 per cent, respectively), according to FCC's report. Drivers included demand for land to grow cash crops, expansion of supply-managed farms, and a tight supply of land. Overall, Ontario land value increases had slowed to 4.4 per cent, and the report states that demand for land is "only at a realistic price level that can be supported by crop production."

Rising interest rates and a slightly higher Canadian dollar could cause farmland prices to fall in some areas, Eisenhauer says. "But if you look historically, those have not been big drivers of farmland value."

Van Dyk thinks the average farmland increase will be four to seven per cent a year, in most cases. "And some areas might not go up at all, depending how the crop has fared, how the competition is for land."

But there are hot spots. For example, irrigated land in southern Alberta has been hot this year, Van Dyk says, as there's plenty of competition for it. FCC pegged the average farmland increase in southern Alberta at nine per cent in 2016, due to competition from farmers and investors.

Regions dominated by supply management will also see higher farmland prices, Eisenhauer says, as the supply management system tends to bump land values. Bonnefield avoids areas where supply management is king, he adds, and that's part of the reason the company hasn't invested in Quebec (although the province's farmland ownership rules play a role as well).

Bonnefield also tends to shy away from areas where development has pushed farmland prices. And Eisenhauer says farmers on urban fringes will continue to see farmland values driven by development rather than farmland profitability. No province in Canada is immune to urban fringe development, but it's particularly relevant to Ontario, he adds.

"The Golden Horseshoe is the glaring example," he says.

Yet it's not just urban areas where producers face

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The importance of continuing professional development

BY LIZ ROBERTSON, M.A., CAFA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

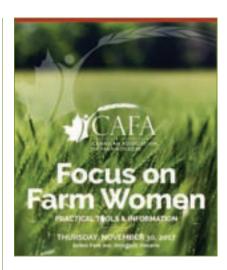
armers are convinced that education is key to their farm's success. CAFA is convinced that no matter what level of education obtained, Continuing Professional Development is a career obligation as it keeps knowledge relevant.

Degrees and technical education along with years of experience say that you can do the job, but don't pass-up on professional development courses that come your way or you'll be lagging behind your colleagues. Continuing professional development (CPD) is important because it ensures you continue to be competent in your profession. It is an ongoing process and continues throughout a professional's career.

The ultimate benefits of quality continuing professional development are that it protects farm families and businesses, employers, the professional and the professional's career.

CPD ensures:

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- That you maintain and enhance the knowledge and skills you need to deliver a professional service to your farm clients.
- That you and your knowledge stay relevant and up-to-date. You are more aware of the changing trends and directions in your profession. The pace of change is probably faster than it's ever been – and as Mark Twain said, "If you stand still, you will fall behind."

CPD helps you:

- Continue to make a meaningful contribution to your team and be more effective in the workplace. This assists you to advance in your career and move into new positions where you can lead, manage, influence, coach and mentor others.
- Stay interested and interesting. Experience is a great, but it does mean that we tend to do what we have done before. Farm-focused CPD opens you up to new possibilities, new knowledge and new skill areas.

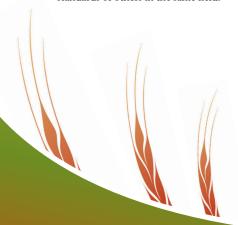
- Advance the body of knowledge within your profession.
- A specialized practice area such as farming needs unique learning opportunities.
- Understand what it means to be a professional, along with a greater appreciation of the implications and impacts of your guidance and advice.

CPD can lead to increased public confidence in individual professionals and farm advisors as a whole—skills and knowledge are current so that they can deliver the high quality of service that protects farm families and businesses, meets their expectations and your professional obligations.

Continuing professional development should be engaging and fun too. Sometimes it's difficult to find a relevant course that fits in with your other obligations. At CAFA's Farm Women's Update November 30 in Stratford, female farm advisors and managers will get multi-disciplinary insights and tips along with in-person networking guaranteeing a valuable day.

With presentations covering everything from farm ownership structures, Powers of Attorney, financial literacy, farm legalese, estate planning tools, banking relationships, farm realty, unconscious gender bias, looking after aging parents and mental wellness on the farm, you will most definitely go back to the office with a much broader understanding of the over-reaching issues your farm clients face on a daily basis.

Register today for your farm-focused Continuing Professional Development by calling Liz at 1-877-474-2871 or email info@ cafanet.com or online at www.cafanet.ca/





competition for land. Stuart cautions that recreational buyers will push up costs of marginal land. That's a common theme in northwest Saskatchewan, where lakes and forests draw in cabin owners and outdoor enthusiasts. A recreational user's mindset is very different from a livestock producer who is likely to calculate stocking rates to figure out a quarter's value.

Recreational buyers, she says, think that "they're still doing really well because they're looking at a back-row (lake) lot that's 50 x 100 that's \$80,000, and yet they can buy 80 acres for \$80,000."

Ultimately, she doesn't think farmers need to be concerned about the availability of land in the future. If developers and investors are getting a chance to buy land, so are local farmers.

IS IT A FAIR PRICE?

So how can farmers spot trends and make sure they're paying a fair price? They can take a page from a realtor's playbook and compare sales values of similar properties to see what the market is doing.

Stuart buys farmland security reports regularly, which include the sale price, buyers, sellers, and soil class for each piece of land. She points out Saskatchewan farmers can buy farmland security reports for any rural municipalities that they're interested in. Stuart also checks assessment ratings, available online at Farm Credit Canada.

Eisenhauer says Bonnefield spends "an enormous amount of time" spotting trends in land values.

"We do a lot of quantitative analysis, looking at farmland comparable transactions right across the country," he says. They also look at land features such as soil quality, yield history, crops grown, and whether it's irrigated. From there, Bonnefield employees parse out which of those factors are driving farmland values in a particular county.

TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY

Farmland has been seen as an attractive, safe investment for many people, especially given low interest rates.

But, as Van Dyk points out, investors are always looking for the highest returns. If returns are higher outside of agriculture, they may shift their money. That is a real possibility as land price increases slow.

So should farmers with non-farm investors in their area be on the lookout for opportunities to buy? Though Van Dyk thinks there will be more land available in the next few years, he says that doesn't necessarily mean it will be cheap. It will depend on the buyers in the market, he says. "If we have lots of investment money coming in, land prices will still go up as they have in the past. It's hard to speculate what the land prices will do."

Ultimately, if farmers have a chance to buy land, they should look at whether it fits into their operations and their cash flow, Van Dyk says.

"If it's a detriment, don't do it. You have to use your resources wisely to make sure that your farm stays healthy."

Leigh and Louise Stuart have been buying farmland

since the '90s. The growing value from those early purchases let them leverage equity for the next buy, Leigh says. It wasn't a strategy so much as good timing combined with a desire to farm, he adds. He assumes that's how most family farm operations have grown over time.

"The opportunity to purchase has to be combined with the ability to purchase," says Stuart. And he tries to put himself in his banker's spot before he decides whether to buy. "Would it be a risk that they would be willing to loan against?"

Renting or leasing is another option, and in fact the proportion of rented land on the typical farm has grown over the years.

The lease Bonnefield offers is "quite unusual," says Eisenhauer. "And the reason it seems to work so well in these situations is that it's a very long-term lease."

A farmer's number one concern is long-term access to the land, Eisenhauer says, so they offer five- to 10-year leases. Each year, if the farmer pays the lease on time and meets the lease's sustainability requirements, the lease automatically extends for another year.

Farm families in the midst of estate or retirement planning also turn to Bonnefield. For example, farmers easing into retirement might negotiate a sale-leaseback and use the sale proceeds for estate planning.

Farm families planning for succession also do deals with Bonnefield. Eisenhauer says that while there are enough young farmers with the desire to farm, they don't want to farm the way their parents did. They need to farm at scale to farm profitably.

A decade ago, farms generally had enough equity for parents to transition the farm to the next generation and finance their retirements, he says. Successors could acquire the farm through a combination of financing and sweat equity.

But today's young farmers need to acquire the farm and expand it significantly, he says. "Farmland has obviously gotten a lot more expensive. And they would have to rely too heavily on bank debt to make it work."

In those situations, parents might transfer some land to the next generation. They also might transfer some land into a sale-leaseback. Successors can lease that land rather than financing it and buying it. Or Bonnefield might lease the young farmer other land in the area.

Another common scenario that farm families face is how to buy out the non-farming siblings who own land. Bonnefield will work with the farmer to buy out the non-active siblings, Eisenhauer says, and lease it back to the farmer.

Despite the competition for farmland, Louise Stuart doesn't think farmers need to be concerned about land availability in the future. But farmers do need to be willing to spend the money sellers want, and to let neighbours know they're interested in buying.

"I think that there will always be opportunities," she says. "It's just whether or not you're ready to jump on that when it comes." CG



In an ever-changing global economy, farmers need to make ever-better marketing decisions to stay ahead. This December, Matthew Pot is headlining the Innovative Farmers Marketing Workshop in Milton to bring the big picture market perspectives that help growers stay on their toes. With his highly engaging style, Pot demystifies markets, breaking them down to their basic principles and giving farmers the critical thinking that enables better decision making. "Markets are more than just the math, they boil down to human behaviour and decisions. That's what makes them so interesting," he says.

Born and raised on a Niagara dairy farm, Pot studied nutrient management until his first economics course; then he shifted gears. He studied economics at the University of Western Ontario, earned a Masters degree at the University of Guelph and later worked as a grain marketing advisor with Cargill before launching his own consulting business.

Pot founded Grain Perspectives in 2014, moving from consulting with larger growers into a subscription based platform available to all. He provides daily reports market analysis for a growing clientele of progressive farmers and traders in Ontario, Quebec and the West. Matt's goal is to break down complex market trends into principles that are intuitive, for anyone to understand. "Basically, I build on the fundamentals in markets, coupled with perspectives of global markets and politics, to provide an understanding of what matters, and is on the horizon, for grain prices here in Canada," says Pot.

Driven by passion, with a great sense of humour, Pot is sure to leave us with new perspectives on global affairs, markets and grain trading. As the world moves at the speed of business, he will be discussing what is changing and how we can adjust to stay competitive. For more on Pot's perspectives, find him at www.grainperspectives.com.



Matt Pot, Grain Perspectives

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New at the top

Here's how Seed Hawk's new Swedish CEO, Birgitta Ewerlöf, aims to capture corporate synergies and expand market share

BY SCOTT GARVEY / CG MACHINERY EDITOR

askatchewan-based Seed Hawk, now a part of the Swedish global Väderstad brand, had a new look to debut on its Canadian-built air seeders over the summer.

Farmers expected the change in paint colour, since the machines built under the Seed Hawk brand are being changed to match those marketed under parent company Väderstad's brand.

But we weren't quite so sure what to expect from the new faces that were showing the equipment off.

One face in particular belonged to Birgitta Ewerlöf, who took over as president and CEO of Seed Hawk in April from the departing Peter Clarke.

But we weren't to read anything into the fact she was attending her first Canadian public events at the same time the new look for the brand's equipment was being rolled out.

"It's just a coincidence, I think," she said with a strong Swedish accent.

But with the new unified look for all equipment built under both brands, and with a former executive from the parent company in charge, the Swedish influence at the Saskatchewan firm now seems stronger than ever. Some of the other faces of those wearing Seed Hawk shirts have changed as well. The company has now taken over its own marketing efforts, along with bringing other tasks in-house.

Birgitta Ewerlöf took over as president and CEO of air drill manufacturer Seed Hawk in April.

PHOTO: SCOTT GARVEY



Ewerlöf says she's encouraged by all the interest she's seeing in a younger generation involved in agriculture, and some of those fresh, new faces have been hired to help the company move forward under her leadership. But new hires shouldn't expect to get by with a halfhearted effort. She says she'll challenge them to excel as part of the new corporate team.

"I think young people are bravely raising their hand and saying I want to be part of this," she says. "It will be no walk in the park."

A mechanical engineer by trade, Ewerlöf had been overseeing welding operations at the Swedish Väderstad plant before being promoted to lead Seed Hawk. Her engineering experience actually began in the automotive industry, working with heavy trucks at Scania Volvo in her native Sweden before joining Väderstad.

"I think that (previous experience) is very good for the company," she told me. "It (automotive manufacturing) is not that different. You have to adapt because the volume is not there. But when it comes to securing quality, there are many tools that are used in the car industry that we can absolutely use here. I can bring some knowledge."

Ewerlöf says there are no plans to bring wholesale change to Seed Hawk under her leadership, but she will be focusing on opportunities that take advantage of the synergies available between Seed Hawk and its parent company. Now that she's spent some time behind the boss's desk, efforts to understand where to look for those advantages can start in earnest.

She knows the job that is ahead of her.

"The owners have put it on my plate to build more bridges between Seed Hawk and Väderstad," she said. "We should also follow the path of learning from each other. It's an exchange of each other's experiences. We should use the synergies from each other. We have a short (factory) shut-down here, so we are going back to Sweden to build a new strategy and business plan there together."

Also at the company's display at the Regina Farm Progress show were the company owners, Christer and Christina Stark. Seeing them at this event isn't unusual, as at least one of the two tries to attend each year.

"They want to be here to celebrate," says Ewerlöf. "Also to meet and support their employees here. So they

are very eager to come here and help. They make themselves very available for us and the customer."

But with Väderstad and Seed Hawk still operating as independent companies under the Starks' ownership, is there any competition or rivalry building? Ewerlöf thinks that is bound to be the case, but by working together, the two firms can build on each other's strengths.

"You have your own baby and you protect it absolutely," she said. But, she added, "You need to have a system that supports cross-functional work and encourage people to work together. Then one plus one equals three. The Väderstad brand and the Stark family have a very good reputation and are well known out there in Germany, the U.K., Russia, globally."

As she works to build on those synergies, she has to also adapt to life in a new country and work in a second language. That, she says, hasn't been too difficult, and the small community she lives in near the Seed Hawk plant has been very welcoming.

"My husband and I are from small places in Sweden," she explained. "It's different (here in Canada) in the perspective that it's very flat and Mother Nature going up and down more quickly than in Sweden (but) the people here are very, very friendly and there are a lot of Europeans."

Casting her gaze around the show grounds in Regina as she talks with Country Guide, Ewerlöf said it's important for her to be at events like this to meet her customers and learn about their concerns.

"I learn a lot from the questions of the customers and to be around the product managers to understand their day-by-day business," she says. "To meet people and to go around, even to competitors, is a good thing. I think it's a good thing to have competitors, because they push you a little bit."

She will no doubt feel the push from competitors both in Canada and elsewhere in what is a very competitive industry. As the brand's equipment working in farm



fields finished its first season retrofitted with a technical redesign to a critical metering system to counter a defect, Ewerlöf said she looks forward to having that concern finally put to bed.

"The first priority when I came here was we were very tense about the seeding season," she explained. "How it will progress? It was very good, so now we will focus on the feedback from it. So we'll take care of any quality issues that appear. Whatever minor quality issues occur next spring we will correct. When we've done that, we can go back to looking at the normal business. According to my sales staff, there's going to be a little bit brighter future for seeding machines, and also for market share."

Ewerlöf confirms the push from competitors will ensure there is a continued focus on innovation under her leadership at the brand. "There will be changes, because when you stop making improvements then you're probably dead." CG

Väderstad red now replaces the burgundy paint scheme that had been the brand color for Seed Hawk equipment built in Canada.

PHOTO: SCOTT GARVEY

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Join the fight for consumer trust

Every farmer should be in the habit of telling non-farmers to check out www.bestfoodfacts.org

BY GERALD PILGER

arly on the evening of April 13, 1970, Jack Swigert, pilot of Apollo 13's command module, radioed the now famous phrase, "I believe we've had a problem here."

His words immediately set in motion the incredible teamwork needed to diagnose what had happened and to find a solution to a very serious situation. Since then, "Houston, we have a problem" (a misquote) is used to describe everything from personal problems or sports goof-ups to the biggest business failures.

Unfortunately, if somebody needs to say, "Agriculture, we have a problem," the systems we'd need for problem recognition and response are basically absent in primary agriculture and even up the food chain.

Few farmers even acknowledge that a majority of consumers have real concerns about agriculture and the food we produce. So far the strategy seems, for the most part, to have been, "Let's ignore them."

Except now, the numbers are getting too big, and the concerns too deep. Moderate consumers — the consumers who should be our base — are questioning if the food they eat is safe!

We lag far behind the rest of the food sector in this.

Industry has long realized consumer trust in the food system is an increasing problem, and in 2007, industry and commodity groups south of the border created the Kansas-based Center for Food Integrity (CFI). CFI has a goal of earning the trust of consumers in the food system. The stated mission of CFI: "Help today's food system earn consumer trust."

In May 2016, Farm & Food Care Canada set up a Canadian affiliate of the centre. Crystal Mackay, president of the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI) says her organization "seeks to earn consumers' trust through coordination of food research, public forums, and providing training opportunities for food industry participants."

THE SURVEY

The first step in solving any problem is recognizing whether there is a problem, which is why both the Canadian and U.S. centres have conducted surveys to determine the level of consumer trust in the food system. The results are simply shocking.

In the 2016 CCFI survey, only 30 per cent of respondents felt the Canadian food system was headed in the right direction. Almost as many, 21 per cent, felt it was headed in the wrong direction. Half of Canadians replied they were unsure.

When presented with a broad list of life issues such as unemployment, health care costs and the economy, the issue most frequently identified in the survey as a concern by Canadian consumers was the "rising cost of food" (69 per cent) followed closely by "keeping healthy food affordable" at 66 per cent.

To put that into persepctive, only 57 per cent of respondents expressed concerns about energy costs.

And then it gets worse. In the just-released 2017 trust survey, the Canadian economy does not even make the top five. Concerns about the economy have been displaced by consumers' increasing anxiety about their food.

Even though Canadians spend just 9.1 per cent of disposable income on food (2015 USDA data) and only four other countries spend a smaller share of their income on food (U.S., Singapore, U.K., and Switzerland), the rising cost of food is the number one concern of Canadian consumers.

And this is happening as the prices that farmers receive continue to fall.

Furthermore, when asked their impression of various sectors of the food chain, only 39 per cent had favourable impressions of grocery stores and food retailers, 35 per cent for government and government agencies, and 30 per cent for food industry associations.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS

The survey was not all bad news, however. It also revealed that consumers' impressions of farmers are more favourable than any other profession, i.e. more favourable than their impressions of doctors, nurses, teachers, researchers, and even friends and family.

In all, 69 per cent of respondents answered that they have favourable impressions of farmers.

There was one other very important finding in the trust survey too. While 93 per cent of respondents admitted to knowing little, very little, or nothing about farming, 60 per cent said they wanted to learn more. Unfortunately, however, there have been limited opportunities for consumers to get accurate information about farming or to direct their food concerns to actual farmers.

Instead, most consumers seek information about farming and food online. And that is a real problem.

"Google searches are not returning credible links to food safety searches," Mackay reports. Instead, she says factual information about farming and food safety is being lost in the noise from self-appointed experts and activists.

Mackay points out that if farmers want to share their messages online, they need to compete with the likes of the Food Babe who gets 200,000 hits per day on her website.

But now there's a credible online voice, that may change the landscape, via Best Food Facts (www.bestfoodfacts.org).

Best Food Facts is an interactive website where consumers can pose questions about food. There are over 200 university-based experts, dietitians and farmers from across North America available to provide factual answers to queries about food.

The credentials of all the respondents are provided on the website so consumers can judge the qualifitions of the person(s) providing answers to their questions. Previously posed questions and answers are also searchable on the Best Food Facts website.

Best Food Facts also disseminates information and factual articles about food, food production and food safety through their website and through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and Google+.

Best Food Facts is a website that every farmer should be aware of and a resource we should be referring consumers to.

But even more important is what individual farmers should be doing to address the food safety concerns of consumers. Mackay says there are three rules every farmer must follow every day if we are to address the consumer's distrust of our farming and food system:

- 1. You are always on duty as an ambassador for the food industry.
- 2. Engage in one conversation at a time.
- 3. No question is a dumb question.

TIME IS SHORT

American consumers, for the most part, have already made up their minds. In Canada, by contrast, most consumers are still looking for information.

This means Canadian farmers still have the opportunity to influence consumer perceptions of food safety and production systems, but only if we make active efforts immediately.

Failure to address consumer concerns will only ensure we follow the path that farmers in the EU and U.S. are already heading down, where they face increased regulations and consumer opposition to farming and food production.

The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity is perhaps the best ally farmers have for addressing consumer concerns about food safety. Yet how many farmers have even heard of it?

If you are unaware of the CCFI and what it does, it is imperative you check out the CCFI website today (www.foodintegrity.ca/). **CG**

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Get more for the family

have been the witness to several successful farm operations over the last number of years. I count myself lucky as someone who gets to see what innovation, smart business practice and communication can achieve on family farms.

The majority of what I see doesn't surprise me. And it frustrates me when people act surprised about these innovations and how well run our farms are. Farmers are smart. They are educated, and many have been taking risks for decades and are finally reaping the rewards.

As I encounter more and more farm leaders, this doesn't surprise me. It still makes me smile and makes me proud, but I will never be someone who is surprised by it.

Of course, I have also seen operations that could use improvements or suggestions on how to be more efficient with their resources. We see some that struggle with their business — sometimes too many balls in the air with no real clear strategy or focus. Sometimes they have beef, dairy, crops, trucking, custom farming.

On some farms, such a mix can be successful because they have the proper governance structures in place. But most fail because there is no clear strategy. They lack focus in any one area.

When we work with farm families, one of our first meetings is to uncover the individual family members' goals and visions for success. Then, when we bring the entire family together, we identify the common goals and together co-create the aligned family vision for success. This allows our families to clearly see where they need to focus their efforts and resources to reach their goals for continuity of the family farm.

One of the most challenging parts of finding the focus is making everyone comfortable sharing their personal perspectives. The key is to create a safe environment for all members of the family to openly share their thoughts and feelings around the future of the family farm. We create the environment by giving each individual family member an opportunity to speak freely to us in confidence.

I am a firm believer that in today's world,

specialization is one key to success. By focusing attention and resources on one aspect of the farm versus multiple sources of business revenue, a farm can become more successful and efficient

For families with various lines of business, the ability to focus on leveraging the family's unique resources and abilities is critical to success. This is best described as the "familiness" advantage, when a farm leverages everyone's strengths and key abilities, creating an advantage over other farms that don't focus on their strengths.

The family that has two or more children involved in the family business is often successful when it has the next generation working in an area of strength, focusing on their unique abilities.

This means having confidence and instilling leadership values in our children and not micromanaging the next generation, both of which I spoke about in my previous articles. This allows each family member to focus deeply in an area they are passionate about, and where they feel naturally comfortable and confident in their role so they can drive the business to new levels of success.

Each member of the family can bring the power of focus to one aspect of the operation, but this means that the leader requires an ability to balance the focus and energy of people while keeping an eye on the results of the business.

In other words, it is important to see net revenues go up, but not at the cost of losing or abusing good people involved in growing those numbers.

We shouldn't be trying to fit people into a role they are not strong in, or where they have a lack of understanding of how it fits into the long-term vision of the family business. If a family goal has been identified as increasing grain production, then focusing efforts on both the right person and the right strategy to achieve that is the way to reach this goal.

When we focus on strategy only, we lose that "familiness" advantage. We lose the advantage of allowing the person who is best suited for the role to focus on achieving this goal.

This is best described as the "familiness" advantage, when a farm leverages everyone's strengths and key abilities, creating an advantage over other farms that don't focus on their strengths

We need to have everyone pulling the rope in the same direction, and good leadership will help everyone focus on the longterm goal. Success today is important — but long-term most farms also want to see family harmony balance with family legacy.

I have seen families who only have their eye on the results or the finish line. They have not looked at the importance of establishing governance and allowing their team to learn and grow. It is our generation's responsibility to show the next generation how important that balance is if we want to increase the success of continuity in our family farms. CG



Darrell Wade is a certified family enterprise adviser and a CFA-certified farm adviser. He is the founder of Farm Life Financial Planning Group www.farmlifefinancial.ca and can be reached directly at darrell@farmlifefinancial.ca.

CHRISTIAN FARMERS FEDERATION OF ONTARIO



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Web site: www.christianfarmers.org

Soil Care Innovation Found Across the Country.

By Suzanne Armstrona Director of Research and Policy

ast summer, the Soil Conservation Council of Canada hosted a Summit on Canadian Soil Health in Ontario. Don Lobb, farmer and award-winning soil health leader, challenged participants to improve their soil care based on four principles: restoring soil aggregation, increasing soil organic matter, increasing biological activity in the soil, and managing water availability.

It was clear from the farmers who shared stories of their soil conservation efforts on their farms that how these four principles are put into practice varies greatly from region to region, and from farm to farm.

Among the strategies that are often employed to work towards those four principles are perennial forages, diverse crop rotation, cover crops, and reduced tillage. Farmer speakers shared many different strategies, well suited to each different farm, but all working toward better soil health.

Alberta farmer Doug Wray described his beef operation where, he says, if he looks after the grass, the grass looks after the cows. In reverse from his neighours, his cows harvest the "hay" all summer and live off the natural pasture in



the winter. Having the animals do the work adds fertility back into the land as well.

Quebec crop and vegetable farmer Jocelyn Michon began in the early 1980s by transitioning away from the moldboard plow, moving to no-till and then later incorporating cover crops, which he has been using since 2003. On his farm he aims to "replace steel with roots; fuel with photosynthesis, and urea with nodules." The nice even production in his fields is a sign of the soil

health he has been able to achieve.

Ontario farmer Ken Laing is innovating with organic methods of no-till and cover crops as part of his CSA vegetable farm. He noted especially the role of glomalin in building aggregate stability as a result of the natural cooperation between fungi and roots in healthy soils. His aim is to have living covers, to reduce or eliminate tillage and to integrate livestock. He farms with horses, which made it a little more challenging to find a suitable no-till drill. His methods include using a roller crimper to terminate cover crops.

It is clear with soil health that a one-size-fits-all solution is not the answer. Good soil care means working to find the best methods that suit the soil, climate, type of production, and resources available on each farm. Canadian farmers are innovative not only in business but also in their farm stewardship.

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario is one of three accredited farm organizations in Ontario. The organization is focused on long-term issues facing the sector and is supported by 4000 farmers in the province. Learn more about us at www.christianfarmers.org

C'mon, get happy!

'Plastician' Jen Moss tells us why happiness is the right goal if you really want to drive the profitability of your business

BY AMY PETHERICK / CG CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

aking more money this year would make me very happy. But what if just being happier is what it takes to make our I farm more profitable?

Clearly, this sounds too good to be true, so I went to Jennifer Moss, the author of Unlocking Happiness at Work. She's also the co-founder of "Plasticity Labs," a company based in Kitchener, Ont., that is committed to building happier workforces.

If anyone is convinced that happiness is a realistic, measurable, profitable goal, it's Moss.

More and more of her business clients are convinced as well, and below, Moss tells us what she tells them about why "authentic happiness strategies" generate better business.

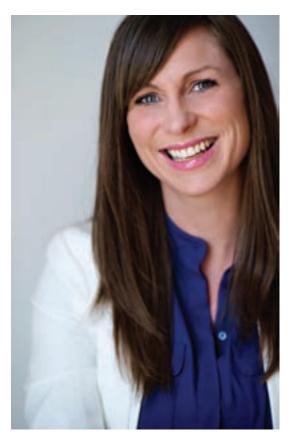
I'm hoping she'll also shed some light on one puzzle, as you'll see in my first question.

Q. We thought you were going to talk to us about happiness, so what is this "plasticity" all about? Is this like some sort of manufacturing?

Moss: The term "plasticity" is actually based in neurosciences, where neuroplasticity refers to the way repeated behaviours actually hardwire your brain for certain skills. It's why we can talk about skills as something that can be trained.

That's not just what they call "hard skills," like your ability to run a machine or develop code for computers. We're talking about the ability for you to build up gratitude, mindfulness, all the traits that lead to happiness, by repeating intentional actions.

This is how we get habits, which are really the part about neuroplasticity that we focus on, and why we named the company Plasticity Labs.



Q. So neuroplasticity offers advantages over other approaches for building a more efficient organization?

Moss: We're looking at people being the engines of our organizations.

Until now, I don't think we really understood the value of human capital, or understood why understanding the performance of our people is actually quite critical.

If you look back at companies like Toyota and their way of thinking about how to improve processes, it's all based on looking at tiny, ever-smaller chunks of the process, and then reviewing, assessing, tweaking them based on knowledge as it is gathered.

I agree productivity is important, but understanding that we have to make small changes in our habits in order to achieve broader change is taking the same concept that we would attach to building a product and putting it to work around our people.

Our people need to be valued more than the other things in our organizations.

We need to spend more time understanding how to improve their experience. Then what will come out of that is a more engaged, higher-performing, betterproducing collective.

Q. How about an example so I can see how this might actually work on a day-to-day basis?

Moss: You can do very simple things that some people are going to be uncomfortable with it at first, but are extremely valuable.

A lot of research in positive psychology has gone into activities surrounding gratitude. For instance, before they go to sleep at night, it's good for people to write down three things that they are grateful for, and they could do the same thing before they start their shift during the day.

We have gratitude walls where people put up sticky notes. This quite significantly impacts productivity, engagement and relationships.

For those that are out there selling seed or anything else, they will increase sales by up to 40 per cent in year two if they just practice these "Three Things of Gratitude."

People will also catch more errors. If you're out in a field and you have to be extremely alert, this improves your alertness by 20 per cent. It also reduces procrastination. There are so many huge benefits from doing very simple things like being grateful.

Don't try to complicate it.

O. So how do we know what tactics to focus on in order to increase the happiness of our people? Is it mainly about keeping little miscommunications. misunderstandings and mistakes from building up in the wrong way?

Moss: Well, it ebbs and flows.

Analyze what makes "your secret sauce" and then get back that thing that makes you feel motivated faster after you've suffered a setback.

As another example, it helps to understand what someone feels grateful for.

If someone says they really love seeing the movies on Tuesday with their wife, well, handing over two tickets to the movies, those are kind things that are simple, but practical and very easy to implement.

It's quite amazing what you can do for someone when you just listen to what really matters to them.

Q. How do I assess the "company culture" of my farm and what is going to improve it?

Moss: Google used to hire with the assumption that people were going to leave. Now, they're looking to hire you for life. So, I think they're a good example. They put a lot of effort into not just thinking about perks like massages at the desk, but really looking at key components that make the highestperforming teams.

What they found in 180 groups across four years is that what makes a difference is "conversational turn taking" and "being kind."

Often really strong leaders have an intuition as to where the gaps are, but we have the benefit of technology and data now to do assessments that ask what is motivational and what builds happiness for your specific team, and then create programming based on that.

Over time, we have learned you could have one farm that is motivated by one way of thinking, and then one farm that is completely motivated by something else. Even just from gender and age, it varies.

Q. So how does this fit in with happiness? Many readers may be skeptical about trying to make everyone on the farm happier. What would you say to someone who isn't convinced that being more mindful of company culture actually can improve the bottom line?

Moss: Something very special about the agriculture industry, in general, is gut intuition. There are some really good people likely doing these things because they have a gut feeling about it.

So take that gut instinct a little bit further. Bridge all of the awesome things that you already do intuitively so that you can just give yourself a five or 10 per cent edge. It can mean a small increase in productivity, but also people showing up to work more engaged, loving what they do, being more passionate, and you get to laugh more, get to enjoy your job more, because your people are improving your experience.

And understand that being mindful is science. It's real, it's valuable, and it's also very tangible.

Q. As a farmer, I find it's very natural to do business with people. rather than always focus on products or services. Is being more people-oriented what makes me and other farmers happy at work?

Moss: Relationship is so paramount to general enjoyment of life, and if we have general enjoyment of life, we tend to have overall enthusiasm, passion, and enjoyment of work... even just thinking, "I'm really glad I have this job," makes you enjoy what you're doing more. A person is also more likely to enjoy their job and stay there if they have a friend at work. Coming into work and having one person that you feel you have physiological safety with helps to retain that person 50 per cent longer.

They're all very simple things that folks in agriculture likely "get," because they are a human business. And, in an industry that's been around for a very, very long time, that human element is probably deeply embedded in the culture. CG

Analyze your 'secret sauce," Moss says. "Get back that thing that makes vou feel motivated faster after vou've suffered a setback."

PROTON PUMP INHIBITORS Too much of a good thing?

f you have ever experienced heartburn or indigestion and have taken a proton pump inhibitor drug, you know they work great. Sites in your gastrointestinal tract known as proton pumps, "pump-out" stomach acid in order to digest food. But if they overproduce acid and it is refluxed upward, they contribute to your stomach complaints.

Gastrointestinal esophageal reflux disease or GERD is characterized by heartburn and indigestion symptoms. Obviously as their name suggests, proton pump inhibitors or PPIs stop the acid production and alleviate the symptoms. They work very well, but there can be problems.

Proton pump inhibitors excel at stopping heartburn, but there can be problems

You will certainly recognize some PPIs because they feature prominently in American ads, for example omeprazole, lansoprazole, rabeprazole esomeprazole and pantoprazole. Some are even available as a non-prescription product; in Canada omeprazole is formulated as an over-the-counter medication.

Stomach acid is needed to break down and absorb calcium tablets which help build strong bones. With use of PPIs, stomach acid is reduced and the calcium is not absorbed as well, which leads to an increased risk for broken bones.

Also, without stomach acid, overgrowth of some bacteria is possible, for example with Clostridium difficile which can cause severe diarrhea. There is, as well, an increase in risk for reduced vitamin B12 absorption and pneumonia.

Before you panic and throw away your PPI, however, let's put these adverse effects into perspective. Yes, they do occur but they seem to happen with chronic use (that is, regular daily use for more than four to eight weeks). And, older people seem to be more at risk, perhaps because they already have increased risk for bone fractures and infections.

Short-term use seems to be fine (that is, for only four to eight weeks) and, of course, intermittent use seems fine as well. You should only use PPIs when you need them.

If you are taking PPIs on a regular basis and do want to stop, you must stop gradually because quitting all at once will result in rebound indigestion symptoms. If you are taking a PPI twice daily, reduce the frequency to once daily, or if you take it once daily reduce it to every second day. Do this over four to six weeks, then change from regularly to only when you have symptoms.

You might also consider changing to other acid reducers like

ranitidine or even an antacid for short-term control of symptoms. And, of course, don't forget nondrug approaches for your stomach symptoms. Avoid spicy or fatty foods, alcohol consumption, eating late in the day — especially before bed, caffeine-containing foods, and any other foods that may bother you. Weight loss and quitting smoking will also help.

When you do have a diagnosis of an ulcer, four to eight weeks of therapy is certainly appropriate, and there are some situations where long-term PPI use creates more benefits than problems, for example prevention of stomach ulcers when non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen or naproxen are used on a long-term basis.

But, if you do take a PPI regularly and have been for some time, check out whether you should consider reducing and/or stopping it. It never hurts to ask, and you may prevent some complications! CG



Marie Berry is a lawver/pharmacist interested in health and education.

NEXT ISSUE

At one time, hormone therapy was standard treatment for menopause symptoms, but then research showed that there were risks with this approach and women started using different drugs for their symptoms. However, recent reports have revisited the issue and determined that hormone therapy may have a place. Next month we'll have a look at some of these new findings.

All dressed up The family's in town

The rumour mill is swirling, and even the FCC is offering tickets

just had the strangest call," Donna said to her husband Dale as she walked from her • fitness room into the kitchen, where he was drinking coffee and reading the Western Producer. Donna had her phone in one hand and was using the other to wipe sweat from her forehead with a faded towel.

"Oh yeah?" Dale said, not lifting his eyes from the classifieds.

"It was Tara Hunter. She said she'd heard it from her sister-inlaw."

"Heard what?" Dale said, finally looking up at his red-faced wife. "Good grief! You must have really given that treadmill a workout."

Donna looked down at the remaining half of a chocolate chip muffin on the plate in front of Dale and raised one eyebrow.

"Yeah, all right. I should get some exercise too," Dale said. After the Hanson's early harvest, Dale and his son Jeff had spent a few weeks cleaning up and fixing machinery, repairing their cleaning plant and doing some fall field work. But the long season had left Dale with free time.

"What did Tara want?" Dale asked.

"Her sister-in-law was at the bank, and she heard the bank manager telling someone that we're winning the Golden Plow award this year."

"What?"

"You know. That Chamber of Commerce award. Farmer Appreciation night."

"That can't be right. Heck, we haven't even gone to that dinner for at least five years."

"That's what I said," Donna answered. "But Tara seemed sure."

"Wouldn't the chamber have called us?"

"I don't know," Donna admitted. "It's been so long since we've gone I can't remember if the winners looked surprised."

"Somebody would've told us they nominated us," Dale said.

Before Donna could answer there was a knock on the door and their son Jeff came in, taking off his coat and boots on his way to join them in the kitchen.

"Have you already heard?" Jeff asked. "Shawn Peterson called. He said to tell you congratulations."

"Huh," Dale said. "Guess we'd better round up some tickets for this shindig."

"Way ahead of you," Jeff said. "FCC just called to offer me some. I asked for eight, so the kids and Grandpa and Helen could come too."

With only two days before the Farmer Appreciation banquet, the Hansons didn't have much time to prepare. They gathered later that day to make plans.

"You'll need a speech," Jeff's wife Elaine told her in-laws.

"I hate public speaking," Donna said, looking worried. "Can you give us a hand?"

"It'll have to be today," Elaine said. "I need to go to the city tomorrow. Jenny has lots of cute dresses, but Connor doesn't have anything to wear that doesn't have a cartoon on the front or a hole in the knee."

"That kid grows faster than zucchini," Dale said.

"No kidding," Elaine said. "But he needs something that will look nice in the pictures."

"Pictures?" Donna asked.

"Well...," Elaine hesitated. "I guess I just assumed you'd want all of us in the pictures. We don't have to..."

"What pictures?"

"At the banquet tomorrow. There's going to be photographers. Taking pictures for the paper. For the city website."

"Oh no," Donna said. "I hadn't thought of that." She texted her hairdresser for a last-minute appointment.

By banquet day the Hansons were ready to go. Connor was dressed in a brand new buttonup shirt, even wearing a tie. Jenny had been fully scrubbed and was as clean as a four-year-old could get, although it was probably temporary.

With her new fitness regime, a new dress and a new hair colour, Donna looked great. Elaine had new shoes, and Jeff and Dale were both wearing suits. Dale had even waxed the SUV.

In town, Dale's father Ed and his girlfriend Helen met them at the

"I'm proud of you," Ed said, looking his son in the eye. "You've done good work. Nobody deserves this award more than you."

Dale wasn't generally one for emotions, but suddenly he was blinking back tears. "I had a great start, Dad. We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for you."

"That's in the speech," Donna said. "All of you are in it. I'm not sure Dale and I are going to be able to read it without crying."

"We'd better get in there," Dale said, looking at his watch. "Don't want to miss it."

Once they'd hung their jackets in the coatroom and moved to the door of the banquet hall, the Hansons looked around at the crowded tables.

"This is a lot of people," Dale said, nervously fingering the speech in his pocket.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 70

GUIDE LIFE



RETIRED ANGLICAN BISHOP

"Doesn't look like there's any reserved seats at the front," Jeff said.

"There's room for us over there," Elaine said, pointing to a space in the middle of the room.

"Excuse me," said a man in a black jacket with a CTV logo on the back as he pushed by Dale. He was carrying a huge camera, heading for the back of the hall.

"I never thought of TV," Donna said, looking a little pale.

Dale looked up at the podium on the stage at the front of the room. He swallowed hard, feeling a little dizzy. "I'm not sure I'm ready for this," he said.

The Hansons made their way to the seats Elaine had spotted. Once they were settled in, Jeff stood up. "I'll get us some drinks. What does everyone want?" The adult Hansons were quick to put in their drink orders, especially Donna and Dale, and Jeff turned to make his way to the bar. Then he sat back down, rested his elbows on the table and lowered his head into his hands.

"What's wrong?" Elaine asked.

Jeff pointed discretely. "See that table at the front? Right by the stage?"

They all swiveled their heads.

"What about it?" Ed asked.

"I know that family. They farm about 30 miles on the other side of town. The parents are Dale and Donna

Dale, Donna and Elaine's jaws dropped. They looked at each other in stunned silence. Until Donna started to giggle.

"At least we won't have to speak at that podium," she said.

"I don't understand," Helen said.

"Committee picked the wrong family," Ed said.

"We should have realized it wasn't us when nobody from the chamber called," Dale said.

"As far as I'm concerned, you two deserved it," Ed said to his son and daughter-in-law.

"I agree," Jeff said.

"Does this mean we don't get a prize?" Connor asked his

"Being part of this great family is a prize, Connor," Elaine said. "But Grandma and Grandpa aren't going to be on TV."

"We still get dessert, right?" Connor clarified.

Within a few minutes, the crowd had been quieted, the grace had been said, and the Hansons were in line at the buffet table, loading their plates.

Later, Dale and Donna Schultz took the podium gracefully. They gave a well-rehearsed speech, talking about their family "team" while looking poised and relaxed at the same time.

"That's just how we would've done it," Dale nodded.

"Maybe somebody will nominate you next year," Ed said, looking thoughtful.

Donna squeezed Dale's knee under the table. "I feel like we already won," she said.

Leeann Minogue is the editor of Grainews, a playwright and part of a family grain farm in southeastern Saskatchewan.

ould you be the speaker at our seniors' lunch? Could you talk about being a senior?" I qualified my acceptance. "Seniors have their experience to share, their stories to tell. I want to hear from them."

I began by sharing memories of the farm when I was a child. My grandparents and two uncles farmed east of Red Deer, Alta. The landscape was rolling parkland. When I climbed the windmill, I could see the banks of the Red Deer River and the beginning of the badlands. They grew hay and grain, and raised cattle and chickens.

I spent a couple of weeks at the farm each summer. I loved riding in a horse-drawn wagon with my grandfather and his fencing tools. He let me take the reins. "Say 'gee' when you want the team to turn right and 'haw' to turn left." My uncles let me drive their John Deere two-cylinder tractors, a fascination I still have. In the evening I would chat with the men while they milked the cows. Afterwards we would sit around the kitchen table with light from a coal oil lamp. My grandmother always found a special treat.

I asked the seniors if they had a farm in their youth? Almost everyone put their hand up. Living on a farm or visiting a farm was a significant part of their early life. Fewer hands went up when I asked how many still have a farm in their family.

I asked some volunteer guides at our museum the same questions. The response was similar. They had grown up on a farm or had a farm to visit in their early years. There is no farm in their family now. Their children and grandchildren do not have the privilege and warmth of a family farm.

On Sundays work was set aside on my grandparents' farm. The cows were milked and the animals fed, and it was off to church. The ministers seemed severe and remote, and their tedious sermons were long. The men wore suits and ties. The women wore hats. I don't recall feeling inspired.

This summer I attended a similar church and found it inspiring. What had happened to church-going, or to me, over the years? While camping near Shell Lake, Sask., a church called "Partners in Worship" advertised a service at 10 a.m. I did not know what to expect but decided to attend. The prayers and hymns were familiar and the sermon was interesting. Afterwards a feast was served in an adjoining hall. People were glad to tell me about their church. "Our small village had too many churches so we got together." They put the United Church and the Lutheran Church buildings together. The roof lines met with a difference of only four inches! A stained glass window displays the Anglican Church crest. Their practical experiment in church union seems to work. The church was full and everyone seemed happy.

A sign at the edge of Shell Lake points down a gravel road toward "Memorial Hill." There, 76 steps ascend on a 90-foot climb to a war memorial. The monument was built in 1929 by veterans and Boy Scouts. It was constructed with stones gathered from the homesteads of local men who died in the First World War. It is a peaceful spot, overlooking the lake. The countryside reminds me of my grandparents' farm.

On November 11th I will think of veterans whose names are recorded on "Memorial Hill" and thousands of other monuments. They made possible the good life and privileges I enjoy.

Suggested Scripture: Psalm 139:1-11, John 17:20-24

Rod Andrews is a retired Anglican bishop. He lives in Saskatoon.



