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**Spectator**

**AG NEWS**

MARCH 2025



Farmland near Moosomin, Saskatchewan.

Kevin Weedmark photo

## Canada's farmland values continued to climb in 2024, FCC reports

The average value of Canadian farmland continued its steady climb in 2024, increasing by 9.3 per cent, slightly less than the 11.5 per cent increase reported in 2023, according to the latest FCC Farmland Values Report.

"The increase in Canadian farmland values in 2024 reflects an enduring strength in demand for farmland amid some pressures on commodity prices," said J.P. Gervais, FCC's chief economist. "The limited supply of farmland available for sale combined with lower borrowing costs resulted in an increase in the average price of farmland across the country."

The highest increases were observed in regions with strong agricultural activity and favourable growing conditions. In 2024, Saskatchewan again led with a 13.1 per cent gain in average farmland values, and British Columbia recorded growth of 11.3 per cent.

All other provinces experienced growth in the single digits. New Brunswick's cultivated land values grew by 9.0 per cent, Quebec reported a 7.7 per cent change and Alberta was close behind at 7.1 per cent. Manitoba

had a growth rate of 6.5 per cent and Nova Scotia reported a 5.3 per cent appreciation in value. Ontario's cultivated average farmland value increased by 3.1 per cent and Prince Edward Island had the most stable values with an increase of 1.4 per cent.

Only three provinces reported higher growth rates in 2024 than 2023: British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick. There were insufficient publicly reported sales in Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon to fully assess changes in farmland values in those regions.

Recent dry conditions across the prairies have led to a robust demand for irrigated land, with interest growing each year. Market availability of irrigated land is very limited. "With persistent dry conditions, the value of irrigated land continues to rise, reflecting its critical role in boosting production and farm profitability", said Gervais.

Gervais points out that while farmland value appreciation is slowing, farmland affordability relative to farm income continues to deteriorate. This makes it

challenging for those aspiring to grow their land base including young producers, Indigenous peoples and new entrants.

In 2024, total Canadian principal field crop production is estimated at 94.6 million tonnes, up 2.7 per cent from 2023 and 3.3 per cent above the five-year average. Lower prices for grains, oilseeds and pulses resulted in an estimated decline in main field crop receipts of 11.8 per cent in 2024. "The profitability pressures combined with the current uncertainty with regards to trade disruptions create significant headwinds for farm operations looking to invest," mentioned Gervais.

"Overall, the increase in farmland values is a testament to the strong outlook for the demand of agricultural commodities and the high-quality food produced in Canada," said Gervais.

FCC has reported a national trend of increasing farmland values for more than 30 years and 2024 extends the streak. The overall trend reflects the ongoing strength in demand for quality farmland and limited supply of farmland available for sale.

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# SARM wants strychnine back for gopher control

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As the spring melt begins, a familiar sight will emerge from the ground—one that those who make a living off the land consider a scourge. Gophers are notorious for causing widespread damage to crops and pastureland. Previously, the use of strychnine was a powerful and effective tool for gopher control, but a federal ban on the pesticide in 2024 halted all use. One group in particular has recently called for the reintroduction of strychnine to control gophers, calling it “a crucial tool used by farmers to control growing gopher populations in rural municipalities.”

“It has been a year since the ban came into full effect and our farmers are struggling to find a practical and effective method to control the Richardson’s Ground Squirrel populations. SARM is asking the provincial government to use The Saskatchewan First Act to reintroduce the use of strychnine specifically for gopher control,” says Bill Huber, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities President.

Strychnine was banned due to secondary mortality rates as predators became ill from consuming gophers that had ingested strychnine, but SARM feels that when applied according to label instructions, the pesticide is “an effective and low risk method” for gopher control. SARM is calling for the provincial government to use the powers of The Saskatchewan First Act to reinstate strychnine use in the province.

“In 2020, the Pest Man-

agement Regulatory Agency (PMRA) cancelled all uses of strychnine for burrowing rodent control in Canada, particularly Richardson’s Ground Squirrel, with the last permitted use being March 2023,” said provincial Agriculture Minister, Daryl Harrison. “The Ministry of Agriculture submitted a notice of objection which did not prompt any changes to this decision.”

Conditions may be right for a gopher explosion this year, as Harrison noted the pest’s abundance last year.

“RGS was a significant pest in several regions of the province in 2024, most notably in seedling canola,” he said. “It is likely that slow stand establishment contributed to movement of ground squirrels deeper into fields than is normally seen.”

Timing is crucial in terms of gopher control as early spring is optimal for applying rodenticide. Adult male gophers tend to emerge first, usually mid-February to early March, followed by adult females in early to mid-March. Juvenile gophers usually emerge early to mid-May.

“Both crop and beef producers are certainly used to strychnine. They found it very effective and convenient to use,” Harrison said. “It’s the old standby, but there are other products out there, and they are effective, but what really is hard for producers is the timely application of that product. It’s important to get it out there before the grass starts to green up for it to be fully effective. That’s what the producers miss, is that flexibility. I think if they keep learning and understanding on the



Gophers have long been a problem for landowners.

product, they’ll find an effective control.”

Strychnine sales were permitted until March 4, 2022, a year after the PMRA’s decision to deregister the pesticide. It was allowed to be used for a further year, then not allowed after March, 2023. By nature, strychnine is highly toxic, causing respiratory failure and has no antidote if consumed. It was sold in the form of two per cent liquid concentrate, requiring mixing with grain to achieve an application concentration of 0.4 per cent.

“The Government of Saskatchewan continues to be disappointed with the de-registration of strychnine for RGS control,” Harrison noted. “We believe the science indicates that this product, when used according to label instructions, is effective and presents the best option for controlling RGS populations in the province and mitigating the significant impacts on agriculture op-

erations.”

Zinc phosphide is an effective alternative that affects the central nervous system, found in ZP Rodent Oat Bait AG and Burrow Oat Bait. There are also anticoagulant pellets, which require re-baiting after two days.

“Zinc phosphide has been called a new gopher control product. It is not, it was first synthesized in the 1700s,” explained Dr. James Tansey, Provincial Specialist, Insect/Pest Management, Production Technology, Crops and Irrigation Branch, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture during last week’s SARM conference in Sas-

katoon. “Once you get to about 50° C, it will break down. Sometimes the inside of a shed can heat up, and you need to be aware of that.”

Much like strychnine, zinc phosphide is a quick killer.

“It shuts down cell energy production,” Dr. Tansey explained. “So what this causes is necrosis in the heart, brain, kidneys and liver, and it works quickly. It can kill in 15 minutes, so they need to get an adequate dose of it. There’s also evidence now that it can act as a neurotoxin, so much like strychnine, where you get that convulsive reaction to

poisoning, this can result in that too.”

As for the anticoagulants, Dr. Tansey noted application before gophers are literally surrounded by the antidote is crucial.

“Plants, grasses, legumes are full of vitamin K, so gophers after green up are basically surrounded by the antidote,” he said. “If they can take in enough of this plant material, they’ll get the antidote for this toxin, so that can be problematic.”

Of all the methods, anticoagulants are the slowest in terms of mortality.

“One potential downside for this is it takes a long time to kill, and it is a multiple feeding product,” Dr. Tansey said. “It can take seven to 10 days to kill, and in that time, residues are building up in that animal and can present a hazard to non targets like scavengers and predators. Once again, multiple feedings and that residue issue.”

In terms of cost, liquid strychnine averaged around \$13.28 per acre, compared to the oat bait, which cost \$8.46 per acre for the Burrow Oat Bait and \$6.74 per acre for the rodent oat bait.

As for the anticoagulants, Rozol RTU Field Rodent Bait came in as the most expensive at \$21.86 per acre, and Ramik Green at \$12.34 per acre.

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# First spring Farm Show has snowy start

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Almost like it was planned, Regina received a healthy dose of snow just before Canada's Farm Show, which ran March 17 to 19 in Regina. Either way, throngs of people passed through the gates regardless to take in the announcements, demonstrations, and visit the trade show.

"This is the first time in our 48-year history that we're hosting it here in March," said Show Director, Carla Vipond. "Our show is Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and we are welcoming thousands of farmers from across Saskatchewan and across Canada. So thank you all for being here today."

Last year, the move from June to March was announced during the 2024 edition of Canada's Farm Show, citing feedback from exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees as the reason for the new dates. Also noted was a desire to hold the show before seeding.

"The reality is that we moved this show because farmers asked us to," Vipond told the World-Spectator. "Our industry partners, long standing partners including Viterra, said it's time for us to rethink the timing of the show. It really boils down to this is such an important time in the farming season. This is right before farmers are preparing for seeding and growing, they're looking for latest information, they're looking to get together and have some fun. And the reality is that is why we're having Farm Show in March."

The decision to move the show was not an easy one as for nearly 50 years, anyone related to the ag industry had three days in June circled on their calendars.

"But again, the only thing I can say is that when you listen to farmers about what date suits them best, and what it is that they're looking for, you can't go wrong," Vipond said. "We talked to hundreds of farmers. We talked to lots of industry representatives, and their best advice was, move it to March, get provide good information, camaraderie and fun and great food and entertainment before they get ready for seeding and growing."

So how has that gamble paid off? According to Vipond, the show in March has been well-received.

"The response has been absolutely incredible," she said on Tuesday, March 18, which was Farmer Appreciation Day at the show. "You can see by the lineups that we had here early this morning, farmers wanted to come in and enjoy a great pancake breakfast. Farmers that I've talked to here, visiting all of our exhibitors, are just absolutely delighted to be here. They're also asking some great questions from our exhibitors and sponsors as they gear up for a really busy seeding and growing season. So response has just been phenomenal."

The ongoing instability and confusion around the U.S.



Carla Vipond, Show Director, answers media questions on the first morning of Canada's Farm Show.

tariff situation has affected Canada's Farm Show to a certain degree.

"You know, the thing that I've really learned about from our exhibitors is sort of two things—first of all, they're unfortunately used to navigating uncertain times, and we know that these are uncertain times for a lot of our exhibitors and our farmers as well," Vipond said. "The second thing is that more than ever, it is important for farmers, exhibitors, and industry to gather, to come together and figure out some of what this means for them and their business and their farm, and to come together and really figure out what the possible solutions are. We know that this is probably one of the biggest topics that we're hear-

ing. We certainly have on our Launch Pad where we're going to have panel discussions talking about what this means for industry, what this means for farmers."

As for the trade show side of the show, Vipond was happy to note an overwhelming response.

"I'm just delighted to say our trade show is fully sold out," she said. "We already have a waiting list for 2026, so it just really speaks to how there was a need in the market and Canada's Farm Show, presented by Viterra, is meeting that need. We have 350 companies, sponsors, and exhibitors here today."

Even with all the preparation, change, and work to re-vamp Canada's Farm Show, Vipond says organizers still remain open to input on how to improve.

"Farmers tell us have some displays in the parking lots, and if they want to see opportunities for showcasing that kind of equipment, we will continue to work very closely with our farmers and industry to make that happen," she said.

## Mark your calendars for 2026

The 2025 version of Canada's Farm Show may have looked a bit different than previous iterations, and that was by design. Prior to the event's first day, Jelly Roll came to the Brandt Centre for a Sunday night concert. On the second day of the show, a tailgate party featured Hell N Back, an AC/DC tribute band, and a Regina Pats vs Swift Current Broncos game in the evening.

"We really wanted to bring a bit of some fun back to farm shows," explained Vipond. "We know that farmers have many choices when it comes to farm shows, and the reality is that it really speaks to what Canada's Farm Show is, that it really is serious about farming, but knowing that farmers are wanting to have some fun. So we tried some new things this year, and we were actually going for the element of surprise, and quite honestly, we did."

Taking a deep breath after the wrap of this year's premiere March show, work starts on the 2026 version.

"Our dates are March 17, 18 and 19 in 2026," Vipond confirmed. "We're already working with industry partners to talk to them about what products they're interested in launching, renewing booths and all of the great work that is in front of us. But more importantly, we're also spending a lot of time listening to farmers about what they'd like us to see in 2026. Whenever you're doing a farm show, there's always things that we can improve on, and we're really committed to that, but it will be remaining to farmers at the heart of everything that we're doing."

Canada's Farm Show draws around 20,000 people every year, boasting around \$76 million in sales.



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# Cutting-edge USask chickpea research thrives through cold temperatures

Amid the snow and the slush of frigid Saskatchewan winters, one place on the University of Saskatchewan (USask) campus always remains warm and green: the greenhouses.



Dr. Tamanna Jahan (PhD) is a post-doctoral fellow in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources and works throughout the year in the campus greenhouses.

By MATT OLSON, USask's 13 signature greenhouses are situated in the northern part of campus and are home to a variety of crops, including wheat, barley, beans and chickpeas.

"The greenhouse is a good way to beat the winter blues," said Dr. Tamanna Jahan (PhD), a post-doctoral fellow in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources. "It's sunny in here ... and I can control the environment."

Jahan's research focuses on chickpea breeding. Inside one of the greenhouse buildings, wide swaths of Jahan's chickpea

crop fill massive hydroponic systems in rectangular planters that can slide on rails, offering researchers access to the plants for study, watering and fertilization.

Jahan is part of the research lab led by Dr. Bunyamin Tar'an (PhD), the Ministry of Agriculture Strategic Research Program (SRP) Chair in Chickpea and Flax Breeding and Genetics. Her work focuses on nutrient levels in chickpeas, increasing the quality of crop yield. Jahan's PhD research focuses on the idea of biofortification of chickpeas - essentially, growing lines of chickpeas with a greater amount of a par-

ticular nutrient.

Her latest research revolves around phosphorus, a critical element for the fertilization and growth of crops. Jahan is using genetic editing tools in combination with field techniques to identify and

create lines of chickpeas that require less phosphorus to thrive. The project received support from the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF).

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# Farm succession workshop draws large number

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

It's a topic many people would rather not broach, but an extremely important one. Although farm succession is not an easy item for people to talk about, events like the Bridging the Gap workshop held in Regina certainly help open that conversation.

Around 130 agriculture producers attended the day-long information session on March 17, a number facilitated by Trevor McLean—who is a National Lead with TransitionSmart, MNP—is pleased with.

"It's great to have attendance, but it's better when you have engaged attendance, which is using my gauge of how successful and needed the service is," he said. "They're asking questions, they're scribbling, they're following along in the workbook, they're taking pictures of your slides so they want to be able to take the information back and share it with the people that they need to share it with."

The statistics are not flattering with only 12 per cent of Canadian farmers in possession of a transition plan. Of those 12 per cent, a further 13 per cent are actively working on that plan.

"That's a scary thought because, again, if transition plans reside in somebody's head, what happens if something happens to that person? Now where do you turn?" McLean asked, adding that without a plan, the entire farming operation that took decades to build is placed in a dangerous situation.

In the next decade, 75 per cent of current farms will trade hands, something McLean told his Regina audience. "Agriculture is the largest wealth transfer opportunity in Canada over the next decade," he said.

### Current factors

Of course, one factor weighing heavy on agricultural producers is the uncertainty caused by the U.S. tariff situation, and transition planning is not immune to those pressures.

"Tariffs definitely have a part to play, because one of the greatest risks that we have today and going forward in our world of



Trevor McLean speaks to a group of 130 producers in Regina at a farm succession workshop titled Bridging the Gap. The workshop was held during Canada's Farm Show on March 17.

agriculture is geopolitical risk, and tariffs are going to have an impact, because it is a new and different type of risk that farms are going to have to adapt to," McLean said. "If you were planning on planting canola, which a large part would be exported to the U.S. or exported to China, both of those

countries now have tariffs. So do you plant an alternative crop, or do you continue to plant canola and hope that a new market emerges for that crop in the meantime. Does your farm have the ability to plant, harvest, and hold that crop until some of this tariff or geopolitical pressure falls off,

where the market can then rebound, but where you can get a better or fairer price for that commodity."

Dealing with these unknowns underlines the benefit of having all stakeholders at the table on the same page.

*Continued on Page B6*



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# Farm succession workshop draws large number

Continued from Page B5

"Everybody in the farm has to understand what the financial picture is," McLean said. "Some farms may not have the ability to hold off because they need the cash flow for debt service purposes, or they need the cash flow because they have a share redemption schedule in play where the owners that are exiting need that money to do what they need to do. This is why it's so important to share what the ideas are and to share the plans with multiple people, so that everybody's aware."

Having presented Bridging the Gap across the country, McLean has been able to see how different sectors in agriculture are affected, with many commonalities present despite the product being harvested.

"I've been very fortunate to be able to do these workshops in New Brunswick where they're talking about supply management and lowbush blueberries, poultry, potatoes, those are their crops," he explained. "You move to Alberta and you have very different crops. You have the irrigation infrastructure that they don't have quite built out in Saskatchewan, that takes one of those major risks away. Going across the country does present me an opportunity to listen to the needs, demands, and challenges in each of the geographic regions, and it has to be considered."

These unique markets mean tweaking the workshop somewhat, but the general theme remains the same.

"I definitely don't have a cookie cutter approach," McLean said, adding the relatability to the people in each different geographic region is required.

### Canada's Farm Show a draw

Aligning the Bridging the Gap workshop with Canada's Farm Show in Regina is no accident. McLean says tacking the presentation onto an attraction is fairly common.

"We always try to do it in conjunction with other events that are happening around agriculture in the regions, so that it's not a burden on the families to come to the workshop," he said. "So we try to tack it on to the front end or back end or the middle of other events that are happening."

An added incentive is free tickets to Canada's Farm Show when participants signed up for the succession workshop.

What makes Bridging the Gap so unique is the diversity of content, drawing from the experience of several backgrounds. Presenting partners include MNP, AFSC, Alberta Canola, FCC, Ritchie Bros., and RBC.

"The reason we do it that way is because we need to

show the audience that this is not a singular advisor service," McLean explained. "You need multiple advisors from different professional lines in order to support families through this very critical piece of transition. As professionals, we have to respect that we cannot fully service all of the needs of a family going through this particular point in a business's growth cycle."

In some presentations, lawyers have even been brought in to go over the importance of wills and other legal documents people ought to consider as part of the transition plan. Experts on life insurance and inviting lenders to speak are other examples of utilizing professionals to complement the presentation.

"We have to be able to stand up there as professionals and recognize that you do need a team of people around you to get from beginning to end," said McLean.

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# Positive ag reaction to provincial budget

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The final day of Canada's Farm Show kicked off with reaction to the provincial budget from an agricultural perspective. Finance Minister Jim Reiter tabled the 2025/26 budget—titled Delivering for You—on March 19.

"I'm happy to say that it was a record budget, \$625 million for agriculture," said Deputy Agriculture Minister Bill Greuel. "We have fully funded business risk management, so that's the provincial government share of crop insurance premiums, accounting for agri-stability payments as well, and \$89.5 million for strategic initiatives, a large portion of which is dedicated to research and innovation funding that we support at the Ministry of Agriculture."

When asked if there might be anything missing in the budget for the ag sector, Greuel noted a couple of areas, but said overall it seemed producers were top of mind in making budget decisions.

"Our stakeholders are always looking for enhancements to crop insurance and maybe more support for business risk management, but I think given the fiscal situation of the province, we've taken everything into consideration, and we've delivered a budget that meets the needs of producers, meets the needs of agribusinesses, while contributing to a strong and resilient agriculture economy in this province."

Bill Prybylski, President of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, was also part of that panel. He was also positive about the budget.

"We're always hopeful that there's going to be incentives in the budget for producers," he said. "We like to support reduced taxes, those types of things. So we didn't necessarily see any of that in the budget, but we did see some areas that we're quite happy with. The increased funding for BRM programming, increased funding for research, particularly the U of S the College of Veterinary Medicine, got some additional funding. So those areas that are very important issues. Overall, we're pleased with the budget."

Tariff talk seemed to dominate budget day. With the potential for agriculture to be deeply impacted by tariffs from the U.S. and China, that discussion seeped into the panel reaction as well.

"I feel a lot of empathy for producers," Greuel said. "I really feel for the canola crush industry that's facing these 100 per cent tariffs on canola oil and meal that are the direct result of the federal government's tariffs on electric vehicles."

Threats from China on canola seed are certainly not out of the question.

"If we back up in time, we all have to recognize that the government of China has looked at an anti-dumping case against the Canadian canola seed into China, and there is a threat that tariffs could be placed on canola seed at any time," Greuel explained. "So that's really hampered the sale of canola seed into China.



APAS President Bill Prybylski meets with reporters after participating in a panel on the provincial budget, held on the last day of Canada's Farm Show in Regina.

And so for all intents and purposes, seed hasn't been moving to the level that it has been in the past. We need to recognize that there's two sets of tariffs—there's the 100 per cent on oil and meal and there is the threat of tariffs on the canola seed that has already slowed seed sales into China. And that's why we've repeatedly said that the federal government needs to make trade with China a priority for Saskatchewan producers."

The challenging times have not played a factor into Prybylski's seeding decisions this spring.

"On our farm, no," he replied when asked if the current situation in China has him second-guessing what to seed. "We've developed a rotation over the years that works on our farm, and we will stick to that same rotation. I think some of the producers that may be thinking about it are in areas that maybe have been considering getting out of canola anyway because of the drought."

Those producers on the transition areas beyond prime canola country might be tempted, though.

"Obviously, canola doesn't do well compared to other crops in those drier areas of the province," Prybylski said. "If there's any question in their mind whether or not you grow canola, I think this may have been the straw that broke the camel's back, in terms of switching to something away from canola."

Threats from other countries still have producers on alert, with a close eye on markets.

"Anything that causes any delays in the supply chain, whether it's our canola going out to market—all the other crops that we grow in Saskatchewan are primarily for export," Prybylski continued. "So anything that can be done to help expedite that process, to get to market quicker and more efficiently, less expensive, that's all



Deputy Agriculture Minister Bill Greuel explains highlights of the provincial budget as they pertain to the agriculture sector.

to the benefit of producers. As more value is added to our commodities, it's a benefit for the province. We would like to see significant investment in infrastructure so that we can get our product to the market, whether it's to Egypt or India or China, we need that commitment to those investments in infrastructure."

One criticism of the provincial budget was the lack of a contingency plan taking tariff threats into account. Other places have baked this into their budgets, but Saskatchewan chose to forego that measure.

"It depends on the approach that the province wants to take, and I think we've taken a very prudent approach to this," Greuel said. "If you look at the impact that tariffs will cause, we need to understand three things. We need to understand the product that's being under tariff, we need to understand the value of that tariff, and we need to understand the duration of that tariff that leads to the impact on the industry. Today, none of those things are known.

Yes, we could have put in a contingency in the budget, but Minister Reiter and the Department of Finance I think rightfully chose not to do that because any action that we do take will have to be funds that are borrowed. We don't know what that quantum is going to be."

Prybylski also pointed to another big unknown, the length of time the whole tariff issue will be in play.

"I am concerned about it," he said on the topic of no tariff-related supports. "But I guess my thought is what sort of supports do we need? We don't really know that yet. We don't really know the total effect of the tariffs, and if we ask for something, and then realize those tariffs will last for a week or 10 days or whatever and then they're resolved, well, obviously that's different than if we have ongoing tariffs for China. If the U.S. tariffs come into effect on April 2, that's, obviously going to compound that problem."

More important to Prybylski is knowing the provincial government has the back of agriculture producers.

"What I think producers are looking for is just some reassurance from our government that they are there," he said. "They're looking at the situation. They'll be consulting with industry groups and farm groups to determine exactly what the effects are, and then develop a plan to address those effects. There's no doubt there's going to be some need for support from both levels of our government if the tariffs do drag on any length of time."

South of the border, American farmers realized some programs after the 2018 tariffs from Trump's first time in office—a historic marker that could be worth analyzing in our country, according to Prybylski.

"We can't compete with the farming programs that exist in the States," Prybylski said. "But certainly we would like to know that our federal government will be looking at those programs in the States, seeing how effective they are and using that as maybe a bit of a starting point to see what we can develop in this country."

## Cutting-edge chickpea USask research

Continued from page B4

Jahan said this would mean fewer fertilizer inputs would be required by producers, which would be more environment-friendly due to less phosphorus remaining in the soil, and these chickpea lines could be used to grow crops in less nutrient-rich environments around the world.

"This phosphorus is non-renewable, and it's coming only from phosphate rock," she said. "A huge amount of phosphorus is used by the agriculture industry, and across all crops, pulses like chickpeas need more phosphorus because of the ways their roots grow ... If we find the chickpea genotypes which require low amounts of phosphorus, we can reduce our input cost."

And much of this research is taking place in sub-zero temperatures in USask's greenhouses. Each greenhouse can be controlled for temperature, lighting and humidity. Despite the cold temperatures outside, Jahan can continue her research program through the coldest months in Saskatchewan.

She noted that agriculture is a large industry here in Saskatchewan, and being

able to continue to explore those agriculture and bioresource-related research questions even through the dead of winter was a tremendous boost. Jahan is also able to manage her inputs – water, nutrients, fertilizer – with great precision in the controlled environment of the greenhouse.

With the tools of the greenhouse at her disposal Jahan can mimic any environmental condition she needs to confirm if her more phosphorus-efficient chickpeas are producing a greater yield. She initially tested this line of chickpea seeds using a hydroponic growing method to more closely examine the plant roots before planting these crops in more traditional soil.

Jahan has plants ready to be harvested and more that are still growing, but she hopes to develop more hardy chickpea lines that can grow in the most inclement of conditions.

"When I'm testing 200 lines of chickpeas, where will I grow them? Research is a continuous process," she said. "Whether or not the outside is extremely cold temperatures, I cannot stop my research."

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# Enjoying the season of new life and new growth

My homecoming after a month away from home and the farm was met with a swat across my arm as my cat, perched on the desk, felt the need to say, "I didn't appreciate you taking off for so long." As for our oldest granddaughter, I'm not sure she was all that excited to know we were back as it meant returning our half-ton to us. The heater on her car works rather sporadically if at all, so methinks she was loving driving the truck and staying warm wherever she went. She dutifully had it parked in our driveway though by the time we came to the end of our 2,000-mile journey home.

Amidst a lot of desert that we traveled through on our trip south, there was so much beauty – the red cliffs of Sedona, Zion National Park and the canyons near Palm Springs. And I was, as always, over-the-top in awe of God's amazing creation as we drove through Montana's mountain passes near Helena, one of my favourite areas to drive through. Hubby, another one of those 'men of few words' that some of my family is noted for never once asked me to stop saying, "Look, over there, isn't that beautiful," or "Oh my goodness, look at that!" My guess though is he might have thought a time or two, "Would she stop already!?"

When we left the very warm and beautiful Palm Springs area where we had enjoyed nothing but wonderfulness (if that's a word) and where I had loved shopping (for hours) with my friend at Hobby Lobby, visiting new restaurants and seeing friends and family (including our nieces from back home) or simply reading on the patio, I was excited about the road trip home because I oh so love the scenery (and even the lack thereof at times).

A little snag in some plans at home caused my phone to light up (repeatedly) as we left the California highways and headed north through Nevada. My Elections Canada office space (booked last spring in preparation for this year's federal election) was not necessarily going to work out. That first text consisted of just three words, "You sitting down?" I knew the news to follow was not going to be good. A stop for gas at that moment allowed me to get out into the warmth and sunshine, make some phone calls, re-think my plan, and pace. And pace some more. Until hubby pointed to the car and without a word spoken, it was clear it was time to hit the road again. With or without a new Elections location.

Hubby continued our drive through the rest of Nevada and southern Utah that day as I began my search for another temporary office space in Whitewood. I have to say, regardless of the problem at hand, the miles certainly passed quickly that day although I may have missed some of the scenery I was so looking forward to seeing. Long story, short, new office space located!

Despite the Idaho snowfall that gave us pause a time or two, the large wet flakes and the resulting snow cover was so incredibly beautiful. The bonus was that the just-above-freezing temperatures meant the highways were only wet, not slushy, so we just kept on rolling onward towards the dry roads of Montana.

As we got closer to the Canadian border, hubby says, "I think we'll spend a couple of nights in Great Falls (MT)."



What I heard however, was, "You will be able to spend all the time you want at Hobby Lobby in Great Falls." Ahhh, what a fitting finish to a beautiful vacation.

Back at home, one granddaughter turned our lemons into lemonade – literally! We were fortunate to be able to bring back a bunch of freshly-picked lemonade and Kam was able to make the tastiest drink from them! As for the California oranges? You guessed it. Sierra turned them into the yummiest orange juice ever.

One day before we had left on vacation and the grands were over for lunch as is the norm, our then 15-year-old granddaughter was on a mission to create a 'pina colada' slushie for her teacher and her classmates as part of an assignment she had done on another country. As it was a nice day and we only live a couple of blocks from the school, I responded to her question of whether I would drive her and her jug of juice back to the school by saying it was nice out and she would be fine carrying the jug. I was in a hurry to clear the table and get to my hair appointment but as I was putting my coat on to leave the house, my phone rang: "Grandma, I tripped and the jug broke and I lost all my pina colada."

Talk about feeling awful. Why didn't I drive her and leave the dishes on the table? Why didn't I just take five minutes to do this one little thing for her? And on went the questions in my mind. "What about your assignment, Sierra?" I asked. "Do you have to re-do the pina colada part? Will you lose marks?" She assured me there was about a tablespoon in the bottom of the juice jug for her teacher to be able to have a taste but the jug itself was a write-off. Well, that was the least of my worries as I hurried over to the school to see for myself that she was doing okay. What a huge letdown to an assignment that she had worked so hard on, only to have the final part of the project in pieces out on the snow.

What a calving season it has been on the old home farm! We left before it began and arrived home when it was all over. To be fair, even if I was home, my days of calving cows or bottle-feeding calves ended years ago and the new generation now gets to do all that kind of stuff. What is wonderful though is to get out to the farm and see all those little calves bouncing around in the sunshine. This

always warms my heart and it is, to me, the start of new life both in the corrals and on the land (though it may take a bit longer to notice new life on the land!)

When I see a new crop of calves I think back to our move from NW Ontario to here (me at the age of 12) and the very first calf we ever had. Likely premature. Unexpected. Bitterly cold. Near death. But it's interesting what a determined, brand new-to-the-farm family will do. We carried her into the old inhabitable house with the old wood stove and though it took some time, we warmed that baby up, fed her and she became the most spoiled, always-looking-for-attention calf who grew up to be a wonderful, albeit somewhat needy, cow that would go on to give us many more calves. It was the start of a season of cattle farming for our family and many a calf who got their start in the main house, right next to the register with the dog by their side and, along with a blow dryer, old towels for a good rub-down, and a bottle of milk, got them off to a good start. If you've seen the tik tok video of the farmer who finds the calf lying on the ground with the amniotic sac over its nose and how he removes it and does mouth-to-mouth and gets that calf breathing and back up on its feet, you will understand the heart of a cattle farmer.

The twins (13), when not busy in the barn, have enjoyed the winter season as usual. While not in hockey this past season, they've enjoyed curling and snowmobiling and ice fishing. Lots and lots of ice fishing. I remember those days when ice fishing was part of my family's winter fun time outings, no doubt because the twins' dad when he was a kid loved (and still does) those days on the ice. Personally, what I remember is sitting on an upside down five-gallon-pail, eating cold sandwiches and frozen rice krispie cake and sipping hot chocolate to stay warm. Did someone say ice tent/shack? Lol, nope, just three half frozen kids, one excited hubby and me, the maker of said snacks and sandwiches. While it brings back warm memories, the memories are technically of the cold.

Now that we are back to 'our' reality, meaning cold days and no sign of green grass yet, we are sort of into routine. The grands and company come for lunch most days and enlighten us with their excitement and chatter and fishing videos via u-tube. Don't they ever get tired of fishing? Our cats are happy we are home for the most part, though I sense the 'swatter' seems rather entitled. Even 'our' farm kitty who survived winter very well with his little warm room and a steady diet of canned cat food that not even our housecats get, was so happy to see hubby by one day, he wouldn't stay off his shoulders. That might have been worth videoing, seeing hubby trying to feed the cat who wouldn't get off his shoulders.

And now we await the warmth of spring and the time when we can get the crop in the ground. Hubby is constantly scribbling numbers and clicking away on the calculator so methinks the price of canola has him in deep thought. So to all you farmers penciling things down and figuring it all out, take care, be safe and have a safe seeding season (if you actually get on the land before the next column comes your way!) Until next time!

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# Companies in AgTech Accelerator's Cohort 4 announced

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

This year's lucky 15 were officially announced during Canada's Farm Show in Regina March 18-20, the latest in agricultural innovation from Cultivator powered by Conexus Cohort 4 of the AgTech Accelerator.

"I love the global excitement that we get around the AgTech Accelerator, it just really reinforces how special it is what we're building here in Saskatchewan," said Laura Mock, Director of Cultivator.

Launched back in 2019, the purpose of Cultivator powered by Conexus was to assist local tech start-ups through a hub fostering resources, mentorship, funding, and even the room to make that growth happen. Conexus Credit Union is the nation's first credit-union-led tech incubator, based in Regina. As for the AgTech Accelerator side of things, there's an annual cohort comprised of Canadian and UK companies in the pre-seed to seed stages of their development. AgTech Accelerator focuses on key areas of big data and predictive analytics, supply chain, traceability, and sustainability, precision agriculture, farm management, IoT (Internet of Things) sensors, software and hardware, and animal health.

"Going back from the very first cohort, we've had a partnership with Innovate UK," Mock explained, adding that the mix is usually 10 Canadian and five UK-based. "We're seeing a lot of diversity in terms of the technology and ideas, and that's part of the beauty of having a global program is the ability to cross-pollinate with founders in the industry that are trying to solve very similar problems and to create partnerships and allow that peer to peer mentorship."

## Cohort 4's companies

Being one of those fortunate 15 young companies in Cohort 4 is an enviable position. Since Cultivator has begun, they've supported 47 agtech companies. Over the first three years, the program has created 193 new jobs, raised \$119.2 million in private capital, and generated \$72.1 million in revenue. Cultivator has also received \$44.4 million in public funding.

Representing the Saskatchewan-based companies are AgScouter Agronomy who work with cloud-based software built by agronomists for anyone with a passion for agriculture; ClearCost Ag which is focused on supply and demand discovery for farm inputs; Combine Settings where farmers find their ideal combine settings for their crops and geographies; and Super GeoAI Geospatial Artificial Intelligence (GeoAI) which offers platforms for automating laborious manual observations in agriculture and supporting rapid, informed decision making.

Ontario-based companies include Chariot Command Corp who determine the mechanical health of your farming equipment using thermal imaging, additional sensors, and data analysis; Circulus Agtech who turn manure and compost into an odourless, pathogen free, directly available organic fertilizer rich in microbial activity and behaving like a fast-acting



Carla Vipond, Show Director, answers media questions on the first morning of Canada's Farm Show.

synthetic fertilizer; and Spornado where farmers find their ideal combine settings for their crops and geographies. Chick Pick is from New Brunswick and specializes in poultry processing and utilizes cutting-edge technology to streamline poultry hatcheries. TerraWave in Manitoba is keen on revolutionizing soil analysis for a sustainable future. Alberta-based Threshold AUV is in the business of building drone software for ag, powering weed mapping, prescription mapping, and terrain mapping.

On the UK side of Cohort 4 are AgSense Ltd. from Lancaster which offers the program HerdVision, which uses 3D imaging to automatically monitor cow health and provide real-time data to help producers optimize animal care. Antler Bio from Great Shelford introduces Epherd, which helps you identify and address factors limiting your herd's full potential. They blend gene expression data with actionable insights to unlock your herd's capabilities.

Oxcel Ltd of Great Yarmouth promises to boost livestock farming efficiency, sustainability, and environmental impact by enhancing water for better growth, feed conversion and reduced costs. London's Messium uses actionable nitrogen analysis for any wheat farm at the click of a button. PheroSyn of Harpenden harnesses sustainable insect pheromones for natural crop management.

## Future goals

Cultivator has also set some ambitious targets to encourage more Saskatchewan companies with yearly recurring revenues of \$1 million, cultivating 35 companies by 2030 and 250 companies by 2050.

"We knew when we set those targets, this is a big commitment, but it is attainable if we start to be a lot more intentional and very focused," Mock said. "All of our business decisions are anchored around, 'is this going to help the company grow? Will it help them get there faster? How do we remove roadblocks? It is attainable, but it takes having a clear vision, a clear pathway, and sometimes you have to be a little

bit ruthless."

Another change is when the AgTech Accelerator holds their illustrious Finale Week. Traditionally, it has been in conjunction with Canada's Farm Show, but with the move of that event from June to March, that can no longer happen.

"Finale Week is going to be based out of Saskatoon, and that's aligned with Ag in Motion," Mock explained. "We're really excited about the changes that will be happening in terms of the Finale Week, and some of the industry that will be there that are able to participate and connect with founders. There's just such a great opportunity to increase exposure and support."

With the move to Ag in Motion for Finale Week, the hope is to make even more connections.

"We're representing Canadian agriculture, and we just happen to be located in Saskatchewan," Mock said. "By breaking up our kickoff weekend, finale week, and spreading them between our two major centres, it gives us a chance to connect with a broader range of producers, and to see some of the different challenges."

## Female founders rising

Throughout Cohort 4, one third of the companies have female founders—an important number that Mock would like to see increase in time. While women make up 51 per cent of the population in North America, representation in the tech market shows women founders only receive two per cent of venture capital funding. This is despite the fact that women actually return a higher revenue per dollar than their male counterparts.

"Being a female leader in ag tech, it is still very much a male-dominated industry," Mock said. "It's super exciting to see that women are continuing to push forward and to build innovations and strong companies. We would like to see more female founders, more Indigenous founders, more new Canadians. We do want to invest in those equity deserving groups."

One of those companies in Cohort 4 is AgScouter, created by co-founders Jill

Sharko and Kara Annand.

"It's an app for field scouting," Sharko explained. "It was originally designed by agronomists for agronomists because we have a parent company up in Nipawin. We actually run our parent company, Ag Grow Consulting, in the Nipawin area and the Moose Jaw area."

Co-founder Annand is from Moose Jaw where her family continues to farm, and around eight years ago the quest began for a program to make life easier.

"We had scouts out in the field trying to record their observations and make their recommendations to their growers and send those reports off," Zarko recalled. "Everything was either too cumbersome or didn't have the right information, and in the end, they were going home and creating a lot of manual reports, which obviously added to their time in their day. As a company, we were just losing a lot of time."

While there were programs out there, Zarko says finding the right fit for Ag Grow Consulting was the challenge. Ultimately, the team decided to build their own app with the assistance of a web development agency out of Montreal, culminating in a working product in 2017, which Ag Grow used internally.

After three years of using the program, Covid hit, which led Zarko and Annand to avoid hit, which led Zarko and Annand to Covid on taking AgScouter to the people.

"We just knew that as a tool for creating reports and being able to view that historical field information, it was saving us as a company one full time agronomist a year," Zarko said. "It really adds up. It means that we can scout approximately 20 to 25 per cent more acres per year. That's important, because at the end of the day, the information that an agronomist or a farmer that's collecting out in their field, they're using that information to make critical decisions down the road, and I mean now, more than ever, economically, it's important to be making the right decisions and to be doing the right things in your field."

Fast, easy, and doesn't add to the job are the key benefits Zarko noted of AgScouter.

"The job should be scouting the field, not putting it into your program," she said, adding that the app can create a professional, branded report that can be sent right from a phone before even leaving the field.

"That way, the farmer gets that information in their phone, it's an instant thing," Zarko said. "Everything's cloud based, and then they can start doing what they need to do. They can go out and spray their crop or do whatever the action item is."

"There's a chat feature there that comes directly to my phone," Zarko explained. "We also have an option to sign up for a free trial, a free demo. Then we are available for free download on the iOS App Store. We know we have a great program, and as soon as people have it in their hands and on their phones, we know that they're going to see why we get so excited about it. It's just fast, easy, efficient, and it's just making sure that they can get their data in there and at all tech skill levels. We made sure that we kept it really simple."



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# SARM supports Sask's move to become a fully carbon tax free province

The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) welcomes the Saskatchewan government's announcement to eliminate the industrial carbon levy, making Saskatchewan a fully carbon tax-free province. This decision aligns with SARM's long-standing advocacy for a practical approach to addressing environmental challenges, one that supports the economic vitality of rural communities and the agriculture sector.

"Today's announcement is a significant step forward for rural Saskatchewan," says Bill Huber, SARM President. "By eliminating the industrial carbon levy, the province is taking a crucial step to reduce unnecessary costs for our municipalities and agricultural producers.

This move will help maintain the competitiveness of our rural economies and support the well-being of our communities."

SARM has strongly advocated for the need for environmental policies that recognize the unique challenges and contributions of rural Saskatchewan. The association believes that federal carbon taxes are not the solution, and a made-in-Saskatchewan approach is essential for ensuring that any environmental initiatives do not disproportionately burden rural residents and businesses.

"SARM appreciates the provincial government's commitment to addressing environmental challenges

through methods that respect provincial autonomy and support local economic development," added Huber. "We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the government to ensure that our rural communities remain strong and resilient in the face of changing environmental policies."

This decision is seen as a positive step towards fostering economic growth and stability in rural areas, where the impacts of federal carbon pricing have been particularly felt. SARM remains committed to advocating for the interests of its member municipalities and working with the government to promote the prosperity of rural Saskatchewan.

## USask industry chair to advance forage research

**In a move to strengthen research into crucial livestock production systems, Dr. Flavia van Cleef (PhD) has been appointed as the new Beef Industry Integrated Forage Management and Utilization (IFMU) Chair at the University of Saskatchewan (USask).**

As the industry chair, van Cleef will bridge disciplinary boundaries, lead systems-based forage and pasture management, and utilization research to address the needs of all levels of the agricultural sector.

"Working with researchers, industry and producers, Dr. van Cleef will develop innovative tools and resources to improve forage management and use," said Dr. Angela Bedard-Haughn (PhD), dean of the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at USask. "We are excited to have Dr. van Cleef join the college to deliver the collaborative, interdisciplinary research needed to support a sustainable livestock and forage sector."

Forages are plant systems that act as high-quality livestock feed with potential benefits for soil health, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. Established to address a gap in forage research, the IFMU chair will explore the soil-plant-animal interface to help maximize the agronomic, economic and environmental benefits of forages.

"Productive pastures and forage crops are key to maintaining a strong and competitive beef industry in Canada," said Craig Lehr, the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) chair and Alberta beef producer. "The investment Canadian producers have made to establish the chair in IFMU will contribute to improved forage and grazing management strategies as well as training of new expertise to serve Canada's beef cattle and forage sectors."

van Cleef joins USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources with a joint appointment between the Department of Plant Sciences and the Department of Animal and Poultry Science. As the industry chair, she will work to advance forage utilization by enhancing system health, productivity and resilience.

"My goal is to bring together the latest research and practical solutions that work in the real world, ensuring they are locally relevant and aligned with global sustainability demands," said van Cleef.

"Identifying new technologies through applied research will be key to improving forage use and, therefore, profitability in forage-based



Dr. Flavia van Cleef (PhD) is the new Beef Industry Integrated Forage Management and Utilization Chair at the University of Saskatchewan.

livestock production systems. Through collaborative research, I am committed to helping the agricultural community adopt innovative strategies for a more sustainable integrated forage management."

van Cleef completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in animal science at São Paulo State University - UNESP in Brazil. In 2021, she obtained a PhD in agronomy from the University of Florida.

Prior to joining USask, van Cleef was a post-doctoral research fellow at the Center for Nuclear Energy in Agriculture at the University of São Paulo in Brazil. Her studies focused on evaluating the greenhouse gas production of various arid and semi-arid tannin-rich plants.

For her research at USask, van Cleef will focus on the development and evaluation of agronomic strategies that optimize forage establishment, yield, quality, and longevity. She will also explore feeding and grazing strategies that optimize animal performance while also contributing to improved soil health and environmental sustainability.

The industry chair position is jointly funded by the Beef Cattle Research Council, the Saskatchewan Cattle Association, the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), and the Global Institute for Food Security at USask.

Sustainable CAP is a five-year, \$3.5 billion investment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments that supports Canada's agri-food and agri-product sectors. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion


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# FCC launches Trade Disruption Customer Support program for agriculture and food industry



To support the Canadian agriculture and food industry as U.S. tariffs are implemented, Farm Credit Canada is providing \$1 billion in new lending to help alleviate financial challenges.

"There is no relationship in the world like the one Canada shares with the United States, and that certainly extends to our agriculture sectors. Our supply chains are highly integrated, and our producers rely on fair access to the U.S. market. These unjustified tariffs will have a direct impact on them," said the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. "Building on our Team Canada response, FCC will be providing financial support to the sector as we adapt to the challenges ahead, so our farmers can keep their operations going and continue producing the best products in the world."

"We know that agriculture and food producers across Canada are bracing for

uncertainty," said Justine Hendricks FCC president and CEO. "Agribusinesses, farm operations and food processors are key drivers of our economy and FCC is ready to provide meaningful and immediate support to keep the industry moving forward at this critical time."

Hendricks said that FCC will rapidly deliver solutions for the industry to adapt to the changing trade and economic conditions. Initially, the focus is on assisting the industry in addressing cash flow challenges so that businesses can adjust to a new operating environment.

Through the Trade Disruption Customer Support program, FCC will provide relief for viable customers and non-customers who meet the necessary lending criteria. This includes access to an additional credit line up to \$500,000 and new term loans. Current FCC customers have the option to defer principal payments for up to 12

months on existing loans.

FCC customers and non-customers should contact their local FCC office or call 1-800-387-3232 to discuss their individual situations and available options. Lending due diligence will be carried out on all applications.

"Supporting the industry will also take strong collaboration as part of a team Canada approach," said Hendricks. "FCC has served as a strong, reliable, and trusted industry presence for more than 65 years, and this current situation is no different. We will be working in partnership with industry associations and other financial providers to offer the solutions needed by

the agriculture and food industry to take on the challenges ahead."

"Canadian agriculture and food businesses supply high value and quality products to U.S. buyers and a positive trade relationship benefits both countries," said J.P. Gervais, FCC chief economist. "Despite this latest challenge, FCC will continue to provide capital solutions and be a catalyst for value creation to advance Canada's leadership in agriculture and food production."

FCC continues to evaluate the economic impact of tariffs implemented by Canada's largest trading partner on the Canadian agriculture and food sector to ensure that we are best able to support the industry.



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# Q1 2025 economic snapshot:

## Long-term opportunities for the Canadian economy despite short-term drag from trade disruptions

GRAEME CROSBIE, SENIOR ECONOMIST

The threat of U.S. trade barriers continues to hang over the Canadian economy. Broad based tariffs, which the White House had vowed to impose on Canada in February, were postponed to March, and then again to April. For now, we are keeping unchanged our forecast of 1.6% for Canada's 2025 GDP growth, although that estimate will likely be downgraded over the course of the year if there's no further postponement of American tariffs.

While Canada cannot control what its trade partners do, it can influence its own destiny. Policy geared towards boosting productivity would arguably help cushion the blow of tariffs, particularly with respect to removing or relaxing barriers to interprovincial trade. We dive into this recently-revived, decades-old idea in this quarter's economic snapshot.

### Economy was vulnerable, even before trade shock

Forecasters were not particularly bullish about Canada's 2025 economic prospects, even before the tariff drama unfolded. The economy has indeed been treading water for the last two years with real GDP growth averaging a meagre 1.5% over that period, well below the estimated potential. Worse, real GDP per capita, a proxy for standard of living, fell in both those years, highlighting Canada's continued challenges in raising productivity.

Weakness in productivity growth, and therefore real GDP per capita, has actually been a recurring theme for the past two decades. And it's not difficult to see why.

Since 2002, business investment in machinery, equipment and intellectual property has consistently fallen as a share of GDP to reach just 5.6% last year. That contrasts sharply with the U.S. where the investment share of the economy has climbed steadily to reach nearly 11% last year (Figure 1).

Continued on page B23

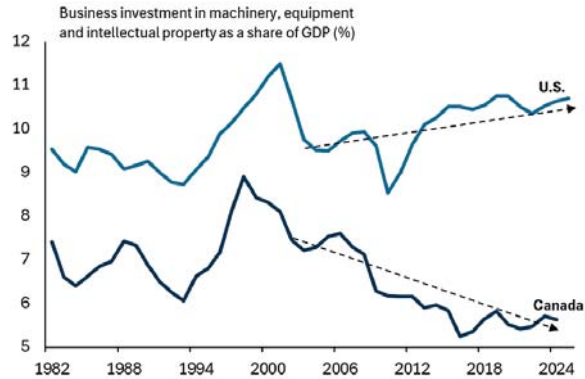


Figure 1: Canada's business investment heading in the wrong direction

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# Budget has record funding for Sask agriculture

Saskatchewan's 2025-26 Budget included record funding of \$625.0 million for Saskatchewan agriculture, an increase of \$54.6 million from the previous year.

"With this budget, we will continue to deliver the programs and services producers need, while investing in the long-term success of the industry," Agriculture Minister Daryl Harrison said. "The budget will support Saskatchewan's ranchers, farmers and agri-businesses to take on the challenges they face while continuing to meet the rising global demand for sustainably produced, nutritious food."

Through the federal-provincial Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership, this year's Agriculture budget allocates \$483.8 million to continue funding a strong, existing suite of business risk management programs, including Crop Insurance and AgriStability. The budget includes \$89.4 million for programs to strengthen the competitiveness, innovation and resiliency of the agriculture sector.

Program funding supports a wide range of initiatives including:

- Innovative work on pest biosecurity, disease surveillance and invasive weeds;
- Research to develop solutions to new emerging problems;
- Farm safety research; and

• An agriculture mentorship program.

Agriculture research remains a top priority in Saskatchewan and this budget invests \$37.0 million to help producers stay competitive and profitable in international markets. Over the past five years, the province has invested more than \$166.0 million in key personnel at our crop and livestock research facilities, in research chairs to advance strategic priorities and in research projects that demonstrate innovative technologies to producers and agronomists at the local level.

The agricultural industry is foundational to Saskatchewan's Growth Plan with several 2030 targets focused on agriculture. One target includes increasing Saskatchewan's value-added agriculture revenue to \$10.0 billion by 2030, and the sector is on track to meet that. This sector is one of the fastest growing in Canada with annual revenue that

has more than doubled since 2012, from \$3.5 billion to an estimated \$7.9 billion in 2023-24.

The province is also on track to achieve the Growth Plan target of increasing crop production to 45 million metric tonnes by 2030. Despite some challenging dry conditions in several areas, Saskatchewan's crop production totalled 35.5 million metric tonnes in 2024, marking a 7.8 per cent increase year-over-year and four per cent above the five-year average.

"Agriculture is a critical contributor to Saskatchewan's economy and deeply integrated into the lives of people all across the province," Harrison said. "We are fortunate to be able to rely on our agriculture producers to help us meet our Growth Plan targets for 2030, because they are the best in the world at what they do - and in many ways they are doing it more sustainably than anyone else."

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# 2024 farmland values in Canada: Continued, steady growth

BY CORBIN CHAU,  
DATA ANALYST, VALUATIONS

The national average farmland value increased 9.3% in 2024. This represents a slower pace of appreciation than in 2023, but remains higher than the average of the last 5 years (8.6%) and of the last 10 years (9.1%). This post summarizes the changes in values for cultivated land, irrigated land and pastureland. The full FCC Farmland Values Report also presents provincial and regional trends in each of these land types.

**Provincial Trends**

Our analysis covers the period of January 1 to December 31, 2024. The highest reported increase in average farmland values was in Saskatchewan at 13.1%, followed by British Columbia at 11.3% with New Brunswick rounding out the top three at 9.0% (Figure 1). All other provinces recorded an increase below the national average. Note that we use a weighted average approach when calculating the national percentage change in the average farmland value. As Saskatchewan is home to the highest number of cultivated acres, it represents the single largest contributor to the national average. Alberta and Manitoba carry the second and third largest weights, respectively.

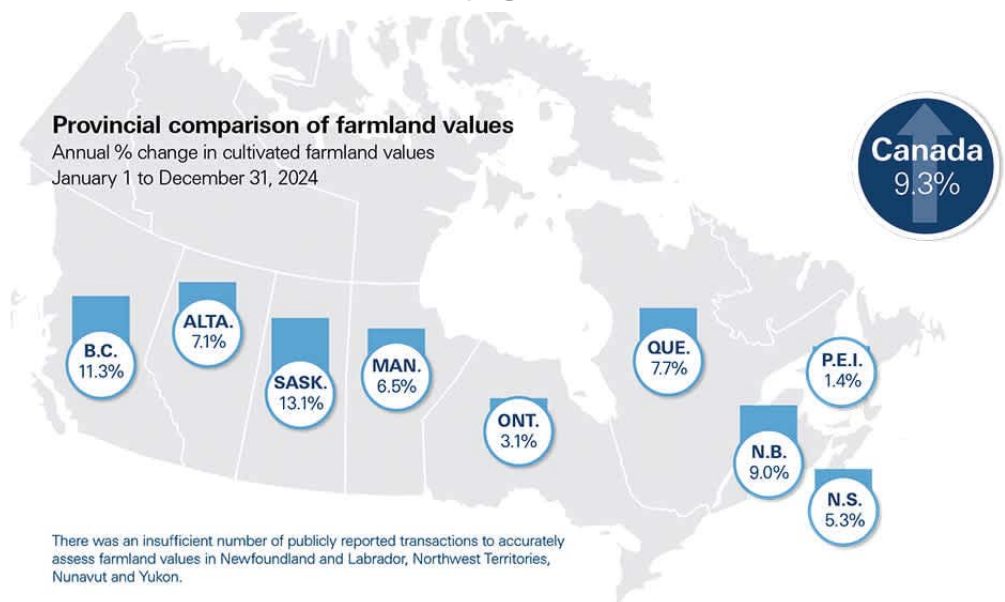


Figure 1: Average Cultivated Farmland Value Changes for 2024

**Profitability pressures emerge, but aren't enough to weaken the demand for farmland**

Profitability at the farm level is understandably and inextricably linked to farm operations' willingness and ability to purchase farmland. Figure 2 provides some illustration of this correlation. The period 2018-2020 is when the smallest increases in average farmland values were recorded over the least 10 years. This period is also associated with the smallest agriculture net margins defined as the difference

between farm cash receipts (FCR) and costs (expressed in percent of FCR). Although not necessarily apparent from figure 2 is the fact that a strong net margin in agriculture in a given year increases the likelihood of recording a strong increase in average farmland values in the following year.

There are obviously various other factors that explain farmland values. Interest rates are a primary driver of the demand for farmland. Borrowing costs started to decline in 2024 as the Bank of Canada implemented cuts to its policy rate starting in

June. But they remained, on average, elevated relative to previous years. The supply of available farmland remains tight, which, when combined with a robust demand, contributed to the lift in farmland values.

Continued on page B18 <sup>ESR</sup>

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### Farm rescue training in Redvers

Redvers Fire Department held a Farm Rescue Training course hosted by Redcoat Mutual Aid last week. This is a jointly funded rescue operation with tooled units in Redvers and Carlyle. There was an attendance of nine from Redvers, five from Carlyle and four from Carnduff. Participants spent numerous hours reviewing farm equipment and the dangers it presents. Practical hands on training consisted of the most common accidents they could encounter like motor vehicles verses combine, tractor roll overs, PTO entanglement, person verses combine header, grain auger incidents and various scenarios with round balers. This hands on training puts reality to the dangers with equipment found in rural Saskatchewan. Firemen also learned that unlike vehicle accidents where the use of hydraulic spreaders and cutters are tools of choice, this more so involves dismantling and taking equipment apart to remove the victim. These weekends are also great team builders for fire departments. It gets all members working as a team and also working with surrounding departments.




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# Above normal runoff expected

On March 14, the Water Security Agency (WSA) released the Spring Runoff Report for 2025.

A normal to above normal runoff is forecast for most of central and southern Saskatchewan due to an above normal snowpack.

Runoff across most of the north and parts of the southeast is expected to be below normal due to dry fall conditions and a below normal snowpack in these areas.

Most major water reservoirs in southern Saskatchewan are at or above normal levels for this time of year and are expected to be near normal levels following the spring runoff.

"Over the winter, we have seen moisture conditions improve in parts of the province with higher than forecasted snowpack particularly across the south-central area of the province," Minister Responsible for

the Water Security Agency Daryl Harrison said. "This, combined with overwinter operating plans at reservoirs designed to retain water supplies, means water supply conditions have improved over last year."

Snowfall throughout the remainder of the spring, and the melt rate, can significantly impact spring runoff. Long-range forecasts predict normal precipitation and near normal temperatures across Saskatchewan from March to May.

Runoff has already started across parts of the southwest including the Maple Creek area in the Big Stick Basin, in the Old Wives Basin and in lower portions of the Frenchman River Basin.

Residents are encouraged to monitor local ice and water conditions and take precautions as they can change rapidly during the spring melt, leading to weakening ice and rapidly moving water.



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# 2024 farmland values in Canada

Continued from page B14

## Irrigated and Pastureland Values in Canada

Average values of irrigated land in Western Canada have increased in all regions. Manitoba reported the highest rate of growth in 2023 at 18.1% but the province's market now takes fourth place in 2024 with an annual growth rate of 3.5%. Saskatchewan experienced the largest growth rate at 25.8%. Alberta reported an 8.6% increase in average irrigated land values and British Columbia increased by 4.4%. Irrigated land continues to be in high demand, especially in drier parts of the Prairie provinces. Development projects like the Westside Irrigation Rehabilitation Project are becoming increasingly important in places that have experienced drought conditions in recent years.

Average pastureland values, across all four provinces, grew at a slower rate in 2024 than they did in 2023. This year, British Columbia reported a slight increase of 1.1% while Alberta had a 4.6% change in average values. Manitoba saw values rise by 8.6% and Saskatchewan once again reported the largest growth rate at 8.9%. Cattle receipts continued to trend up in 2024 with an increase of 11.4% over 2023. That's lower, however, than the annual growth rate of the previous two years, and thus profitability pressures in the cattle sector could ex-

plain the muted increase in pastureland values.

### Bottom line

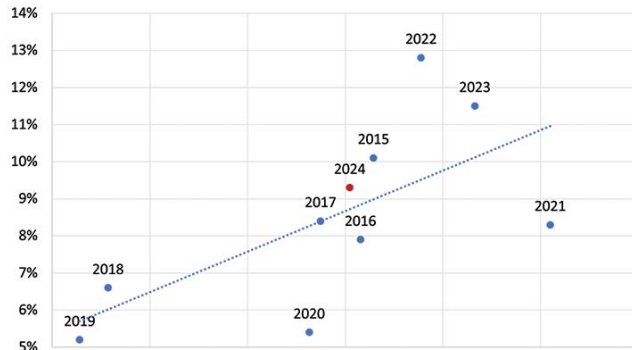
Saskatchewan recorded the largest growth rate in average farmland values across all three land types included in our report. In many ways, the province reflects well the overall trend across the country. Farm operations continue to invest in their operations to gain productivity. They implement new technologies, find efficiencies within their existing production processes, and also benefit from economies of scale when expanding and purchasing land. All these factors are a major

driver of productivity growth.

Uncertainty and volatility are expected to be significant in 2025 due to potential trade disruptions at the US/Canada border. Hence, farm operations are also cautious when buying farmland, knowing that farmland has never been more expensive than at the end of 2024, when evaluated against farm income. We will dig into the topic of farmland affordability in our blog post next week.

Increase in Canadian average farmland value

Figure 2: Canada's National Farmland Value (FLV) growth rate vs. Canadian agricultural net margins



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# SaskTel launches Smart Ag at Farm Show

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A lot of smart ideas tend to float around Canada's Farm Show every year, and SaskTel told attendees last week about their latest plan—SaskTel Smart Ag.

"We're really excited to be launching SaskTel Smart Ag here at Canada's Farm Show," said Heather Clair, Marketing Manager in charge of Smart Ag at SaskTel. "We couldn't think of a better time of year and place to start talking about SaskTel Smart Ag on this large scale."

She explained how Smart Ag is an ecosystem of companies based in Saskatchewan and around the world.

"We're providing the background infrastructure for them to build their technologies off of," Clair said. "We've partnered with some phenomenal companies that are experts in their field, whether it's soil analytics, data analytics, tracking cows, taking care of water sources—it's all about how can we help farmers be empowered with a digital toolkit to make better, more sustainable decisions. It's very much about options, it's very customizable."

A pair of the partner companies were represented at SaskTel's trade show booth during Canada's Farm Show, both promising some new technology for Saskatchewan producers.

Xact Agriculture is based in Saskatoon, using advanced AI-powered algorithms to process multispectral data captured by satellites. What that means is they can provide detailed soil analysis to help farmers make more informed decisions to optimize their operation.

In tandem with the dynamic brain power at Regina-based Kvale Informatics, the result, as Clair describes, is "a war room management system for your farm."



Heather Clair, Marketing Manager in charge of SaskTel's Smart Ag, answers questions from reporters during Canada's Farm Show in Regina.

"They have this great enterprise grade dashboard that can pull from APIs or your login credentials, to connect the information from your tractors, from your weather stations, from Xact Agriculture, and it creates a very holistic look at your farm," she said of Kvale's offerings. "That kind of information can be combined with your seeding data, your spraying data, your traceability data. Start to finish, it starts to layer upon itself and give you some really great analytics on the back end to be able to make better decisions."

There's also room for more partners to join the SaskTel Smart Ag realm, according to Clair.

"We're very interested in talking to any

companies that are wanting to take part in this," she said. "One of the key features within our ecosystem, though, is we want to make sure that everybody that we work with understands that the farmers own their data. This is an open data system. Everybody can use the data to create tools, but the ownership of that remains on the farm."

This includes places like Cultivator powered by Conexus and Saskatoon-based Co.Labs, both of which have been in communication with Smart Ag.

"The companies that are coming out of those programs are phenomenal, and that's one of the reasons that I'm really excited about SaskTel Smart Ag, because it's allowing those startups to get

a foothold into the community," Clair said. "You don't have to be approved for the big platforms. This is a platform that can take whatever those great up and coming tools are and integrate it with some of the more long-standing systems within agriculture."

## Solar-powered ear tags

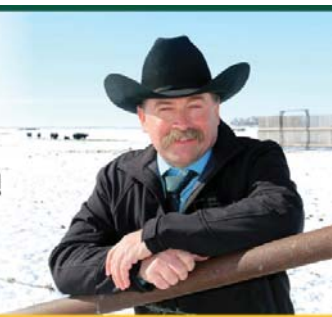
A perfect example of how all the technology comes together is found in the Australian-based Smart Paddock livestock management system. At the centre of the system is a solar-powered ear tag for livestock, which provide real-time GPS monitoring of each critter wearing the fancy earring. The tags have a 10-year lifetime, can be applied using tagging equipment producers already have at their fingertips, and can be transferred to different animals.

The company also offers SmartTrack trackers for equipment, SmartFence monitors for voltage levels on electric fences, and updates on water levels through SmartWater.

"We want those companies to be able to build off of what we're providing, to be able to reach their own needs," Clair said. "We want to support them."

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# Sask extends 4R nutrient stewardship agreement with Fertilizer Canada

The Government of Saskatchewan has renewed its ongoing collaboration with Fertilizer Canada to support education, training and expansion regarding 4R Nutrient Stewardship in the province through the signing of a new three-year Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC).

Extending the joint effort based on previous agreements, the Ministry of Agriculture will work with Fertilizer Canada to continue advancing the implementation of 4R Nutrient Stewardship in Saskatchewan. This approach to crop nutrient management and environmental stewardship follows the four "Rs" of fertilizer use: Right Source @ Right Rate, Right Time, Right Place.

"Healthy soil means healthy crops, and that is part of the reason Saskatchewan enjoys a reputation as a major global producer of quality agri-food products," Agriculture

Minister Daryl Harrison said. "The 4R approach is fundamental to a responsible, sustainable agriculture industry driven by producers who set the bar for best practices, and we are very pleased to continue working with Fertilizer Canada to enhance 4R Nutrient Stewardship in our province."

"Saskatchewan is a cornerstone of Canadian agriculture, demonstrating industry leadership through its commitment to responsible nutrient management and science-based farming practices," Fertilizer Canada Interim President and CEO Catherine King said. "With 40 per cent of Canada's cropland, the province is a key driver of the national economy. The Government of Saskatchewan's commitment to the 4R Nutrient Stewardship framework reflects its dedication to balancing environmental responsibility with economic growth in agriculture, strengthening Canada's global

competitiveness. Fertilizer Canada values this strong partnership and the province's ongoing efforts to promote best practices on the farm, ensuring the long-term success of the agricultural sector."

Areas of collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and Fertilizer Canada outlined in the new agreement focus on progress toward achieving shared objectives, including data and information sharing and knowledge transfer activities. The ministry has promoted 4R practices to a broad audience of producers and industry through events such as the Crop Diagnostic School and the Agronomy Research Update, as well as publications, webinars and research and demonstration initiatives. The percentage of agricultural land in Saskatchewan under a 4R stewardship plan has

experienced steady growth, increasing by over 20 per cent from 2022 to 2023.

Pursuant to the agreement, the ministry and Fertilizer Canada have co-chair roles on the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Steering Committee, which includes representation from industry partners - the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers, Canola Council of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Prairie Certified Crop Adviser Board, and Agriculture-Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) sites - and the University of Saskatchewan.

More information on 4R Nutrient Stewardship and sustainable farming practices in Saskatchewan is available at <https://fertilizercanada.ca/our-focus/stewardship/4rs-across-canada/saskatchewan/>

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# Q1 2025 economic snapshot:

## Long-term opportunities for the Canadian economy despite short-term drag from trade disruptions

Continued from page B12

This downtrend in the share of Canadian investment is in dire need of reversal if productivity is to be revived. A concrete action that could help here would be simplifying the regulatory environment in Canada. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranks Canada 25 out of 38th in their overall indicator of product market regulations (which is a rough evaluation how policies promote competition and innovation). The Canadian Science Policy Center identified the regulatory burden in Canada as the most important obstacle to innovation. Public and business investment are intrinsically linked. Targeted public spending can improve productivity, yet issuing government bonds to finance such spending can raise long-term interest rates, restraining private investment (an undesirable effect referred to as "crowding out").

### Unlocking trade amongst provinces offers buffer against tariff threat

Another way to revive productivity is to eliminate internal trade barriers. Over the last several weeks, the idea of reducing interprovincial trade barriers to spur economic growth and counteract the negative economic impacts U.S. tariffs has been raised. This is not a new concept, having been prescribed by the Rowell-Sirois Commission way back in 1940.

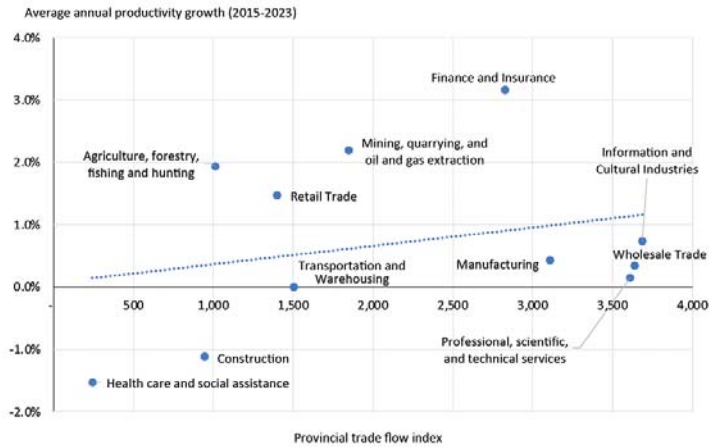
What exactly do we mean by interprovincial trade barriers? There are essentially rules and regulations that slow the movement of goods and labour between provinces, such as trucking regulations, licensing requirements, or health and safety rules. Some examples within the food and beverage space include the sale and distribution of alcohol (which provincial governments have various degrees of control over, and all have different rules) and meat (where you are required to be a federally inspected abattoir to sell interprovincially, which can be costly).

Table 1: Most common obstacles to interprovincial trade for the agricultural sector

Obstacle experienced	% of firms who encountered the obstacle
Transportation cost	34.9
Distance between point of origin and destination	12.6
Transportation availability	11.0
Lack of profitability	10.7
Provincial or territorial tax laws	6.1
Permits and licenses were difficult to obtain	5.0
Too much paperwork to fill out	4.3
Provincial or territorial language laws	4.0
Transportation regulations were difficult to abide by	4.0
Regulations for this business' industry were difficult to abide by	3.8

Source: Statistics Canada

Figure 2: Industries with greater ease, more frequent interprovincial trade tend to have higher productivity growth rates



Reducing these barriers would be immensely beneficial. An International Monetary Fund (IMF) study from 2019 found that non-geographic internal barriers to trade amount to a 21% tariff we effectively put on ourselves – and that number is about 27% for food products. In 2022, University of Calgary Economist Trevor Tombe estimated that eliminating these barriers could boost Canada's GDP by between 4.4% and 7.9%. The Bank of Canada estimates a protracted trade war with U.S. would lead to a 2.5% hit to GDP. Based on these estimates, the elimination of interprovincial trade barriers would more than offset the hit to GDP from U.S. tariffs.

In a recent survey, Statistics Canada found that over 45% of agriculture business experienced at least one obstacle when selling goods or services to customers in another province. Outside of transportation related issues, provincial tax laws, difficulty in attaining permits/licenses, and the volume of paperwork to fill out are common grips for those in the industry (Table 1).

There are, of course, geographical barriers that make interprovincial trade naturally difficult. Indeed, the top obstacles below reflect this reality. Still, the barriers are real and, if addressed, would provide significant upside in terms of increased economic growth.

Reducing internal trade barriers would allow investors easier access to the entire domestic market, making investing in Canada more attractive and boosting productivity in the process.

Continued on page B31



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# Canadian farmland affordability trending down

BY JUSTIN SHEPHERD  
SENIOR ECONOMIST AT FCC

The average value of Canadian farmland continued its steady ascent in 2024, with an increase of 9.3%, which is slightly lower than the 11.5% bump observed last year. This growth was propelled by the limited availability of farmland for sale coupled with a resilient demand (despite an 11.8% decline in major crop receipts). Slightly lower interest rates also contributed to support demand.

This post provides an update to our initial farmland affordability index released last year, which focused on newly acquired land. The affordability of new purchased farmland continued to deteriorate in 2024. We examine each province individually, considering factors such as unique growing conditions, land prices, crops and livestock raised, and proximity to urban populations, all of which influence changes in farmland value. Furthermore, we assess the annual payments for owned farmland over time in relation to its revenue-generating capacity.

## Measuring farmland affordability

For many farm businesses, farmland is a key asset. Trends in farmland prices can affect financial performance and business growth over time. FCC's farmland affordability index provides information on Canadian farmland prices, assisting farming businesses in making informed decisions about their farmland assets and investments.

The index represents the relationship between the annual payments for newly purchased farmland and the income potential derived from that land. A higher ratio indicates decreased affordability in acquiring farmland, as a larger portion of revenue is required to service the debt. Read last year's blog for more detailed information on the calculations.

## Affordability index for newly purchased farmland in Canada deteriorated last year

Farmland affordability in Canada worsened in 2024, reaching levels not seen since 1983 (Figure 1). The index is mainly influenced by Saskatchewan and the Prairies due to their vast acreage. Reduced affordability was driven by lower farm cash receipts and higher farmland values. Since 2020, farmland values and interest rates have risen faster than farm revenue. While established farmers gained equity, the cost of farmland increased relative to its income potential.

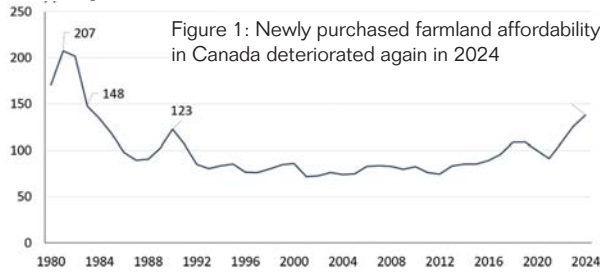
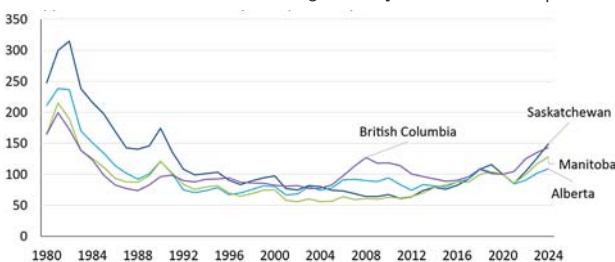


Figure 1: Newly purchased farmland affordability in Canada deteriorated again in 2024

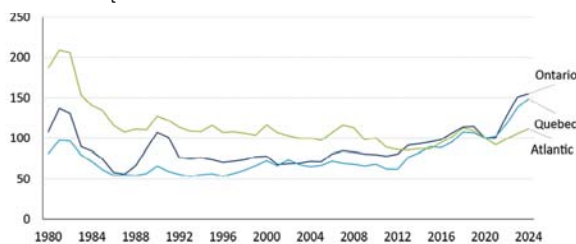
All provinces in Western Canada remain significantly below the record levels established in the 1980s. Saskatchewan saw the largest deterioration due to a rise in the value of farmland and a decline in farm cash receipts, with the index being at the highest level since 1990 (Figure 2). Alberta and Manitoba experienced similar trends in 2024, with farmland values up and farm cash receipts down, marking Manitoba's highest level since 1983 and Alberta's since 2018. British Columbia, despite an increase in farm cash receipts, saw its index rise again (i.e., a deterioration in affordability) due to rising farmland values.

Figure 2: Affordability of newly acquired farmland in Western Canada deteriorated in 2024 but remains significantly below historical peaks



In 2024, farmland affordability was the worst on record in both Ontario and Quebec. Both provinces had lower farm cash receipts compared to the previous year, accompanied by an increase in farmland values (Figure 3). Despite a decline in affordability in Atlantic Canada, this region experienced relatively small increases over the past five years and remains significantly below the levels observed 30 years ago.

Figure 3: Newly purchased farmland affordability declined again in Ontario and Quebec



The unaffordability of newly purchased land affects all producers looking to acquire land and presents significant challenges for those aiming to expand their land base, including young producers, Indigenous peoples, and new entrants. However, only a small amount of land changes hands each year, with most being held long-term, often across generations. For these farmers, we can evaluate their success over time in generating farm cash receipts relative to actual land payments.

## How are existing landowners performing in terms of generating revenue relative to land costs

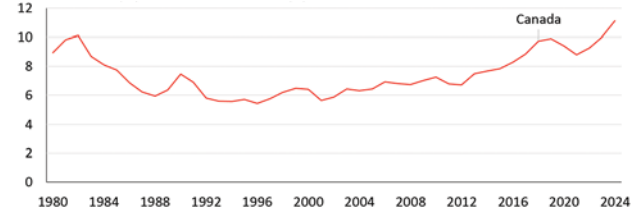
According to Statistics Canada's balance sheet of agriculture, Canadian farmers collectively hold approximately 85% equity in their operations. Since the largest component is farm real estate, we assume that farmland equity is at that level, indicating that mortgage payments are only being made on 15% of the value of farm real estate. Equity levels range from about 70% in Atlantic Canada to nearly 90% in Saskatchewan.

We can evaluate farmland affordability for owned land based on the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's formula for land investment cost. For Canada, this involves applying 85% land equity to a 1.5% land opportunity cost, with the remaining 15% allocated to mortgage principal and interest over 25 years. In 2024, the average payment for newly purchased land in Canada was \$309 per acre, whereas the payment for owned land was \$115 per acre using this method. We use this value applied to total seeded acres as a percentage of farm cash receipts to create a ratio as shown in figure 4.

## Performance of owned farmland varies nationwide

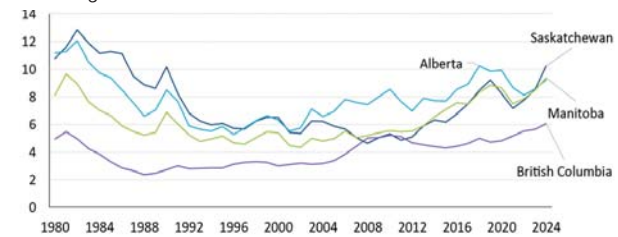
The owned farmland payment as a percentage of revenue in Canada reached its highest point historically in 2024. The average land payment represented 11% of farm cash receipts last year, or essentially for every \$1 in revenue generated, there was \$0.11 in land payments. Since the early 1990s, the average annual payment has slowly been increasing relative to growth in farm cash receipts. The last decline in the ratio was in 2021 when mortgage rates declined to a low of just over 3%.

Figure 4: Owned farmland payment as a percentage of revenue in Canada is the worst on record



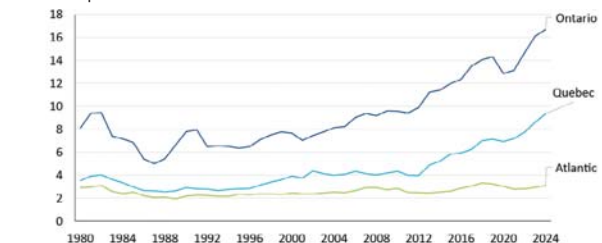
At the provincial level, it is possible to observe how different areas perform in generating farm cash receipts relative to their average land payments. British Columbia has the highest priced farmland in the west, but landowners pay \$0.06 in payments to generate \$1 in farm cash receipts, which represents an efficient performance. The three Prairie provinces have seen an increase in their land payments as a percentage of revenue in recent years, indicating that on average farmland value growth is surpassing revenue growth.

Figure 5: British Columbia farmland payment is relatively small to the revenue generated



Much like the recently acquired farmland, Ontario and Quebec exhibit a trend of diminishing affordability in already owned farmland. Ontario is the most challenged area in the country for generating revenue relative to the annual cost of land ownership, for every \$1 of revenue, \$0.17 goes towards farmland payments. While Quebec is below the Canadian average, since 2012 the average farmland payments has been rapidly increasing. Affordability in the Atlantic declined this year but remained relatively stable compared to other regions.

Figure 6: Ontario farmland payments continue to increase relative to revenue potential



Despite the rise in farmland payments as a portion of revenue, most producers have been able to generate sufficient cash flow to fulfill their annual payment obligations. Net agricultural margins in Canada for 2024 remained strong, contributing to increased farmland values and presenting affordability challenges for purchasing additional land. Net margins are expected to tighten in 2025 due to a second consecutive year of declining receipts for grains and oilseeds. The persistence of high costs and trade disruptions may lead to lower revenues and higher expenses. This could lead operations to be cautious about farmland purchases in 2025.

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# Breaking barriers: Women in Canadian agriculture

BY BETHANY LIPKA

Women play a critical role in Canadian agriculture but also face significant participation barriers. Lack of resources and lack of recognition lead to under-representation among farm operators and in leadership roles within agriculture businesses and organizations. The growing skills gap across the agriculture sector makes it imperative to grow gender equity and lift women's participation in all aspects of farming.

We estimate that achieving revenue equity – with female farm operators earning on average revenues in line with male farm operators – would add an additional \$5 billion to agriculture's GDP contribution. Achieving gender parity in the number of farm operators would magnify these economic benefits. Recognizing existing contributions of women could attract more women to the industry, which itself is a function of elevating the status of women's contributions equal to men's. We estimate that almost 88,000 additional female farm operators will need to be counted to achieve gender parity by 2026 – 75% of which are already farming but unrecognized as operators, and 25% of which will need to be new entrants.

## The status of women in agriculture today

In the 30-year period spanning 1991 to 2021, the percentage of female farm operators in Canada increased from 25.7% to 30.4% (Figure 1 See Page B 28). This upward trend is expected to continue, with the proportion of female farm operators expected to reach 31.1% by 2026. While encouraging, it's important to note that this trend is largely explained by men leaving the industry not by more women joining. Farm consolidations and an aging farm population have reduced the total number of farm operators across Canada over time, with the number of men falling faster than the number of women. So, while the proportion of women farmers has been steadily on the rise, the actual number of women in farming has not been growing by much. In fact, between 2016 and 2021 the number of female farm operators grew for the first time since 1991, but only by 2.5% – translating to less than 2,000 additional farm operators. And women are also still less likely than men to be the sole decision-maker on the farm.

Female farm operators face very different economic circumstances than male farm operators. Female operators tend to have smaller



operations, and lower farm incomes. The median farm operating revenue bracket is the same for both men and women, at \$50,000 – \$99,999 (Figure 2 See Page B28). But approximately 58.6% of female farm operators work on farms that reported less than \$100,000 in revenues, compared to 51.1% of male farm operators, based on the most recent census data from 2021. Conversely, only 17.9% of female farm operators were employed on farms with revenues of \$500,000 or more, compared to 21.9%

of their male counterparts. Women have gained some ground in recent years in high value markets for products like beef, poultry, and eggs. Men continue to dominate the grains and oilseeds market (Figure 3 See Page B28).

## In their own words: Barriers faced by Canadian women in agriculture

In the fall of 2024, FCC interviewed women working in Canada's agriculture sector to learn about their

experiences. Overall, these producers felt that things are slowly changing for the better. Yet, women still face barriers to full participation in farming.

### 1. Industry gender norms

The public still expects farmers to be male. Stereotypically, in many farm families the man is labelled as the "farmer", while the woman is labelled a "farm wife". Girls growing up in farm families may not feel encouraged from participating in the more operational aspects of farming.

This early socialization can shape how women perceive their roles on the farm, and their confidence in engaging in all aspects of farming as adults. Women also tend to be expected to take on more household and childrearing responsibilities and often provide economic stability for their families through off-farm employment, making it more difficult to engage in production work.

Continued on page B28 <sup>WR</sup>

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# Breaking barriers: Women in Canadian agriculture

Continued from page B27

## 2. Devaluation of women's knowledge, skills and contributions

Women reported that they often feel like they must prove that they are as knowledgeable, skilled, and capable as their male counterparts, and often feel judged to be less competent because of their gender. And that non-production roles dominated by women – like accountant, or finance manager – are often deemed not as important as operational roles that tend to be male dominated.

## 3. Resource accessibility

Men are more likely to inherit the farm over women, as tradition dictates that these resources be passed from fathers to sons. Women are often excluded from succession planning, and in large part are still expected to marry in to farm families if they want to participate in farming.

## 4. Physical barriers

Many aspects of farming were not designed with women in mind. For example, most farm equipment has been tailored to the male physique, and these design limitations can make it more difficult for women to engage in the physical side of farming.

## 5. Lack of representation

Many women shared that their views on their own potential were shaped by what they saw represented as they grew up – which typically was men as decision makers on the farm, and women in supportive roles. A lack of representation of female leadership in agriculture can make it difficult for younger women to feel confident that they can take on leadership roles.

## 6. Lack of networks and support

Women in farming are more isolated than their male counterparts, and have less access to networking, mentorship, and support. As agriculture continues to be a male-dominated industry, most executive and board positions within agriculture continue to be held by men. Women generally have less access to a network of like-minded peers sharing similar struggles who they can lean on for support and advice, and often have the experience of being the only woman in the room. This can be both challenging and intimidating. Women also face barriers to attending in-person networking events, as they are often juggling childcare and off-farm work.

## Women are well positioned to be future leaders in Canada's food system

The labour needs of Canada's agriculture sector are changing. In this era of digital agriculture and data-driven decision-making, there is a growing need for highly skilled farm labour. Reflecting this need, there has been an overall upward trend in educational attainment in the agriculture labour force in recent years – with a declining number of workers having no formal qualifications, and an increasing number of workers with college and university degrees. This trend is even more pronounced for women, who are more likely to be highly educated than their male counterparts. In 2021, nearly one-quarter (23.5%) of female farm operators possessed at least a bachelor's degree, compared to only 14.5% of male farm operators (Figure 4). And the proportion of female farm operators without any formal education was only 9.3%, notably lower than the 18.2% observed among male farm operators. The current gap in educational attainment between female and male farm operators is greatest for operators aged 30-39; within this age cohort, 36% of women have a university education, compared to only 17% of men.

A high level of educational attainment makes it easier for women to take advantage of new tools and technologies of farming as they emerge. Many of these innovations are making it easier to overcome some of the physical and social barriers that women in agriculture have faced in the

past. A growing number of female farm operators are adopting new production technologies – things like automatic guidance steering, and GIS. These tools can make it easier for women to achieve work-life balance. Women who are highly educated are also well positioned to be thought leaders and champions of the agriculture industry, playing a leadership role beyond the farm level.

Women working in agriculture also continue to demonstrate a strong entrepreneurial spirit, leveraging their skills and expertise to enhance the value of what they produce. Women have been driving the emerging trend of direct to consumer sales of farm goods, with farms run exclusively or jointly by female operators being much more likely to adopt this marketing strategy. And there are a growing number of women working on farms producing organic goods, and using sustainable energy sources and technologies. Women are also carving out space for themselves in growing niche markets, like sheep and goat production.

## Achieving gender equity in Canadian agriculture: Some possible steps forward

There is a lot of work that needs to be done to achieve gender equity in Canadian agriculture. Currently we fall behind wholesale and retail, finance, education, health care, and several other industries in terms of women's participation.

Continued on page B30

Figure 1: Gender breakdown of farm operators in Canada – women and men, 1991-2026f1

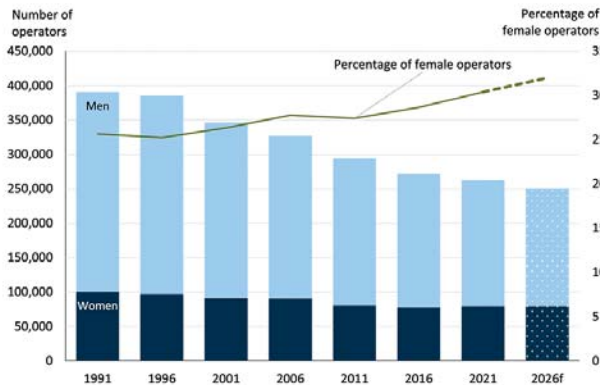


Figure 2: Total farm operating revenues for women and men – Canada, 2021

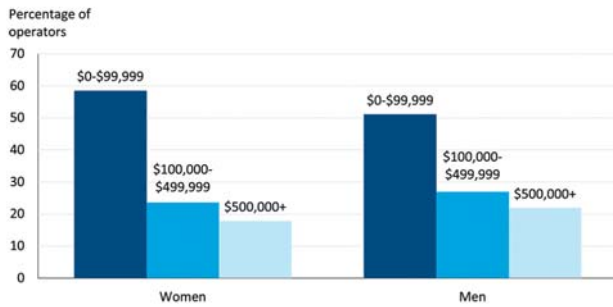
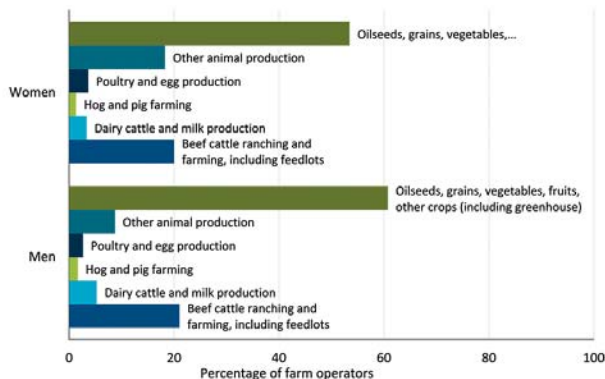


Figure 3: Types of farms operated by women and men – Canada, 2021



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# Grazing lease rate formula amended to support livestock producers



The Ministry of Agriculture has amended the Crown land grazing lease rate formula, effective for 2025.

The revisions to the grazing formula will offer relief to producers renting Crown land and contribute to affordability and stability for the livestock sector in the face of rising production costs. Amending the rental formula provides a transparent and straightforward calculation for producers to understand while increasing the stability

and predictability of the annual rental rate.

"We have listened to feedback from producers and, as a result, these changes will contribute to the further growth of the province's livestock sector," Agriculture Minister Daryl Harrison said. "Additionally, this new formula provides a fair and transparent pricing structure for producers and a fair return for a public asset back to Saskatchewan taxpayers."

"We have been requesting changes to

the formula for a while and are pleased where the province has landed," Saskatchewan Cattle Association Past Chair Keith Day said. "The 20 per cent ceiling on fee increase will help producers and community pastures better plan for any possible changes to the rates."

In 2024, the ministry conducted consultations with livestock producers and industry associations to determine what changes to the grazing formula would provide more predictability for producers. As a result,

the ministry has introduced an amended formula that uses price averaging of cattle marketed between October 1 to November 30 of the five preceding years, as opposed to the previous formula based on fall cattle prices from the previous year.

The ministry also introduced a 20 per cent cap on annual rental rate increases. These changes ensure rates are less vulnerable to sharp fluctuations and provide more stability to help producers budget for the coming year.

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# Women in Canadian agriculture

Continued from page B30

Women in agriculture today are highly educated and driven, with strong business acumen. They are well equipped to foster innovation and accelerate new methods, tools, and technologies on the farm. At a time when productivity growth in Canadian agriculture is stagnating, leveraging their skills and entrepreneurial spirit will reap significant economic benefits.

Here are some potential strategies to consider:

- **Increase the visibility of women in agriculture.** Recognizing the important work that women are already doing on farms and in boardrooms across Canada is critical.
- **Enhance mentorship and networking opportunities.** This will help to reduce isolation and build community for women navigating the agriculture and food space. Programs like AgriMentor, that pair new and established women farmers with experienced mentors, and events like Advancing Women Conferences, can foster useful connections for women, helping to address time and cost barriers women often face when engaging in networking. Virtual initiatives can also help to make networking more accessible. The National Women in

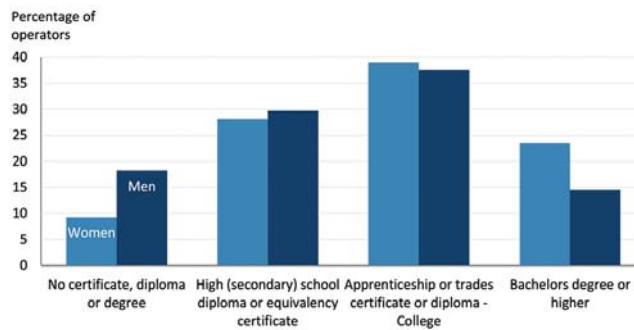
Agriculture and Agri-Food Network Project is one example of a growing network that connects women in farming through both in-person and virtual initiatives.

- **Ensure that women have equal opportunity to take on leadership roles.** This requires not only reducing gender bias in promotion and hiring, but also ensuring women are supported in stepping into leadership roles when the opportunity arises, through access to things like flexible work arrangements and childcare accommodations.
- **Improve access to resources.** Women have historically been excluded from succession planning and equal access to land and capital. Programs that support women in accessing the resources they need to start their farm businesses are essential moving forward. FCC's Women Entrepreneur Program is one example of this. A broader cultural shift toward including women in succession planning is also needed to break this inter-generational cycle of exclusion. We are slowly seeing progress in this area, with more women being involved in farm transition planning.
- **Embracing the strengths and potential of women in agriculture can unlock \$5 billion in economic benefits for the agricul-**

ture sector. Achieving gender equity can drive innovation, improve productivity, and foster sustainability, leading to a more resilient and prosperous agricultural in-

dustry. Together, we can cultivate a future where everyone can contribute and thrive, creating a dynamic and inclusive farming community that benefits all.

Figure 4: Educational attainment of farm operators in Canada – women and men, 2021



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# Q1 2025 economic snapshot:

Continued from page B23

To better understand this hypothesis, we created a Provincial Trade Flow Index (PTFI) which considers an industry's reliance on inter-provincial trade as well as the degree to which each industry has experienced barriers to interprovincial trade. As Figure 2 illustrates, there is a positive relationship between PTFI and productivity growth. Put another way, those industries that have an easier time trading amongst the provinces and / or trade interprovincially at a greater rate tend to have better productivity growth. In the context of the above-mentioned IMF analysis (re: interprovincially trade barriers amounting to a 21% internal tariff), the numbers make tremendous sense.

There are clearly other factors at play that would explain why productivity growth over the last decade has been different between the various industries. Still, the relationship exists, and efforts to lower the obstacles encountered by those attempting to trade interprovincially can only help to stimulate productivity growth.

### Bottom line

While we are keeping unchanged our forecast of 1.6% for Canada's 2025 GDP growth, awaiting more clarity on U.S. trade policy, we acknowledge significant downside risk to that estimate. The negative economic consequences of U.S. tariffs will be as diverse as the Canadian economy itself. The potential impacts are largely negative with regards to GDP, employment, productivity, and the Canadian dollar. Amidst all this short-term negativity, opportunities – such as a relaxing of interprovincial trade barriers – do exist, which would better position the Canadian economy in the long-run if seized upon.

	2023				2024				2025				ANNUAL AVERAGE		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1f	Q2f	Q3f	Q4f	2023	2024	2025f
<b>GDP growth, quarter-over-quarter % change, annualized</b>															
Canada	3.9	0.8	-0.6	0.7	1.8	2.8	2.2	2.6	2.5	-0.4	0.1	0.9	1.5	1.5	1.6
US	2.8	2.5	4.4	3.2	1.6	3.0	3.1	2.3	0.5	1.5	1.8	2.5	2.9	2.8	1.8
<b>Inflation, year-over-year % change, quarterly averages</b>															
Canada	5.1	3.5	3.7	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.3	1.4	1.5	3.9	2.4	1.5
US	5.8	4.1	3.6	3.2	3.2	3.2	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.8	4.2	2.9	2.8
<b>Key policy rate, %, end of period</b>															
Bank of Canada overnight rate	4.50	4.75	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.25	3.25	2.75	2.50	2.50	2.50	4.72	4.53	2.68
US Fed federal funds rate	5.25	5.25	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.00	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.00	4.00	5.25	5.25	4.44
<b>Government of Canada key bond rates, %, end of period</b>															
2-year	3.74	4.58	4.87	3.88	4.17	3.99	2.97	2.93	2.59	2.57	2.56	2.55	4.29	3.63	2.62
5-year	3.02	3.68	4.25	3.17	3.51	3.51	2.80	2.96	2.67	2.64	2.62	2.60	3.56	3.22	2.68
10-year	2.90	3.26	4.03	3.10	3.45	3.50	3.01	3.23	3.00	2.96	2.93	2.90	3.35	3.28	2.99
<b>Exchange rate, quarterly averages</b>															
USD per CAD	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.73	0.74	0.73	0.73	0.71	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.70	0.74	0.73	0.69
EUR per CAD	0.69	0.68	0.69	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.67	0.68	0.67	0.68	0.67	0.69	0.67	0.68

Summary of forecasts of key economic variables

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