



# THE WORLD-Spectator AG NEWS

MARCH 2023

Bridget Wagstaff submitted this photo of spring seeding in 2021. Despite chilly temperatures at the end of March, farmers are gearing up for spring.



## Feds, province sign new agreement to support sustainable agriculture

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS

The federal and provincial governments have agreed to a new five-year plan under which \$485 million will be invested for strategic agricultural initiatives in Saskatchewan, as part of the new five-year Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP).

"The process for the Sustainable CAP started a couple years ago to negotiate and work through what the next five-year funding program would look like," said Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit.

"It came to end in a formal signing in Saskatchewan last July of the overall agreement with the Government of Canada and all the provinces. Then what happened was all the provinces work out how that program money would best serve their industry and stakeholders.

"Obviously Saskatchewan would be a lot different than Ontario or even Manitoba. It's what our priorities are versus what Ontario's are. It's how they want to use their

money, how we want to use our money, and if the feds would agree to how we want to use our money."

The Sustainable CAP is a five-year \$3.5-billion investment by federal, provincial and territorial governments intended to help strengthen competitiveness, innovation, and resiliency of the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector. It also includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities, and \$2.5 billion in cost-shared programs and activities by federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Over the next five years, the Sustainable CAP will prioritize the following five areas:

- Building Sector Capacity, Growth and Competitiveness: \$176.6 million investment to build the agriculture sector capacity, ensuring growth and competitive advantages.
- Climate Change and Environment: \$53.4 million to support the long-term resiliency and sustainability

of the sector.

- Resiliency and Public Trust: \$40.2 million to support the sustainability of the sector by anticipating, mitigating and responding to risks while building public trust.
- Market Development and Trade: \$2 million to assist industry in expanding domestic and international trade opportunities.
- Science, Research and Innovation: \$175 million invested in research and development activities, enhancing the diversification and profitability of agriculture.

Marit spoke about how Saskatchewan will focus on the different areas over the next five years.

"The Building Sector Capacity, Growth and Competitiveness is about how we build that, how we work to be competitive globally, and how we deal with the capacity of growth," he said.

*Continued on page C6*

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As farmers look forward to spring, the provincial government announced \$548.2 million for agriculture in the provincial budget on Wednesday.

Left: An aerial view of crops in Southeast Saskatchewan.



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**Budget 2023:**

**19 per cent increase in ag budget from previous year**

Saskatchewan's 2023-24 Provincial Budget was released on Wednesday. This year's Agriculture Budget is \$548.2 million, a 19 per cent increase from the previous year, with a strong investment in programs, services and agriculture research, as well as a fully-funded suite of business risk management programs.

"Supported by this year's budget, the industry is well-positioned to continue to take on the challenges inherent to agriculture and build on their success," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "This budget will help Saskatchewan's farmers, ranchers and agri-business remain competitive and operate sustainably while continuing to deliver safe, high-quality food."

The 2023-24 Agriculture Budget contains \$89.8 million for strategic initiatives under the federal-provincial Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, which will launch in the new fiscal year. The budget provides increased support for producers to develop sustainable ag-

riculture water sources like wells, dugouts and pipelines, as well as increased funding for irrigation programming.

The budget includes \$1.0 million to target invasive weed control on agricultural Crown land pastures, promoting continued productivity and stewardship of this resource and more than \$38 million for agricultural research.

There is \$408 million to fund a suite of federal-provincial risk management programs including Crop Insurance and AgriStability. Average Crop Insurance coverage for 2023 is at a record-high level of \$446 per acre due to increased commodity prices and yield coverage. The AgriStability compensation rate will increase from 70 to 80 per cent for the 2023 program year, to better support farmers in times of need.

Saskatchewan producers harvested a crop of nearly 35 million tonnes in 2022, with record agri-food exports valued at \$18.4 billion.



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# New members welcomed to USask Strategic Advisory Board for Livestock and Forage Centre

## Robert Johnson of Fairlight is new board chair

BY LANA HAIGHT

The new chair of the Strategic Advisory Board of the University of Saskatchewan's Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence is eager to ensure the voice of producers continues to be heard.

"It's really important as an agricultural producer to be part of the conversation whether it's research or policy. If you don't get involved, you are on the outside looking in. You are not at the table; you are 'on the menu,'" said Robert Johnson, who owns and operates a bison ranch with his wife Rebecca near Fairlight, Sask.

The Johnsons own about 400 bison cow-calf pairs and feed to the finishing stage about 800 animals annually that are shipped to the United States because processing capacity in Canada is limited. Some of the bison meat is then imported back to Canada and sold as Noble Premium Bison.

As the newly elected chair of the board, Johnson will be involved in crafting the strategic vision of the board.

"It's really encouraging to see the people who were on the board for the first couple of terms and they developed a real identity for the board. Now, we have new people coming in with new ideas. They are experienced, whether it's in governance or hands-on. We've got a really good group," said Johnson, who started his second three-year term on March 1, 2023. The chair position is a one-year commitment.

Johnson added he appreciates the support of the deans of the Western College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Agriculture and Bioresources as well as LFCE director Dr. Scott Wright (PhD), who are ex-officio members of the advisory board. Dr. Gillian Muir (DVM, PhD), Dr. Angela Bedard-Haugh (PhD) and Wright are very engaged and connect well with the producer, industry and government representatives.

At their March 1 meeting, the advisory board members welcomed three new people who will serve a three-year term.

Calvin Gavelin and his wife operate a mixed farm/ranch with Red Angus cattle near McCord, in southern Saskatchewan. In addition to running the cow-calf operation, they background and finish their cattle to supply a farmgate, direct-market beef business. Four years ago, they completed a Holistic Management Course where they learned how to implement regenerative agriculture principles. He has served on many industry boards and was the reeve of the Rural Municipality of Mankota. Gavelin is currently a director-at-large with Saskatch-



**Left:** At its meeting on March 1, the Strategic Advisory Board members discussed five key priorities for research at the LFCE: ecological goods and services/sustainability; discovery, innovation, research, technology; teaching, training, translation; outreach; and indigenous relations. **Right:** Robert Johnson, the new chair of the Strategic Advisory Board, spoke at the annual Beef and Forage Research Forum at USask on March 2.



ewan Stock Growers Association.

Kyron Manske and his wife own and operate East Poplar Simmentals, a purebred and commercial cow-calf operation near Coronach, in southern Saskatchewan. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness from USask and is a board member of the Saskatchewan Simmental Association, Saskatchewan Stockgrowers Association and South Saskatchewan Ready, as well as a councillor with the Rural Municipality of Hart Butte.

Dr. Leigh Rosengren (DVM, PhD) and her husband farm near Midale, in southern Saskatchewan. She earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the Western College of Veterinary Medicine and a PhD in Veterinary Epidemiology from USask in the early 2000s. More recently, Rosengren completed a Masters of Agribusiness from Kansas State University, which was instrumental in improving the management systems of their grain farm and influential on the decision to disperse the cow-calf herd to consider other opportunities in the sector. Rosengren continues to work in the livestock industry as chief veterinary officer with the Canadian Cattle Association and as an epidemiology consultant.

Stepping down from the board after serving the maximum of two terms are Duane Thompson (chair from March 2018 to November 2021), Tamara Carter (chair from November 2021 to March 2023) and Neil Block. All three have served since the board was established in March 2018. Carter will continue as an ex-officio mem-

ber for the next year, providing support to Johnson. Manske says he's always been interested in research and hopes to contribute to growing the beef industry as a member of the LFCE's advisory board. He has a particular interest in developing the use of technology in the cattle industry.

"I'm a curious kind of person. I'm not satisfied doing things the way they have always been done. I'm always looking to the future and new and better ways to do things," said Manske.

The Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence is a world-class research facility with a 1,500-head cattle feedlot and a 400-head cow-herd, but it also has a two bison herds: Woods bison and Plains bison.

Johnson says producers have much to learn from the bison.

"The Northern Great Plains exist today because of the bison. They formed the eco-system through the grazing and their hoof action as the keystone species. We keep hearing that we need to graze (cattle) the way the bison do. Why re-invent the wheel? Let them work for us instead of us working for them."

After meeting virtually for the past couple of years because of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, Johnson is looking forward to effective and efficient meetings where the board members can work through issues as a group.



Kyron Manske, Dr. Leigh Rosengren (PhD) and Calvin Gavelin joined the board, representing the beef and forage industries.

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# Government of Canada and Saskatchewan announce 2023 Crop Insurance Program Enhancements

Federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau and Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit announced details of the 2023 Crop Insurance Program recently.

"Through improvements to the Crop Insurance Program, Saskatchewan farmers continue to get coverage they can count on," said Bibeau. "We encourage farmers to use risk management tools to help them minimize the economic effects of production losses caused by natural hazards."

"As we look forward to the 2023 growing season, I want to acknowledge the drive and resilience Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers continue to show year after year," Marit said. "We had some rough years and while last year was a step forward, there were still very dry areas in the West side of the province and Crop Insurance responded with quick action on claims. That is why it's important for producers to evaluate their current risk management options and ensure they have the right coverage for their farm."

Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) continues to provide Saskatchewan producers with higher Crop Insurance coverage. The average coverage for 2023 is at a record-high level of \$446 per acre, due to increased commodity prices and yield coverage. With this increased coverage and higher insured prices, the average total premium is \$14.79 per acre, an increase from \$12.05 in 2022.



Starting in 2023, Crop Insurance customers will see an Individual Premium calculated for each crop they insure. Premiums are individualized based on a producer's personal claim history compared to the area risk zone. This adjustment (increase or decrease) from the base premium rate is calculated for each customer, and independently for each insured crop. This means, a producer's claim on

one crop does not impact their premium for a different crop. Premium Discounts and Surcharges previously used in the Crop Insurance Program are discontinued.

"It's always good to review the program to ensure it continues to serve farmers and remains efficient," SaskCanola Chair Keith Fournier said. "It is important for farmers to open their insurance packages, review their information and learn about their coverage options."

Also effective for 2023, SCIC is increasing the maximum dollar coverage levels of the Unseeded Acreage feature. While the minimum coverage remains the same at \$50 per acre, additional Unseeded Acreage coverage levels are increasing to \$75, \$100 and \$125 per acre. Unseeded Acreage coverage, included with all multi-peril Crop Insurance coverage, helps offset costs associated with summer fallow acres too wet to seed due to excessive spring moisture.

"We appreciate the ongoing commitment to Saskatchewan agriculture," Saskatchewan Rural Municipality Association (SARM) President Ray Orb said. "The increases to unseeded acres coverage stands out as an example of SCIC listening and incorporating the concerns of our members."

March 31, 2023, is the deadline to apply, reinstate, cancel or make changes to Crop Insurance contracts. Producers must also select insured crops and coverage levels by this date. If no changes are made, a producer's coverage will remain the same as last year. To make changes or discuss the different features and coverage levels, producers can contact their local SCIC office or call 1-888-935-0000.

While Crop Insurance provides coverage from seeding through harvest, AgriStability provides further coverage against uncontrollable events like rising input costs or falling commodity prices. For the 2023 program year, the AgriStability compensation rate will increase from 70 per cent to 80 per cent to better support farmers in times of need. This allows AgriStability to be more responsive when a farm experiences a large margin decline, providing additional compensation to address the operation's financial shortfall.

SCIC offers a full suite of business risk management programs, including AgriStability, Crop Insurance and Livestock Price Insurance and the Wildlife Damage Compensation and Prevention Program, to help mitigate risk for Saskatchewan producers.

For more information, call SCIC at 1-888-935-0000 or visit scic.ca.

Crop Insurance is a federal-provincial-territorial Business Risk Management program under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. Under Crop Insurance, premiums for most programs are shared 40 per cent by participating producers, 36 per cent by the Government of Canada and 24 per cent by the Government of Saskatchewan. Administrative expenses are fully funded by governments, 60 per cent by Canada and 40 per cent by Saskatchewan.



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# Federal government, province of Sask. agree to support sustainable agriculture

Continued from front

"On the Climate Change and Environment it's really looking at the whole environmental impact, the assessment side on soil and health, water quality. That all falls under that sector.

"The Public Trust one is really building on how we can engage the populace of the country to really accept what agriculture is here, what we do here, how we do it, how we're recognized globally, and to ensure that prosperity as well.

"That overlaps and intertwines as well because we have the Market Development and Trade area. That's obviously in conjunction with trade missions and the opportunity to grow the business outside of Canada, but also finding ways that we can attract foreign investment into the province, in the value added sphere and how we can work with that.

"Then obviously research is going to be a big part of it. It is every year. You're looking at roughly about \$90 million annually between the federal and provincial governments for the program, and research is going to take almost 40 per cent of that. It tells you the importance of the research dollars, and innovation that's in there as well.

"All aspects fall into this whether you're a primary producer where there's grain and oil seeds or livestock, or even the value added processing as well."

With the new agreement being in effect starting April 1, Marit was asked if there were any differences from the former one.

"No not really. The federal government was adamant on a new program. They call it the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP) and that one really looked at water quality and bio-diversity," he said.

"We were already doing a lot of that in some of our other programs like the Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program (FRWIP) which is important to us. Soil health, all of that, dealing with the producers on crop rotation, looking at opportunities around crop development and different varieties, disease resistance, things that could really work to improve soil and health, but also improve productivity as well.

"There is an overlap in a lot of them, but we wanted to make sure that some would be strategic in one initiative, but where another one would overlap. An example would be the FRWIP because it would have an environmental impact, yet it still has the sustainability sector capacity piece as well."

## Governments investment will help improve Saskatchewan's market for Ag

Marit spoke about how the federal, provincial and territorial governments investment in strategic agricultural initiatives for Canada will help strengthen Saskatchewan's competitiveness in agriculture.

"What this really does is have an impact because we have a story to tell, and we have one of the best," Marit said.

"This all leads to what we're doing, whether it's improving plant health, animal health, or working with all sectors with research dollars. A good example would be working with Fertilizer Canada on the 4Rs with fertilizer placement and fertilizer emission reduction. How can we do that? We found some good ways, and we're already doing them with variable rate on feeding with sectional control. Is there new technology that we can implement and that we can fund that innovative piece, and that's where that falls in. Yet, it still falls in on an environmental

**"What this really does is have an impact because we have a story to tell, and we have one of the best."**

—Sask Agriculture Minister David Marit

lens as well.

"That's where we see a lot of the opportunities for growth which will really help the producers, both from livestock and grain and oilseeds to tell the story globally. An example would be from some of the research we had done where we can actually quantify that Saskatchewan producers who grow canola, their carbon footprint is 60 per cent better than our nearest competitors. Sixty per cent is not a small number. That is significant."

Marit said he believes that Saskatchewan's carbon footprint being 60 per cent lower than nearest competitors should be explained more globally.

"That's a story we have to tell as a government, as the ministry," he said.

"I've told it on trade missions and it gets the attention of the suppliers that are looking for product globally. Also because their customers are starting to question how it's growing, where it's growing, and the big one is how.

"When we met with some of the major players in the world as far as food processing, this really got their attention because they said, 'wow if that's a story to tell then we're very interested in your product.'"

With concerns of food security being raised recently sharing Saskatchewan's story of how producers continue to grow their production for food will continue to carry its weight over the next few years, Marit said.

"What we heard from the recent travels we've had is food security and in light of that, it's very unfortunate what's happening in Ukraine," he said.

"These companies are saying they want to make sure they have food security, and we need quality insurance as well.

"Plus, they want to, quite frankly, deal with a government that adds on for trade and stuff like that. Is there challenges? Sure there is. Some of the challenges obviously is we're land low, and how do we overcome some of that, and how do we work with the railways and the shippers to make sure we still have continued sup-

ply.

"That's the one thing we've heard in our missions is some of the logistic challenges, but hopefully we can work through all of that because we see great opportunity here.

"I think in the next few years you're going to see some great opportunity where you're going to see companies globally come in to say, 'I want to be at the source.'"

Through the five-year Sustainable CAP initiative, \$89.4 million will be invested annually in strategic programming for Saskatchewan farmers, ranchers and agri-businesses. This comes after a 25 per cent increase from the \$71.2 million in the previous federal-provincial partnership.

Marit was asked what the Government of Saskatchewan hopes to achieve by the end of the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership initiative.

"I hope by the fifth year we have a very good program. This is a huge financial impact, obviously by the federal government, but most certainly for the province of Saskatchewan," he said.

"When you look at our investment versus per capita basis versus any other jurisdiction, we're quite high. Obviously it's an investment by the people of this province to see agriculture grow and flourish. We hope by the end of the five years which would be 2028, that we hit our growth target.

"That we've hit our 2030 growth targets, and that's hitting exports of growing over 45 million metric tons, seeing livestock receipts hit over three billion, and seeing the agri-food exports hitting well over 20 billion. We're close. We were at 18.4 billion last year.

"That's what we sort of want to do, but at the same time we want to make sure that our primary producers are prosperous and viable as well. That is key. If we're not competitive globally, and that was our key message in the whole negotiations with the federal government is before we can do anything from an environmental lens as far as that side of it, our primary producers have to be competitive and profitable. They have to be, otherwise none of this matters.

"At the end of the five years, I hope we can look back and say agriculture is doing very well and continues to grow. Then we can start all over again and hopefully find an agreement similar, or even better than this."



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# An additional \$405,000 for rural early learning mobile programs



Families in rural Saskatchewan with young children will have access to further mobile early learning opportunities, thanks to an additional \$405,000 investment from the Governments of Saskatchewan and Canada. Funding for KidsFirst Regional programming was \$823,500 in 2022-23. This additional investment, recently provided to KidsFirst Regional areas increases the total program funding to \$1.2 million.

KidsFirst Regional travels to communities across the province bringing unique learning opportunities to children up to age five with programs such as take-home literacy kits, story walks and pop-up preschool events. This increase in funding will allow KidsFirst Regional to reach more children in their own communities with learning initiatives that focus on child development, literacy, nutrition and health and well-being.

"Providing KidsFirst Regional with more funding will ensure that regardless of where children live, they can have access to high quality early learning opportunities," Education Minister Dustin Duncan said. "The variety of programs KidsFirst Regional offers will continue to support early childhood development, school readiness goals and positive social engagement in communities across Saskatchewan."

There are 10 KidsFirst Regional areas across the province that received funding; Moose Jaw-Assiniboia area, Kindersley area, Tisdale area, Prince Albert area, Saskatoon area, Southwest area, Regina area, Yorkton area and the Southeast area all received \$40,000. Lloydminster-Meadow Lake-the Battlefords received \$45,000 as they service a larger area.

KidsFirst Regional Community Devel-

opers work collaboratively with local partners and families such as public health, Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP), family resource centres and libraries within smaller urban and rural communities. They provide activities, events and access to information for families with children up to the age of five that spark creativity, ignite imagination and allow every moment to be a teachable one.

"Every family is important to us," KidsFirst Regional, Regina-Qu'appelle Area Supervisor Donna Coleman-Trombley said. "If you only have 10 children under the age of five in your community - we still want to come to you and provide programming. Being able to go out into these rural communities shows these families that their children are important no matter where they live."

Last year KidsFirst Regional supported almost 16,000 parents and young children in 343 communities. The program also distributed 8,600 early learning kits and backpacks across the province which included activities to enhance all five elements of child development including linguistic, social-emotional, cognitive, fine and gross motor skills.

"Every child deserves the best start in life," Canada's Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Karina Gould, said. "The additional funding to KidsFirst programs will help ensure that all families in Saskatchewan have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning opportunities no matter where they live."

To find a KidsFirst Regional mobile early learning opportunity near you visit [saskatchewan.ca/residents/family-and-social-support/community-programs-for-new-families-in-canada/kidsfirst-regional](http://saskatchewan.ca/residents/family-and-social-support/community-programs-for-new-families-in-canada/kidsfirst-regional).

This increase of \$405,000 in funding is being provided through the Canada-Saskatchewan Bi-Lateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, 2021-26.

The Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement was signed on August 13, 2021, for the

purposes of enhancing the quality of Early Years Family Resource Centres, improving access to early learning programming in rural and small cities and to implement a risk-based compliance monitoring system for child care for the period April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

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# SARM happy with rural support in provincial budget

The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), alongside their member RMs, say they are encouraged by the ongoing support for rural Saskatchewan in this provincial budget.

The budget increases total investment into the province's severely strained healthcare sector by 6.7%, which is desperately needed. Service disruptions, aging facilities, and the ongoing struggle to recruit and retain healthcare staff have been further highlighted and are more critical than ever. SARM will continue to work with the provincial government to ensure this new funding and programming reaches rural areas effectively.

The total Municipal Revenue sharing pool was increased from just over \$262 million in 2022/23 to \$297.9 million in this budget. SARM is pleased with the increase, recognizing that RMs are a key component in driving our economy. "More funding is needed so RMs can continue to provide a level of service expected by sectors driving Saskatchewan's economy including preparing for future growth in the critical minerals sector. We are hopeful more can be allocated in the near future," says Ray Orb, SARM President.

Funding for rural road and bridge infrastructure is imperative for RMs to continue to provide key economic sectors with a strategic transportation network that is effective and well maintained. "We were pleased with the continued investment of \$15 million for the Rural Integrated Roads for Growth (RIRG) program but more is needed if we want to revitalize and sustain this critical rural network into the future," says Orb.

Increased funding for Saskatchewan farm support programs is also welcome news. The province is providing an additional 25 percent to further enhance programming offered via the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. "Increased support for farmers and ranchers signals to Saskatchewan's agriculture

sector that our government will be there to assist when they need it," says Orb. "This assurance is critical. It allows our agriculture sector to compete on the world market with countries like the EU and the US, who provide similar supports to their industry."

SARM says they are also encouraged by new and continued funding for crime reduction initiatives as well as \$8.9 million for the Saskatchewan Firearms Program. SARM looks forward to meeting with the RCMP and provincial government to discuss how to effectively use this increased investment to fill the gaps in the current policing system, many of those in rural Saskatchewan. When so much of rural Saskatchewan is already underserved, SARM is asking for a co-ordinated effort between all stakeholders targeting crime reduction, one that ensures we aren't duplicating efforts.

Rural broadband is an essential service; this is something SARM has been promoting for over a decade. SARM appreciates the \$412.7 million for the SaskTel 5G and rural fibre network but substantial investment is needed to reach the goal of broadband infrastructure parity for all Saskatchewan residents regardless of location. Neither people nor industry can thrive in rural Saskatchewan without reliable, affordable broadband. It's often the best option to access, markets, banking, social services, and recently healthcare. At SARM's most recent convention their members highlighted the need for better access for rural schools to effectively deliver education programming.

SARM says they look forward to working with the province to provide input on what works best for rural Saskatchewan as these new budget investments and programs are implemented.

"They will go a long way to support the continued economic growth and livelihood in rural Saskatchewan, and the entire province," says Orb.

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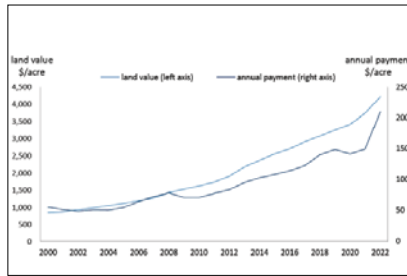


Figure 1. Canadian average farmland values vs. average annual farmland payments



Figure 2. Impact of purchase timing and interest rate on annual farmland payment

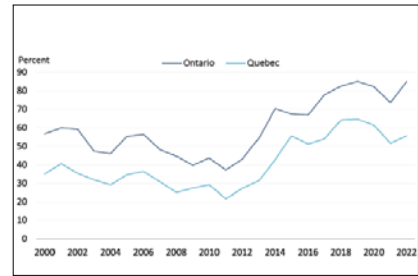


Figure 3. Annual average farmland payments as a percentage of gross crop revenue (corn/soybean rotation)

## Exploring farmland affordability trends through purchase timing and crop revenues

BY JUSTIN SHEPHERD, FCC SENIOR ECONOMIST

Canadian agriculture faced many challenges in 2022 but ultimately came out with strong farm cash receipts and positive profit margins across many sectors. With the availability of farmland for sale remaining tight, average farmland values increased 12.8% in 2022, up from the 8.3% increase in 2021. Inflationary pressures led the Bank of Canada to increase its overnight rate from 0.25% at the start of 2022 to 4.25% by the end of the year.

This post investigates land affordability related to the timing of purchase which was highly impacted by rising interest rates in Canada during 2022. In addition, we compare annual land payments against gross revenue generated by different crop rotations in western and eastern Canada. While important nuances exist across provinces, farmland is near or at its least affordable level in the last 20 years.

Most farmland is purchased with a combination of equity and debt, and affordability is a matter of land prices, financing costs, and farm revenues.

Consider a land purchase with a down payment of 25% and a loan amortized over 25 years. Let's use the effective average business interest rate (a weighted average of market interest rates), which averaged 4.4% in 2022, up from 2.3% in 2021, to estimate the annual loan payment.

Farmland values and annual payments tend to evolve at the same pace (Figure 1). On average, Canadian farmland values have increased 8.3% annually over the last 10 years. In 2022, values rose 12.8%, the highest jump since 2013. Average annual payments increased 9.7% per year in the last decade, but 2022 recorded a large jump of 41% to \$210/acre due to rising interest rates.

Interest rates fell through 2020, so land purchased at the start of the year had higher payments relative to land purchased at the end if it had the same purchase price (Figure 2). During 2021, interest rates stayed consistent, and land purchases at any time throughout the year would have resulted in similar payments.

In 2022, interest rates rose steadily, resulting in a large jump in payments depending on when the land was purchased. Annual payments would have been \$75/acre higher at the end of 2022 than on similarly priced land at the start of the year.

Assessing average provincial yields and crop prices generate an estimate of gross revenues for soybean-corn rotations in Ontario and Quebec and canola-wheat rotations in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Farmland payments as a share of gross revenues estimate farmland affordability.

Quebec and Ontario operations recorded similar crop revenues per acre over the last decade. Farmland payments as a share of revenues differ mostly because of land prices (Figure 3). In 2022, purchasing new land in Ontario generated a land payment equal to 85% of gross crop revenue, tying 2019's record high. Meanwhile, Quebec payments equaled 56% of gross crop revenue, just above its 10-year average. Different dynamics in the farmland market explain differences in farmland prices.

Saskatchewan and Alberta farmland values are driven predominately by grain crop revenues. In what follows, we capture a canola and wheat rotation. Land payments relative to gross crop revenue in 2022 ticked upwards (Figure 4). The Alberta ratio hit 43%, above its long-term average of 37% but below the 2019 high. Saskatchewan's ratio was 24%, above its historical average of 18% and just below the 2019 high. Gross crop revenues have been in-

creasing in both provinces over the last decade, but farmland values and corresponding payments are appreciating at a faster rate.

After 2021's historic low interest rates, interest rates rose quickly throughout 2022, leading to sharp price jumps in payments on newly purchased land. Interest rates are

projected to remain around current levels during 2023, meaning annual land payments will remain well above a year ago. Farm cash receipts are expected to remain strong, but high farm input costs and interest expenses call for thorough assessments of the financial risks in an operation as the economic environment evolves.

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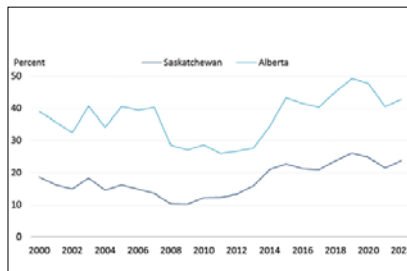


Figure 4. Annual average farmland payments as a percentage of gross crop revenue (wheat/canola rotation)

# Overhead door business operating in Arcola

Eagle Overhead Door is Southeast Saskatchewan's fastest growing overhead door company. They key to their growth—service.

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It didn't take long for Justin, the working partner in the business, to pick it up. After some continued training from one of the most experienced people in the door industry, Eagle Overhead Door was off and running.

Specializing in commercial sectional doors and find-ors, Eagle can help with any problems you may have with your doors.

After three years in business and hundreds of customers served, Justin says there isn't much they haven't seen. Your doors are an important part of your home and business. They not only add curb appeal to your property but also provide security and protection to your vehicles and belongings. Eagle understands the significance of a quality door and they provide reliable installation, repair, and maintenance services in Southeast Saskatchewan, and Southwest Manitoba.

Justin says Eagle Overhead Door prides themselves on excellent and quick customer service and attention to detail. They take the time to understand their clients' needs and preferences and provide personalized solutions that meet their specific requirements. They also offer free consultations and estimates, ensuring that their clients have a clear understanding of the services we provide and the costs involved.



Justin Carrier, the owner of Eagle Overhead Door in Arcola, left, and Justin Hillier, one of the company's lead technicians, right.

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## Manitoba releases spring flood outlook

Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure's Hydrologic Forecast Centre reports a major risk of flooding on the Red River and low to moderate risk of flooding in most Manitoba basins in its March spring outlook. Spring flood risk largely depends on weather conditions from now until the spring melt.

At this time, the centre advises that due to recent precipitation events south of the border in the United States, the flood risk has increased to major on the Red River. The flood risk is low to moderate in the Interlake region along the Fisher and Icelandic rivers, and along the Assiniboine River. The risk of spring flooding is generally low along several other rivers including the Souris, Roseau, Rat and Pembina rivers. Water levels are expected to remain below community and individual flood protection levels.

There is also a low risk of flooding for most other Manitoba basins including the Saskatchewan River, Whiteshell lakes area and northern Manitoba. With the exceptions of Dauphin Lake and Lake St. Martin, most Manitoba lakes, including Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba, are projected to remain within operating ranges after the spring run-off.

As in many other years, the risk of

flooding could change in any of the basins depending on weather conditions between now and the spring melt.

Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure, through a contract with Winnipeg Environmental Remediations Inc., has completed ice-cutting and breaking work along the Red and Icelandic rivers to reduce ice jam-related flooding. Ice-cutting and breaking work were not undertaken this spring on the Assiniboine River, along the Portage Diversion, due to a lower risk of ice jam-related flooding.

The centre also reports that operation of the Red River Floodway is expected this spring to reduce water levels within Winnipeg. Operation of the Portage Diversion is also anticipated to prevent ice jamming on the Assiniboine River east of Portage la Prairie and control river levels in Winnipeg and areas along the Assiniboine River downstream of Portage la Prairie.

The province, local authorities and First Nation communities are continuing to prepare for spring flooding. This includes ice-cutting and breaking on the Red and Icelandic rivers, review of existing emergency response plans, information sharing, and preparation of resources used in flood response.



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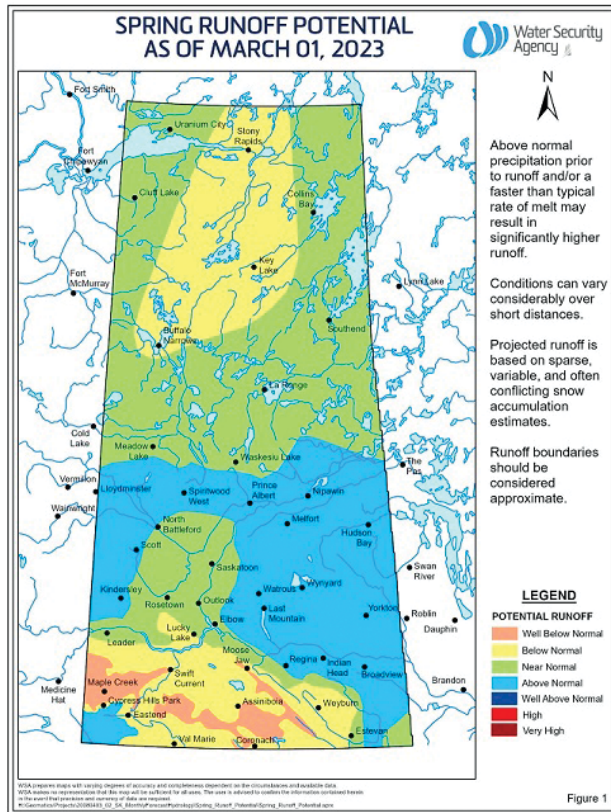
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The WSA's spring runoff potential map. Above normal runoff is expected in much of Southeast Saskatchewan.

# Above average runoff predicted

The Water Security Agency (WSA) released the Spring Runoff Report for 2023. The information gathered in this report is based on conditions as they were on March 1, 2023.

Moisture conditions across southern Saskatchewan were generally dry at freeze-up in 2022, particularly on the west side of the province where drought conditions were prevalent. Winter snowfall has ranged from below normal over much of southwestern Saskatchewan (other than a small pocket in the extreme southwest south of the Cypress Hills where the snowpack is well above normal), to well above normal through much of central Saskatchewan. The agency does not anticipate flood-related issues even in areas where above normal runoff is expected, assuming near normal conditions going forward.

Warmer than seasonal temperatures resulted in near complete melt of the snowpack over a large area of southern Saskatchewan, including areas north of the Cypress Hills and much of the Old Wives Lake Watershed. With variable moisture conditions at freeze-up, mid-winter melts and a variable snowpack, the runoff potential for the province also differs significantly.

In the north, near normal snowmelt runoff is gener-

ally expected, other than an area from Stoney Rapids down toward Buffalo Narrows where below normal snowmelt runoff is predicted. In the south, above normal snowmelt runoff is expected in a band extending from Lloydminster east to the border, due to well above normal snowpack. Below to well below normal snowmelt runoff is expected over much of southwest and southcentral Saskatchewan. The exception is south of the Cypress Hills where, with a heavy snowpack, above normal snowmelt runoff is expected.

It is important to note that this forecast is based on conditions as of March 1. Above normal snowfall over the next month could still produce near normal runoff over areas where below or well below normal snowmelt runoff is expected, particularly if it melts quickly.

In areas where below or well below normal snowmelt runoff is expected, some water supply concerns may emerge or intensify. For instance, irrigation water supply in the Bigstick Lake Basin near Maple Creek is expected to experience a third consecutive year of shortages.

The differences between the preliminary runoff map issued in early February and the current map is the inclusion of data from late-February snow surveys, measuring snowpack water content. With the benefit of the snow survey information, there is much higher confidence in the current runoff potential outlook.

WSA monitors conditions throughout the spring melt and provide updates as situations develop. The next spring runoff forecast will be issued in early April, available on wsask.ca.

## Daryl Harrison

Member of the Legislative Assembly for Cannington Constituency

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# Photographer captures grain elevator images as they fade away on the prairies



An elevator at Humboldt. Photo by Mark Zulkoskey from Tim Lockhart's Facebook page on prairie elevators.

BY NICOLE GOLDSWORTHY,  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
Tim Lockhart has made it his passion to photograph as many prairie grain elevators as he can find.

Lockhart was born and raised in Alberta and his dad was a manager at an Old Dutch potato chip plant. When he travelled with his father he gained a passion for grain elevators as each small town they pulled into had one.

About two and half years ago, he saw how many were rapidly being torn down. What every small town in Saskatchewan had was slowly vanishing. Lockhart decided to start documenting as many as he could find throughout the prairie provinces. To date, he has taken pictures of 465 elevators in the three prairie provinces—275 of them in Saskatchewan alone—with 25 still to document.

Once Lockhart started to document all of the elevators, he created a Facebook page called, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba Grain Elevators, which has just under

9,000 followers. Some of the pictures that have been taken to conserve the history behind each elevator have almost 85,000 likes.

Lockhart names his top Saskatchewan elevators in no particular order as the Clemenciau, Veregin, White Fox, Nut Mountain and Gronlid elevators. He mentions that these are all very rare as two of them are old red Sask Wheat Pool elevators and another being a Federal.

Some communities have gotten creative in saving these elevators that seem to be fading out of Saskatchewan history. Some have turned them into studios for bands to play, museums, tea houses and libraries. Many have been purchased privately and some have been renovated so that they are still useable grain elevators.

Lockhart found out that the oldest elevator in Canada was located at Elva (1897) and made the journey to see this elevator shortly before it burned down.

Lockhart says he is happy to see so many elevator enthusiasts use his page

as a means of sharing photos and history behind each elevator—a great resource for anyone interested in learning and seeing all the different types of el-

evators on the prairies. To check out this group go to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/668808844032536>

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# Field biologist shares passion for conservation

BY MIRANDA LEYBOURNE,  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
From the ruggedly beautiful shores of Lake Athabasca in northern Saskatchewan to the softly undulating, grassy landscape in the southern part of that province, Erica Alex's career as a field biology technician has taken her all over the Prairies.

Alex grew up on a farm near Minnedosa, 52 kilometres north of Brandon, and now lives in Saskatoon, where she is studying environmental biology at the University of Saskatchewan. She'll be back in western Manitoba on Feb. 24 to deliver a presentation on her adventures in field biology for Westman Naturalists.

Crediting her childhood on the farm for sparking her interest in conservation, Alex became fascinated by birds when she was around eight years old.

"I spent so much time outside in my childhood," she said. "My grandfather was very much interested in nature and birds."

Beginning her lifelong love of winged creatures with a Christmas bird count, Alex met many other birders in Westman who shared her passion. Eventually, she served on the executive board for Friends of the Bluebirds, an organization dedicated to the conservation of the species.

In addition to being a student, Alex now works for Birds Canada, the country's only national organization dedicated to bird conservation.

Spending her summers working as a field technician and her winters processing data for the organization along with her studies has been a dream come true, she said. Alex's job also involves counting and identifying different types of birds in the field and collecting data on vegetation and habitats. The data is then used to generate information on abundance, density, distribution and diversity among bird

"Agriculture relies on the environment being a healthy, functioning system, and without biodiversity, that system becomes really weak."

—Erica Alex

populations.

"It just seemed like the absolute coolest way to spend my life and get to work. It doesn't feel like work at all," Alex said. "I have loved every minute of it. It just gets better all the time."

Her work has taken Alex all over Western Canada, especially in Saskatchewan, where she has worked in remote boreal forests, expansive grasslands, on the shores of rocky lakes and across vast sand dunes. One of her favourite jobs, she said, was working as a boreal technician in northern Saskatchewan.

"I spent a week camping along the south shore of Lake Athabasca, which is a huge lake in the ... northwest corner of the province," she said. "It has the Athabasca sand dunes, which is the largest active dunes in Canada ... it was just really, really incredible."

The time she spent at Lake Athabasca will be one of the highlights of her talk, which is taking place at the Brodie Building at Brandon University and online via Zoom. Alex said she's thrilled at the prospect of sharing her story. Her advice to anyone wanting to get involved in the world of conservation, whether to pursue it as a career or get involved as a hobby, is to get out into nature—even stepping out one's backdoor can open up a whole new world, she said.

"Parents showing their kids some of the really cool stuff that exists in nature can

go a long way in developing that interest."

To turn an interest in nature into a career, Alex recommends reading books, watching movies and talking with as many knowledgeable people as one can.

"The biggest thing [is] ... just taking the time to learn as much as you can and meet people and make connections."

While she might decide to pursue a master's degree at some point after she graduates, Alex said she could also see herself taking a break from studying to work full-time in the field in an industry that seems to be constantly changing.

One of the most interesting things Alex is utilizing in her work is called bioacoustics, the investigation of how animals produce, disperse and receive sound.

Part of her field work involves recording birdsong. This winter, Alex has been going through those recordings and identifying the birds featured in them.

"Slowly, people are working on artificial intelligence being able to automatically process those recordings, so there's going to be some really cool advancements in that technology in the next few years."

Alex has also partnered with pasture managers and private landowners to survey for birds on their land through a bird monitoring project. Through the project,

Birds Canada is working to support producers in making their practices more biodiverse, while also remaining profitable.

Being able to work with producers is something Alex says she finds satisfying.

"My family has an ag background. I grew up in rural Manitoba, where that's such a prevalent activity. And so being able to kind of bridge science and conservation with the ag industry has been super rewarding ... I really love that part."

Over the past few years, Alex has noticed that many farmers in the Prairies are becoming more and more concerned with conserving biodiversity.

"Agriculture relies on the environment being a healthy, functioning system, and without biodiversity, that system becomes really weak."

Alex is also looking forward to talking about her first love, and what got her started down this path in the first place—birds. When asked to name her favourite, she didn't hesitate long before deciding on the great grey owl, also called the Phantom of the North, the only species of its genus to be found in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.

"Owls are so amazing. They're nocturnal, they have amazing hearing and eyesight, and they fly so quietly. They're just such a mysterious bird," Alex said, adding it took her a while before she was able to see one in the wild. "When I finally did, it was just such a magical moment, not one that I will ever forget."

The bird that makes her favourite call, however, is the common loon.

"It takes me back to summers on Clear Lake," Alex said. "No matter where I am, when I hear it, that's what I think of."

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# Former APAS President Todd Lewis named 1st Vice-President of Canadian Federation of Agriculture

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) has announced their executive has been acclaimed for 2023.

Keith Currie of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been acclaimed President, and Past President of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) Todd Lewis was acclaimed 1st Vice-President. Pierre Lampron of the Dairy Farmers of Canada joins the executive as the acclaimed 2nd Vice-President.

"It's an honour to work on behalf of Saskatchewan's farmers at the national stage," Lewis said. "Saskatchewan's leadership in Canadian agriculture is

dynamic, growing, and evolving. We are innovation and environmental leaders in our farm management practices and representing Saskatchewan's perspective on the national stage is tremendously important and I am deeply humbled to have been chosen."

"Todd is a tireless advocate for Saskatchewan farm interests at the national table," APAS President Ian Boxall added. "He listens intently to all perspectives and passionately provides his view on every issue always looking for a solution that works. He is an incredible mentor to our APAS Board and we look forward to

continuing working with Todd to ensure Saskatchewan solutions are heard and considered nationally."

APAS proposed seven resolutions to the CFA Annual General Meeting in Ottawa. All seven of them passed with over 90 per cent support from CFA membership. One of those resolutions includes calling on the CFA to work with member organizations to examine and support the development of a national cost-shared insurance programming for livestock, including the potential development of a cow/calf production insurance program.



Todd Lewis

# APAS Livestock Summit looking to find solutions to challenges facing producers

In response to requests from Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) members over the past year, APAS is hosting a Livestock Summit at the Saskatoon Inn on April 5 to bring together academics, producers, and industry to help identify solutions to the current circumstances impacting livestock producers—including cattle, bison, and sheep.

"Livestock production is a vital part of Saskatchewan's agricultural landscape," APAS President Ian Boxall said. "Our members have been raising alarms about the future of this sector in our province, as producers have struggled over the past number of years with the impacts of drought, rising production costs, and large spreads between farmgate and retail prices.

Representatives at our General Meeting in December passed a resolution for APAS to bring together stakeholders to find solutions to these challenges."

Saskatchewan is the second largest cattle producing province in Canada and is home to more than a third of the country's native and tame pastureland. According to the latest Statistics Canada reports, however, the provincial cattle herd has decreased by approximately 90,000 head since January 2021. Land that is best suited for livestock production is at risk of being converted to cropland, which creates further challenges for the long-term success and future viability of the sector.

The APAS livestock summit will look at the factors causing the trends as well as policy and program op-

tions to help promote future success. These include recognition of livestock's positive ecological and environmental contribution, improvements to business risk management programs, and work being done currently to process and market livestock from Saskatchewan.

"Success for livestock producers means success across the province," says Boxall. "The more agricultural groups work together to focus our efforts and support each other, the more we can accomplish. At the end of the day, we all want success for agricultural producers."

Registration for the livestock summit is now open. Visit [apas.ca/policy/livestocksummit](http://apas.ca/policy/livestocksummit) to register.



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# Author sheds light on mental health journey

BY MIRANDA LEYBOURNE,  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The joys and trials of living in a small farming community, and how both can play a role in one's mental health, is the idea behind Westman author Lewellyn Melnyk's new book.

Melnyk grew up on a grain farm north of Russell, 140 kilometres northwest of Brandon. After working as a journalist at CKX television in Brandon, Melnyk eventually returned to agriculture. She now farms with her husband in Angusville, 162 kilometres northwest of Brandon.

Although Melnyk's passion for writing never diminished even after her career switch, it wasn't until she'd come through a particularly difficult period of anxiety and depression—which she said she'd suffered from since she was 12 years old—that she thought about writing a book.

"I didn't write that much until recently, and I really, really missed it, because when I was in journalism, I really enjoyed it. I kind of had a calling on my heart to share my story, and so I decided that my skill should get put to work again. So I sat down and decided I was going to write."

"Rooted"—part self-help book, part memoir—not only tells the story of Melnyk's personal mental health journey, but offers warm understanding and advice for those who find themselves struggling.

Melnyk's inspiration to write about mental health wasn't based solely on her own path. Having lost a friend to mental illness in 2020, she believes sharing about mental health issues and what has helped her could possibly be of help to others as well.

"I wanted to write about mental health and some tips, kind of make a guidebook for people ... about how to stay healthy, just because I had learned so much," she said.

But deciding to write and publish a book during the COVID-19 pandemic wasn't easy. Melnyk, also a

mother, put the project on the backburner for a couple of months before she was able to return her focus to it. From start to finish, the endeavour took her about three years.

It's also not always easy to write about such sensitive subjects as mental health, but Melnyk's desire to positively affect people and her hope to foster better mental health for rural Manitobans is what kept her going, she said.

"It is difficult to write about, no doubt, but that's why I did it, because I think it will help people."

When Melnyk was diagnosed with depression at the age of 12, there weren't a lot of options for treatment or support, even though her parents made a concerted effort to help her. Thankfully, they were able to work with a pediatrician, and Melnyk found creative outlets to help her cope.

"I did lean on friends, and my writing and music."

The Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba says that one in four people will experience an anxiety disorder in their lifetime. For Melnyk, hers showed up in her 30s, when her children were very young. She began having panic attacks and was experiencing difficulty sleeping. After getting the all-clear on a physical level from her doctor, eventually Melnyk realized that anxiety was the cause of her suffering. And though that put a name to her problem, it didn't initially help her, she said.

"I was told, 'it's just anxiety.' And that word 'just' is kind of heartbreaking when somebody tells you that because it's not a good feeling to have panic attacks, not a good feeling to deal with anxiety. And to leave a doctor's office with a doctor telling you to go Google stuff was not helpful to me."

Although her experience with the doctor she was seeing at the time was disheartening, Melnyk soon took her healing into her own hands. She began reading books and



"Rooted" by author Lewellyn Melnyk takes a close look at mental health and living in a small town, and how people can stay healthy in their communities.

researching anxiety, which could be enlightening and defeating in turn. In "Rooted," Melnyk hopes she'll be able to streamline the process for others.

The book lays out how she found the resources that helped her, but also relies on experts who share their experience in treating anxiety, other mood disorders and mental health issues.

It was incredibly important for Melnyk to show people what it looks like to be dealing with anxiety and depression, including tips on how to manage it and her favourite coping skills.

"I am not a doctor and I am not a health professional, but I have lived it, and those lived experiences hold value for other people who are maybe going through the same thing," she said.

Living in a small community, where everyone knows each other and gossip flourishes due to simple human nature, can be intimidating when faced with any kind of a challenge, Melnyk said. But at the same time, it's that very interconnectedness that makes rural living so helpful for seeking support to overcome issues.

Continued on Page B25

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# SARM and cattle groups call for support

The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), along with member RMs, said in a press release recently that they are concerned for the future of livestock producers operating in the province due to veterinarian shortages, low profitability, support on premiums and year-over-year drought.

"Cattle producers have been struggling with feed concerns due to ongoing drought and it has taken its toll on the profitability of producers," SARM president Ray Orb said in the press release. "Alongside the feed concern, young ranchers are struggling to get into the industry, or find sustainability with fluctuating prices and little to no risk management support."

Saskatchewan ranchers are heading into one of the most important seasons, calving, and are concerned about the shortage of rural veterinarians. Livestock producers need the support of nearby veterinarians for the health and safety of their herds and the longevity of their stock.

"Can we put incentives in place to attract veterinarians to consider opening clinics in our rural communities? Let's start offering opportunities for youth entering the field to open clinics in our province," Orb said. "The lack of veterinarians is a chronic concern for pro-



"Cattle producers have been struggling with feed concerns due to ongoing drought and it has taken its toll on the profitability of producers," SARM president Ray Orb said.

ducers who are being left to travel great distances to find animal aid, or enduring additional costs for mobile vet appointments. We just don't have enough services for our livestock industry."

The Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association (SCA) also has concerns about the lack of veterinarians, among other issues. SCA board chair Keith Day said they plan to work with SARM to make sure those issues are addressed.

"The agriculture sector is fundamental to the growth of Saskatch-

ewan's economy, and the livestock sector needs to be recognized for the outsized role it plays in protecting our environment while providing quality protein for a world facing a food crisis," Day said.

Jeffrey Yorga, 1st Vice President Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association (SSGA) said the last five years of droughts exposed some cracks in the business of cattle. He said the lack of business risk management tools, lack of pricing transparency, and the rapid exit of aging producers has threatened the existence of Saskatch-

ewan's beef industry.

"Economics has sped the decline in cattle numbers," Yorga said. "As well, the relative economic success in other sectors has turned the land from grass to annual crops, ensuring that the cows won't return."

"While all indications point to better days ahead for producers who remain, the SSGA welcomes all industry partners to continue to work together to fix the problems that got us here so that when these situations arise the industry is more resilient and able to operate on

the same footing as other commodity producers," he added.

SARM, SCA, and SSGA are invested in finding solutions and immediate support for the ranchers that make up a large portion of rural Saskatchewan. They said they want to see producers grow and succeed and to do this need support with better risk management programs, more rural vet clinics, irrigation, and consideration for a joint effort from our provincial and federal governments in cost-sharing premiums.

SARM, SCA, and SSGA continue to call for action in support of cattle producers and push for discussions with the provincial government, delegates, and producers.



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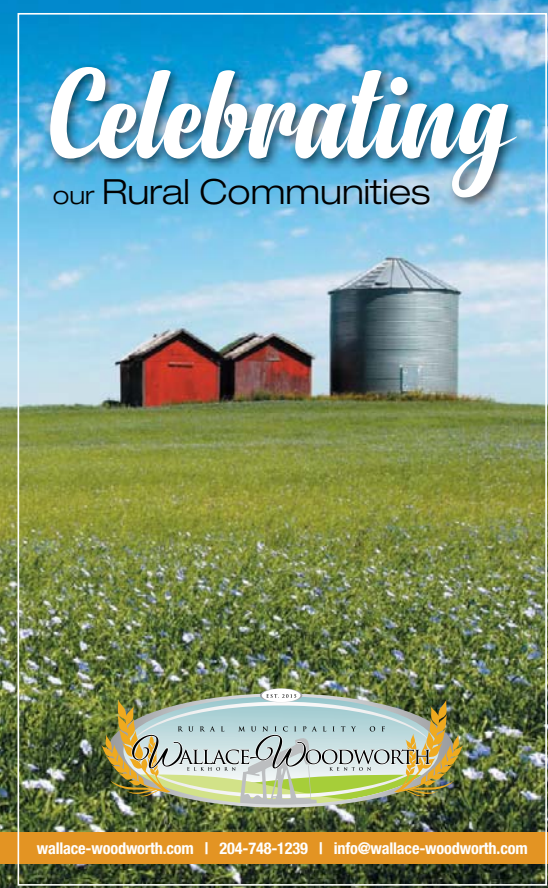
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**Budget 2023:**

# Increased investment in international trade

The 2023-24 provincial budget supports a strong and growing economy by amplifying Saskatchewan's presence in international markets to increase trade and investment opportunities, which in turn creates more jobs here at home.

"This budget is exactly what we need to continue leading the nation in economic development," Trade and Export Development Minister Jeremy Harrison said. "Here at home, we're fostering a competitive business environment that rivals any jurisdiction in Canada, and the positive economic impacts we've seen show we're on the right path."

"Internationally, continuing to develop Saskatchewan's trade and investment interests while strengthening existing partnerships and relationships benefits all Saskatchewan residents. As a province that is

dependent on exports, this work is invaluable to growing our economy and creating jobs."

Saskatchewan will open a new international trade office in Germany, which is the world's fourth largest economy. With the addition of Germany to the international trade network, Saskatchewan will have nine international offices located in China, India, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and Vietnam, as well as a dedicated US Relations Branch within the Ministry of Trade and Export Development here in Saskatchewan.

The efforts of these trade offices, working closely with Saskatchewan exporters, are paying off," Harrison said. "Saskatchewan's merchandise exports rose from \$37.0 billion in 2021 to \$52.4 billion in 2022—an increase of 41.6 per cent. More exports abroad means

more jobs here at home.

"More exports, more investment, more jobs. That's growth that works for everyone."

Direct air connectivity between Saskatoon and the U.S. will support economic growth in the province. Budget 2023-24 provides up to \$2.2 million through a Minimum Revenue Guarantee to the Saskatoon Airport Authority to support a U.S. direct flight. This funding will increase options for the province's business community, recreational travel for residents and support provincial tour-

ism. Similar resources are also available to Regina's Airport Authority to support their efforts to attract a direct flight to a US hub city as well.

Budget 2023-24 provides continued support to advance economic reconciliation through the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation (SIIFC). Launched in 2022, the SIIFC will offer up to \$75 million in loan guarantees to support Indigenous-equity ownership of major projects in mining, energy, oil and gas, forestry and value-added agriculture.

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### LAND ONLINE AUCTION

**Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:00<sup>am</sup> -  
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Barry Olney  
RM of Mount Pleasant #2 Carievale, SK  
CONTACT: 306-421-1495; 1 MILE WEST &  
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#### TIMED ONLINE AUCTION

**Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup> at 8:00<sup>am</sup> -  
Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:00<sup>am</sup>**

RM of Mount Pleasant #2 Carnduff, SK  
Contact: 306-421-2928



### FARM & LIVESTOCK EQUIPMENT ONLINE AUCTION

**Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at 8:00<sup>am</sup> -  
Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:00<sup>am</sup>**

Brian & Mariette Arthur  
Storthoaks, SK  
Contact: 306-452-8838



### FARM EQUIPMENT ONLINE AUCTION

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Spring seeding photo submitted by Colin Jaenen in 2021.

# Spring Seeding just around the corner

It's been a chilly March, but farmers are gearing up for spring seeding just the same. Shown here are some spring seeding photos submitted by World-Spectator readers in years past!



Spring seeding photo submitted by Samantha Sikora in 2021.



Spring seeding photo submitted by Tianna and Dustin Toms in 2021.

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# USask project to improve soil health through knowledge sharing network receives \$1.4 million from Weston Family Foundation

A new project at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) has been awarded \$1.4 million through the Weston Family Soil Health Initiative to develop land-based training workshops for First Nations communities, land managers, and producers who farm First Nations lands.

The \$10 million Weston Family Soil Health Initiative seeks to expand the adoption of ecologically based beneficial management practices (BMPs) including cover cropping, nutrient management (4R principles) and crop diversification/rotation that increase soil organic matter to improve biodiversity and resiliency on agricultural lands across Canada.

The project, Indigenous Soil Health Learning Circles for Resilient Prairie Agroecosystems, aims to establish a network to share evidence-based, culturally significant outreach and education to improve prairie soil health, biodiversity, and soil organic matter for First Nations agroecosystems.

USask soil scientist Dr. Melissa Arcand (PhD) will be working in partnership with Mistawasis Nêhiyawak, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Lands Technicians, and the International Buffalo Relations Institute.

The Soil Health Learning Circles will share soil health knowledge from both an Indigenous and Western science-based perspective with First Nations and farmers who farm First Nations lands across the Prairies, focusing on the prairie-parkland region of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba.

"Our project will expand soil science training beyond the walls of the university—alongside teachings of Indigenous ecological knowledge—onto lands that are of significance to the First Nations we are in partnership with," said Arcand, an associate professor in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

Conventional agricultural production is the main eco-



USask soil scientist Dr. Melissa Arcand (PhD) will be working in partnership with Mistawasis Nêhiyawak, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Lands Technicians, and the International Buffalo Relations Institute.

nomical land use on First Nations in the Canadian Prairies, most of which is farmed by non-Indigenous producers. Many First Nations are now actively engaging in agricultural land management for improved economic outcomes and to establish stronger connections to Indigenous values around ecological stewardship and biodiversity.

The Soil Health Learning Circles will also share outcomes from the Agricultural Climate Solutions Living Lab Project "Bridge to Land Water Sky" led by Mistawasis Nêhiyawak in partnership with Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and other organizations. The Indigenous-led living lab, funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, aims to see farmers and First Nations working together to improve agricultural practices while honouring Indigenous values, communities, treaties, lands, and resources.

"I'm excited to exchange soil knowledge with First Nations land managers, producers, and community members on their own lands within their communities,

and to continued building of respectful and reciprocal relationships for the benefit of the land and soil health," said Arcand.



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# Did you know that the largest farmland owner in the country is not even a farmer?

We all know what's happening to real estate these days. Everything got more expensive in a hurry, fueled by rock-bottom interest rates. But farming has also been impacted by lower interest rates and investors looking for safety and better yields.

The increase in farmland value in Canada has been nothing short of spectacular. The value per acre of farmland in Canada has skyrocketed by 334 per cent since 2001, but most of the increases have occurred within the last few years. Since 2016, the increase has been 213 per cent. According to Statistics Canada, the average acre in Canada is now worth almost \$3,800, compared to \$862 back in 2001.

The value of an acre of farmland in Saskatchewan has increased by 391 per cent since 2001, the highest in the country. The highest increase since 2016 is in Manitoba, by 266 per cent. Depending on what is produced, some farmland valuations have increased more than others due to various factors such as location, soil quality, and potential revenues.

The Atlantic region, though, is not seeing much change compared with other regions. Increases in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island have been more modest. Farming in the Atlantic region remains affordable compared to other provinces, not due to protectionist policies but more because farming is not as profitable and options to market are limited for many farmers. With lower value increases, building capacity when land is barely worth more year after year is more challenging.

In contrast, since 2016, the average farm real estate value in the United States has increased by 27 per cent, according to the latest report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But an acre of farmland on average in the U.S. is now worth about US\$3,800, so Canada has somewhat caught up to the U.S. in recent years.

Farmland values are being pushed higher in Canada by a series of economic forces. The includes high prices for commodity crops, a robust housing market, an ex-



Sylvain Charlebois

tended period where interest rates were extremely low until recently, and a profusion of government subsidies supporting certain sectors. Compensation, which exceeded \$5 billion, linked to trade agreements and given to supply-managed sectors like dairy, poultry, and eggs, has overcapitalized many farm operations out there, compelling many to buy land. That's a problem few are talking about.

In Canada, barely seven per cent of all our land is devoted to agriculture. It's not a lot, and that amount of land where farming occurs is shrinking. In 2011, 166 million acres of land were devoted to farming to support over 245,000 farms. Today, this amount is about 150 million acres for about 188,000 farms. Farms are bigger, more resourceful, and more efficient.

Yes, farmland in Canada is getting more expensive, but farmers in Canada are also making more money. In 2021, cash receipts exceeded \$83 billion, a record, and 2022 is likely to be another record year. Last year was also a record year for agri-food exports; if you're a hedge fund or an investor, these numbers will catch your attention, and they have. Fewer barriers, including the end of the Wheat Board's single desk on wheat and barley, have brought a slew of new possibilities for the farming community.

As a result, we have seen more farmers renting land instead of owning. Close to 50 per cent of farmers in Canada now rent land instead of owning. Some may see this as a threat to normal ways of producing food and supporting agriculture, but it's not necessarily a terrible

strategy.

In fact, the largest farmland owner in the country is not even a farmer. Alberta's own Robert Andjelic has bought over 225,500 acres of land, a portfolio worth somewhere between \$500 and \$700 million. At the root of this investor's move into agriculture is the will to produce more food and address our global food security crunch. Along with his capital, his team brought knowledge of sound soil management practices, helping over 250 farmer-tenants to benefit from such expertise. Andjelic's job is to make sure his tenants make money. Otherwise, he's not getting paid—simple as that. This new way of thinking can make Canadian agriculture more profitable.

Canada's agri-food potential is immense, and farmland has always been a good investment. A growing number of groups and investors who understand how to make capital work are making a difference. The intent of investors from outside the agriculture sector is to make our agriculture stronger.

Farmers who have been in the system for decades still have a lot to offer. But producing and investing simultaneously is getting harder, which is slowly getting agricultural pundits to specialize. Capital markets and the investment community worldwide have changed dramatically over the last five years. This is why more than half of younger farmers in Canada are leasing land now in order to operate.

The correlation between land prices, rental rates, and farm revenues is quite strong. All three tend to move synchronously higher over time, according to a report from Farm Credit Canada last year. With more specialization, everyone wins. Younger farmers also see value in renting and partnering with investors. It's just a different way of seeing farming.

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

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# Millet a sustainable, nutritious alternative grain

BY MIRANDA LEYBOURNE, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
Millet, a sustainably grown, nutritiously dense grain with the potential to curb hunger around the world, is stepping into the agricultural spotlight.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recently named 2023 as the International Year of the Millets. The declaration means to promote the global challenges millet can solve through increased production, such as climate issues, affordability and nutrition.

Raju Soolanayakanahally, a senior researcher with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Saskatchewan, has partnered with researchers from his native India to study how the benefits of millet can be maximized.

Millet is commonly prepared in Indian cuisine, and Soolanayakanahally was surprised it wasn't nearly as popular in Canada, where it would not only make for a nutritious part of a balanced diet, but would be an ideal crop for Prairie producers.

"I thought, why not millets in the Prairie regions?" he said.

Widely produced and consumed for more than 7,000 years in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa to Asia, the cereal crop grows best in arid and semiarid climates where other grains may

not do well without irrigation water.

To produce one gram of wheat requires 500 grams of water, whereas millet only requires half of that. Millet also requires less fertilizer input and is very climate resilient. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the United Nations in December that millet can help the world recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which has impacted grain production.

"At such a time, a global movement related to millets is an important step, since they are easy to grow, climate resilient and drought resistant," he said.

The reason millet is so nutritious is thanks to its micronutrients, such as iron and zinc, as well as dietary fibre and antioxidants. The magnesium and potassium found in millet can reduce blood pressure, therefore minimizing the risk of a heart attack and stroke, while its low glycemic index makes it an ideal food for diabetics. The high levels of fibre found in the cereal also makes it ideal for lowering cholesterol, according to a review by Frontiers in Plant Science.

"When we look at rice or wheat ... they don't have a similar nutritional quality," Soolanayakanahally said. Millet can be especially helpful for infants and



Dr. Raju Soolanayakanahally

babies that suffer from anemia.

Low levels of iron, zinc and other nutrients contribute to "hidden hunger," something that Soolanayakanahally is currently researching alongside his partners at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore. Together, they have created a roadmap for future study of millet using genetic resources, resulting in a genetic atlas of the different stages in the plant's life cycle to identify its super-food

properties.

India has one of the world's highest rates of children suffering from various types of malnutrition, a study Soolanayakanahally shared with the Sun, says. A total of 44 per cent of children under the age of five are underweight, while 72 per cent of infants have anaemia. The rate of undernutrition from lack of micronutrients, especially iron, is also quite high in India, where more than half the women have iron deficiency. To combat these nutritional deficiencies, Indian schools started providing midday meals to students where millet played a starring role, replacing rice and wheat-based meals. As a result, health rates are beginning to improve, Soolanayakanahally said.

The atlas is also an important step toward uncovering the genetic networks that give millet its unique nutritional and stress tolerance features. The data Soolanayakanahally and the scientists in Bangalore are uncovering could be used to breed new, improved varieties of millet with enhanced uptake of iron and zinc, which will support the fight of hidden hunger around the world.

"These micronutrient-rich crops or cereals [like millet] can be used around the world for solving malnutrition problem or hidden hunger," Soolanayakanahally said.

hally said.

Farmers should also take a keen interest in millet, since it's an environmentally friendly crop to grow. With Ottawa's 2023 Emissions Reduction Plan aiming for Canada to reach its emissions target of 40 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050, turning to crops like millet just makes sense, he added.

"Since millet requires low input of fertilizers, low input of water, and they sequester more carbon in the root, that also increases soil carbon as well."

Millet also has the potential to teach researchers and scientists more about climate resiliency in other crops, too, including canola, wheat and barley, all of which grow in the Prairies.

"[Millet] has already figured out how to grow on marginal soils, how to grow with less water, less fertilizer inputs ... and pest and disease resistance are very high," Soolanayakanahally said. "This will be a great way for us to learn how to build climate resilient crops."

Soolanayakanahally is planning to submit a proposal in April for more funding to Saskatchewan government's Agriculture Development Fund to continue his research on growing millet in the Prairies.

# Author sheds light on mental health journey

Continued from Page B17

"If you're struggling, often in small towns people are going to reach out, and they're going to try to help. And that is such a blessing. I think that's what really makes our small towns strong." Melnyk's advice for anyone struggling with anxiety, depression or other mental health issues, regardless of the type of community they call home, includes eating healthy and being consistent with sleep and exercise. Connection is also something that everyone should prioritize, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic made it a struggle for people to get together for so long. "Make sure that [you] have some people you can talk to and be vulnerable with."

It's also imperative that people understand that struggling simply means one is human, she added.

"There's nothing wrong with you, and there's no guilt or shame with that."

Another one of Melnyk's hopes is that her book, which was published in February and is available on Amazon, will help to reduce the stigma that many people still face regarding mental illness and mood disorders.

"Maybe it will normalize mental illnesses for other people, because we all struggle with mental health. And there shouldn't be guilt or shame if you do. It can be a lonely journey to find help, but I want people to know there is help out there."

So far, the feedback that Melnyk has received about her

book has been very positive. She's hopeful that in the future, the book will be available in other major book retailers around Canada. And while she's not totally sure if she'll one day pen another book, Melnyk is open to the idea.

"It was a huge undertaking ... and I've sacrificed some time from other areas of my life," she said. "I'll probably still write, but I don't know if there's another book in my future. But I'll never say never."

**Dawn Nagy, CAIB**

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# Province Proclaims March as Agriculture Literacy Month

The month of March has once again been proclaimed as Agriculture Literacy Month in Saskatchewan. Agriculture Literacy Month connects students of all ages to agriculture through presentations led by industry volunteers.

"Connecting our youth to agriculture is an important piece of strengthening Saskatchewan's agriculture sector," Agri-

culture Minister David Marit said. "Presentations from industry experts can help educate children on the work that goes into producing the high-quality food that our province is known for."

Throughout the month of March, industry volunteers, from all levels of food production will join classrooms to share presentations and personal experiences

to help students learn more about agriculture.

"Thank you to the many volunteers who will be visiting schools across the province to assist students in learning about such an important industry," Education Minister Dustin Duncan said. "Agriculture literacy is about teaching our youth that agriculture is about much more than just growing food, it is also about land management, natural resources such as our water and soil systems, sustainable practices and technological innovations."

Agriculture in the Classroom has been an important organization in Saskatchewan for many years. This year's theme

is agricultural stewardship, which will teach students about the important relationship between producers and the environment.

"Volunteers are vital to the success of Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month," Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan Executive Director Sara Shymko said. "Having a guest visit the classroom to share their personal agriculture and food story is a real draw for teachers and rewarding for the volunteers. They have fun of course, but most importantly, they are helping to inspire the next generation of agriculture leaders and change-makers with their passion and story."



Industry volunteers, from all levels of food production will join classrooms to share presentations and personal experiences to help students learn more about agriculture.



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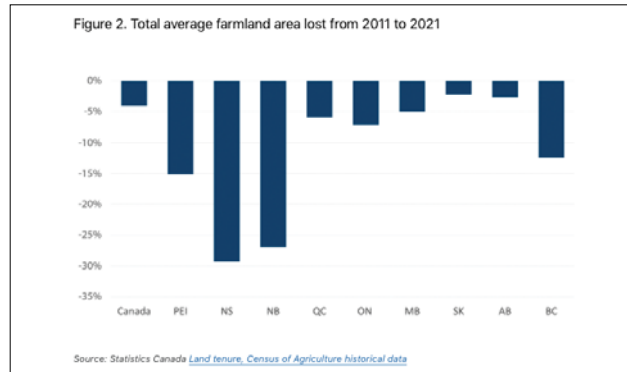
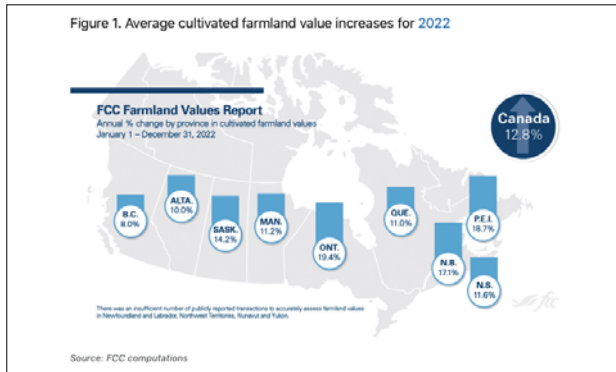
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# 2022 farmland values trended higher amid higher interest rates, elevated input prices and strong cash receipts

BY LYNE MICHAUD, É.A., SENIOR ANALYST, VALUATIONS  
Inflation was the defining economic issue of 2022. The war in Ukraine, supply chain challenges, labour shortages and higher interest rates have been major disrupters in the agri-food supply chain. The agriculture industry hasn't been shielded from inflation as farm input prices climbed along with commodity prices. The resulting increase in farm cash receipts and limited supply of farmland available for sale led to increases in farmland values. FCC reports an average increase of 12.8 per cent in cultivated land values for 2022. This post summarizes trends observed in cultivated land, and the full FCC Farmland Values Report also presents trends in irrigated land and pastureland values.

**Provincial trends**  
Our analysis covers the period of January 1 to December 31, 2022. The highest increase in average farmland values was observed in Ontario at 19.4 per cent (Figure 1), followed by two Atlantic provinces, with an 18.7 per cent growth in Prince Edward Island and a 17.1 per cent increase in New Brunswick.  
The Saskatchewan average farmland value increase was

also above the national average at 14.2 per cent. Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Quebec recorded similar increases, with 11.6 per cent, 11.2 per cent and 11.0 per cent, respectively.  
Finally, Alberta and British Columbia recorded the lowest relative average increases, with 10.0 per cent and 8.0 per cent, respectively.

## Farmland values are always tied to supply and demand

**Farmland availability**  
The tight supply of farmland for sale is a major driver of the farmland market. The outlook for agriculture is positive, and thus farmland owners have few incentives to put farmland for sale. Any neighbouring farmland parcel coming up for sale can generate significant buyers' interest considering that this may happen only once in a lifetime. Farm size and the resulting economies of scale remain a driver of profitability, which can make this neighbouring parcel fit well within the strategic plan of a potential buyer.  
As documented in Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture, a decline in farm areas over time is an additional supply factor. For example, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia recorded declines of 15 per cent, 27 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively, in farmland areas over the last 10 years (Figure 2). The decline in total farm area is smaller in other provinces but still noticeable everywhere. This leads to more limited availability of farmland which can contribute to higher prices.

**Farm cash receipts**  
Crop receipts climbed 14.1 per cent in 2022, driven by improved weather conditions over 2021 and strong commodity prices. Demand for farmland that is well situated can help agricultural producers develop and expand their operations at a time when demand for ag commodities is robust. Farm input prices recorded major increases along with commodity prices, but profit margins have been fa-

vourable. Higher borrowing costs slowed the demand for farmland but were offset by higher revenues.

**Non-traditional buyers**  
The presence of "non-traditional" buyers in the market can drive the overall demand for farmland. These buyers may be individuals, groups or other entities looking to buy farmland without the intent of farming.  
It is next to impossible to determine the extent of the presence of non-traditional buyers in the farmland market as there's no single database across the country that contains all the relevant information. Leveraging the large dataset of cultivated land sales that we assembled for 2022, we could establish that between 9 per cent and 15 per cent of cultivated farmland sold was purchased by non-traditional buyers. Agricultural producers and farm operations make the large majority of purchases.  
Note that transactions do not need to occur for the presence of these buyers to influence land values. The mere presence of non-traditional buyers in a market might lead to more competition in buying farmland.

**Bottom line**  
FCC has been reporting consecutive increases in average farmland values for 30 years. Farmland prices are near historical highs when compared to farm income. Recent increases in interest rates raise the financing cost of purchasing farmland. We'll investigate these factors in next week's blog post. Producers must build and maintain a risk management plan considering possible economic changes to ensure budget flexibility if commodity prices, yields or interest rates shift. Market conditions can change rapidly, which can impact farmland values.

Watch for the FCC 2022 rental rate analysis releasing on April 11, 2023. The 2022 FCC Fruit land analysis will be released in May 2023.

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# Program helps Manitoba farmers, families with mental health challenges

BY DAVE BAXTER, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A program working to help farmers and their families who are dealing with mental health issues celebrated a significant milestone this month, and those who run the Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program say one year after starting up, it is proving to be a success.

"What we learned in our first year is that the program works, is valued by those who use it, and it should be continued," MFWP vice chair Roberta Galbraith said in a media release celebrating the one year anniversary of the program, and announcing plans to continue offering it in Manitoba.

continuing this service in Manitoba," Hacault said. "We are thankful for the growing community of sponsors and supporters that see value in the program, and we are in a great position for the future."

According to Hacault, MFWP is hoping to raise funds this year to be able to support 160 Manitoba farmers and their families, while he said they will also look to increase awareness about the program among farmers and those who work in the agricultural industry, as well as with health care professionals.

Through MFWP, farmers and their immediate family members can access six free, confidential one on one hour long counselling

sessions with a registered counsellor with a background in agriculture. Anyone looking for more information on MFWP can visit [manitobafarmerwellness.ca](http://manitobafarmerwellness.ca).

Extremely dry and cracked soil can be seen in a canola field near Ile des Chenes, south of Winnipeg in July of 2021, when much of the province was dealing with severe drought conditions.

Dave Baxter, Local Journalism Initiative



On March 1 of last year, MFWP was launched as a not-for-profit to offer free one-on-one mental health counselling sessions to farmers and their families.

Statistics released in 2016 showed a high rate of mental health issues among farmers and those in the agriculture industry in Canada, as according to a study from the University of Guelph, 35% of Canadian farmers met the classification for depression, while 58% of farmers met the classification for anxiety, and 45% of farmers reported high levels of stress.

Stress and anxiety levels have also been high among farmers in Manitoba in recent years, after the province saw record drought in 2021, followed by record precipitation levels in 2022.

MFWP chair Marcel Hacault said because of the stress farmers are often under, and because they are often dependent on things they have no control over like the weather, it is important to make sure producers are looking after not only their farms and crops, but also their mental health, and the mental health of their families.

"We saw a need and with overwhelming support from the industry, we are excited to announce we are



			
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# Global Institute for Food Security at USask partnership leads to inauguration of ag-tech centre in Bangladesh

The Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) is pleased to announce the inauguration of an agricultural technology centre at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) in Gazipur, Bangladesh, as part of its ongoing partnership with the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) of the Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture.

GIFS and BARC signed a memorandum of understanding in 2020 to advance knowledge and technologies for agricultural research and development in Bangladesh. The partnership includes collaborations with a variety of partners in Canada and Bangladesh.

The inauguration of the ag-tech centre marks another milestone in the partnership's goal of delivering sustainable food security through programs in Bangladesh focused on enhancing farmer incomes, addressing the effects of climate change, and strengthening the country's delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including reducing hunger and empowering women.

Based in Gazipur, the ag-tech centre will offer programs to enhance crop breeding and plant improvement, advance soil health and quality, improve soil water retention, increase data management and analytics, and deliver innovations for post-harvest food handling and processing—a specific area of concern for the country.

Bangladesh has chronic food security challenges that are increasing due to a rapidly growing population, climate-induced stress like salinity intrusion, drought and heat, loss of agricultural land because of rapid urbanization, and post-harvest loss, which in some cases is nearly 50 per cent.

Saskatchewan's agriculture and agri-food innovation ecosystem has knowledge and expertise that are being used to help find solutions to these problems.

The technical expertise of partners within Saskatchewan and Canada's research, development and agri-food ecosystem—including the Global Institute for Water Security, the Saskatchewan Food Indus-



The inauguration of the Bangabandhu-Pierre Elliott Trudeau Agriculture Technology Centre was announced by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Gazipur on February 23.

try Development Centre, USask colleges, the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute and the National Research Council of Canada (NRC)—are being combined to deliver initiatives designed to create an efficient, effective and sustainable system of agricultural research, while promoting an increased standard of living and quality of life for the people of Bangladesh.

The inauguration of the Bangabandhu-Pierre Elliott Trudeau Agriculture Technology Centre was announced by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Gazipur on February 23. The inauguration coincides with the 50th anniversary of BRRI and the launch of its 2041 strategy to achieve a food surplus in the country.

Canada—led by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the time—was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh's independence in 1971. The name of the ag-tech centre reflects this legacy.

"Canada was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh's independence in 1971, led by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. The Bangabandhu-Pierre Elliott Trudeau Agriculture Centre celebrates this history of bilateral relations," says H.E. Sheikh Hasina MP, Hon'ble Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. "The centre will help bring capacity, technology, and expertise to Bangladesh as we continue to move forward to become a developed and prosperous country. We follow in the footsteps of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and will not leave a single inch of arable land uncultivated."

"Bangladesh is an increasingly important trade partner of Saskatchewan, and agriculture is a significant driver of both economies. Saskatchewan is also home to some of the most advanced and sustainable agriculture and agri-food innovation in the

world. This new ag-tech centre in Bangladesh is a showcase of Saskatchewan innovation and how the world can learn from our success in producing socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable agricultural products," says David Marit, Minister of Agriculture, Province of Saskatchewan.

"Canada and Bangladesh share over 50 years of strong bilateral relations," says H.E. Dr. Lilly Nicholls, High Commissioner for Canada in Bangladesh. "Bilateral trade between our countries exceeds CAD\$2.8 billion annually, including almost CAD \$1 billion in agricultural exports from Canada. The potential to expand trade between our countries is significant. Both Canadians and Bangladeshis are natural innovators and connectors. The Bangabandhu-Pierre Trudeau Agriculture Technology Centre is an excellent example of Canadian and Bangladeshi institutions working to foster collaboration and innovation."

"Collaboration is a key strength of GIFS. We bring diverse partners together to discover, develop and deliver innovative agriculture solutions that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. The inauguration of the agriculture technology centre in Bangladesh is an exciting example of how we are realizing our vision of a world where everyone has access to safe and nutritious food," says Dr. Steven Webb, Chief Executive Officer at the Global Institute for Food Security.

"Saskatchewan is an important partner for Bangladesh, and, since agriculture is critical to both of our economies, we can learn a lot from each other and build more bilateral trade," says Dr. Shaikh Mohammad Bokhtiar, Director for the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council. "The inauguration of the Bangabandhu-Pierre Elliott Trudeau Agriculture Technology Centre is a significant step forward in our continued and growing relationship and will play an essential role in our ability to increase our agriculture research capacity and increase our food production while reducing waste."

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# SARM aims to attract the next generation to rural government

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS

The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) is aiming to attract the next generation to get involved through the rural municipal government.

As more young families are calling rural Saskatchewan home, recruitment of the next generation is vital to maintaining a healthy rural municipal government, SARM stated.

"This is something our SARM board has been talking about for a while," said Ray Orb, President of SARM.

"Also, we can see what's happening in rural Saskatchewan. We can see the demographics of our councils.

"We have a lot of older councillors, I'm one of them. I've been involved with council for quite a few years, also with SARM too. I think we would like to see more young people or new people being attracted to council, and to getting elected into council.

"We put this out for people to start thinking about, and to be able to help us come up with some solutions on how to attract people.

"We have some ideas of our own, but we would really like to talk to our members too."

During SARM's 118th Convention on March 15th, members will hear from current RM council members about bridging the aging demographic with SARM members and recruiting future diverse young leaders in rural Saskatchewan.

Orb spoke about a few of the ideas he has in mind for attracting young people to council.

"I have ideas and our board does too," he said.

"Perhaps career fairs and things like that would help. Even going to local high schools, getting people that are in the later grades especially who are interested in maybe getting elected into a council.

"I know there's some RMs that had some junior members sitting at their council meetings as advisory members.

"They're not elected, but they're sitting as an advisor. It could be as a youth councillor, maybe a 4H councillor, things like that. I think all of those ideas will help. We're hoping we can get some feedback at our convention about this as well."

Orb spoke about the advantages and differences he has seen from being a part of a rural municipal government.

"I think it's really important for everyone out in rural Saskatchewan to see what the role is for the council and reeves, and the administration as well," he said.

"Obviously working through SARM there's a



The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) is calling out for ideas on how to bring younger and new people into being a part of rural municipal governments at their next SARM convention on March 15.

## Elected Officials Gender Breakdown, 2016



The above graph shows the percentage of women compared to the percentage of men that are involved in urban/city governments, rural governments and provincial government.

Graph credited to the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM).

chance to advance Ag policy. We have a lot of policy people that work within SARM, but helping attract economic development into your rural areas too. Even right now, attracting rural doctors and nurses, there's a role for the municipal council to be able to do that.

"Also the RCMP and policing, sub-committees provide housing for some of these people. Veterinarians are another one. For a number of years there have been quite a few RMs that have jointly owned veterinary clinics.

"It all helps in the speed of things to work together. I think that's the role that I see, good governance is the other thing. Getting that message out of what the RM is doing, what they plan to do, like infrastructure and improvements. Communicating to the members to really make sure that they understand

what's going on, and also to get feedback from them.

"That's one of the reasons why we put out this press release. We wanted to draw attention to that."

Aside from aiming to involve more young people in rural municipal government, Orb said they hope to get more women involved as well.

"We don't have a lot of women on council, but we'll be pushing for that at our convention," he said.

"We have about seven per cent of women on council. I've noticed over the years we have more women now than we did five or 10 years ago, but it's not increasing as much as I would've thought.

"For the administration side it has changed a lot. Now we have a lot of women that are administrators whereas 20 years ago we had mostly men."

Orb was asked if he thinks bringing in younger

and new people on council will improve governance.

"It's diversity that we're saying we need more of, and a part of that is young people being involved as well, women being involved as well," he said.

"They bring in a different point of view in a lot of cases.

"People like my own age, you know, I'm getting to the stage where I'm getting to the end of my own municipal career. Obviously that all helps in the decision making because different points of view, lead to different outcomes."

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# Triplet calves born on the Reid farm

By DONNA BEUTLER

Kelsey Reid and his wife have been busy with calving for the past month, along with Kelsey's dad and brother as they enter the second month of a two-and-a-half/three-month calving period on their farm east of Rocanville.

To add to the usual demands of calving, the Reids have an extra mouth or two to feed, so to speak, as they are supplementing triplet calves born on their farm March 4.

It was an exciting moment for the Reids and their two children, especially since the triplets were born on their son's 7th birthday.

Though the triplets were born unassisted, there was some running back and forth from the house to the barn to check on the cow and her babies, as well as get the newborns fed and tubed. And though the needs of the calves were foremost on their mind, the Reid family were able to make it in for birthday cake.

Kelsey says his family knows that, during calving, there are times it's necessary to focus on what's happening with the herd over and above even a birthday celebration.

Kelsey and his brother both work off-farm and Kelsey credits his wife for giving the triplets lots of extra time as needed since their birth.



Rod, Maude and Todd are triplet calves that were born on Reids' farm east of Rocanville.

The black/white face Simmental cow is not just the momma of two males and one female, affectionately called Rod, Maude and Todd, but she is a loving one as well and totally accepted all of them without issue.

"Momma loves all three," Kelsey told the World-Spectator in a recent interview. "And all three calves love to drink from the mother cow but require some supplementation as well."

"Prior to 2015 I only had one cow, but then I got into

it more and now have 100 cow pairs."

Between his dad, brother and himself they run 150 breeding pairs.

Kelsey said he purchased the cow as a replacement heifer in 2016 and in 2022 she gave birth to twins. Having triplets, he went on to say, is a one in 100,000 chance.

All three calves, black with white faces like their mother, are doing well under the watchful eye of Kelsey and his family.



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# Canada's farmland values continued to climb in 2022, FCC reports

The average value of Canadian farmland increased by 12.8 per cent in 2022, amid strong farm income, elevated input prices and rising interest rates. The demand for farmland remained robust and the supply of farmland available for sale continues to be limited, according to the latest FCC Farmland Values Report.

Farmland values saw the highest increase since 2014 and follow gains of 8.3 per cent in 2021 and 5.4 per cent in 2020.

"Challenging economic conditions could have been expected to slow the demand for farmland and the resulting price buyers paid for land in 2022," said J.P. Gervais, FCC's chief economist. "But the underlying fundamental factors in the farmland market tell another story."

FCC estimates that receipts of grains, oilseeds and pulses in Canada have increased 18.3 per cent in 2022, and are projected to grow 9.4 per cent in 2023.

"Higher farm revenues are driving the demand for farmland, but higher borrowing costs and increased input prices are expected to lead to declines in the number of sales in 2023," according to Gervais.

The highest average provincial increases in farmland values were observed in Ontario, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, with increases of 19.4, 18.7 and 17.1 per cent, respectively. Saskatchewan followed with a 14.2 per cent increase. Five provinces had average increases below the national average at 11.6



per cent in Nova Scotia, 11.2 per cent in Manitoba, 11 per cent in Quebec and 10 per cent in Alberta.

British Columbia is the only province to have recorded a single-digit increase at eight per cent, but it is also a market where land values are the highest on average.

There was an insufficient number of publicly reported sales in Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon to fully assess farmland values in those regions.

"It's good practice to have and main-

tain a risk management plan that takes into account possible economic changes," said Gervais. "When producers ensure their budgets have room to flex if commodity prices, yields or interest rates shift, they're better off in the long run." FCC also suggests producers to exercise caution, especially in regions where the growth rate of farmland values exceeded that of farm income in recent years, which was the case in most provinces.

Gervais acknowledges that higher farmland values pose a challenge for young producers, new entrants and other operations that are looking to expand.

"Land is more expensive now relative to income than it's ever been. The ability to service debt and overall equity in the operation are critical factors of success going forward," he said. "The good news is that farmland value increases reflect a positive outlook for the demand of agriculture commodities and the quality food we produce in Canada."

"Producers have a long track record of making strategic investments in land, even before agriculture and food was identified as one of six sectors with the highest potential for growth by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth in 2016," Gervais said. "These long-term investments in food production have spurred growth and create a bright future for Canada's agriculture and food industry."

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