

MAY 2021



Rylar Hutchinson took this drone photo of Hutch Farms seeding wheat North of Moosomin as part of the World-Spectator's Spring Seeding photo contest.

Timely rains over long weekend welcomed by producers, but subsoil moisture and pastures continue to struggle

BY SPENCER KEMP
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
Following dry conditions across the region, the rain that was seen over the long weekend was welcomed with open arms by producers.

But even though the moisture is welcome, producers in the region say that more will be needed.

Van Eaton expresses concerned about pastures

Farming both north and east of Maryfield, John Van Eaton says he received roughly two inches of rain over the long weekend.

While the moisture was more than welcome, Van Eaton says that more will be needed to compensate for the lack of subsoil moisture.

"It was a little bit patchy, the land that we have to the south got around two inches over the weekend, and about an inch and a half on the yard.

"Certainly this will help crops that have already germinated and are waiting to germinate. This will hold us for a couple of weeks but our subsoil reserves were pretty low so we're going to need timely rains all year, really."

Van Eaton highlighted that last year saw dry conditions as well, however there was enough subsoil moisture to compensate for the lack of rainfall. Because of this, subsoil moisture reserves have been exhausted, leaving producers at the mercy of timely precipitation.

Pastures are also struggling, according to Van Eaton.

He says that due to dry conditions over the last year, dugouts are at critically low levels and will require intense rainfall to refill.

"Unless we get a major rain event like we did on the July long weekend back in 2014, these rains aren't going to fill our dugouts and the pastures are in poor shape and water levels are low. The only thing that

will help pastures is a good snow cover this winter to recharge those dugouts.

"We bought a water tanker to consolidate some dugouts. It's not our favourite job, but we don't have a lot of choices."

While it is not ideal, Van Eaton says that utilizing the water tanker is something he will have to do through the summer.

"We're going to have to pump more and use that tanker to consolidate or move water to those dugouts. I don't like the idea of hauling water to cattle in a trough every day but we'll do what we need to do."

In addition to issues regarding weather, Van Eaton says that increased costs due to the carbon tax are beginning to take their toll.

"Costs have escalated almost unprecedentedly. I can't help but think that those costs of the carbon tax will start to show their effect. In my humble opinion, the carbon tax is not an environmental plan, it's a tax plan.

"There are some items that we purchased last year that are almost exactly double this year, too. While I can't completely blame the carbon tax, but I think it has some bearing on retailers having no choice but to increase their costs. It's a cost to them and they can't absorb it so they have to pass it on."

Remaining optimistic for a good harvest, Van Eaton hopes for timely rains and warm weather to secure a good growing season for his wheat, canola, peas, and barley.

Jaenen says subsoil moisture remains low

Nancy Jaenen grows wheat, oats, barley, and canola South of Moosomin and says that the rain over the long weekend was desperately needed following the dry conditions plaguing the area.

"Over the weekend we got around two inches of rain," Jaenen said.

"It'll help, we can certainly use more because conditions were so dry before the rain."

Jaenen says that prior to the rain over the long weekend, conditions were beginning to scare her. During seeding, she noted that there was only a small amount of subsoil moisture available at the start of seeding, but none by the end.

"Things just weren't doing much because when we planted the cereal there was moisture in the ground still, but by the time we got to the canola it was bone dry."

Over the past two years, Jaenen says she has seen conditions consistently get drier.

Also noting a lack of subsoil moisture, Jaenen says that timely rains will be needed but remains uncertain of what the rest of the growing season will bring.

"I can't say for sure, but it will all depend on temperature, wind, that kind of thing. It's all going to depend on what the temperatures do and all we can really hope for is timely rains," said Jaenen.

Duchek concerned about flea beetles

In Atwater, Blake Duchek says that his fields saw a decent amount of rainfall over the long weekend, providing much-needed moisture to his crops.

He says that in the days following the long weekend he saw plants beginning to sprout and germinate.

"From the beginning until Tuesday we got anywhere from two to three inches across our land," said Duchek.

"It'll be enough to get everything growing. You can tell that the wheat in the drier places wasn't germinating because of the lack of moisture. But now those spots are starting to poke out of the ground, even just a couple of days after the rain. They just needed that moisture to get going because the seed was sitting in the dust."

While the rain was welcomed by Duchek, he says that more will be needed by mid-June to secure a strong growing season.

"We're probably good for three weeks now while the crop is small and doesn't

need that much moisture. But by the middle of June, once the crop is bigger, we'll need more moisture. There's no subsoil moisture left from last year."

"We've completed all of our cash crops but we have about 200 acres left of oats yet to seed for feed for the cows"

Because of low subsoil moisture levels, Duchek says timely rains will be necessary for crops to grow and secure a bountiful harvest.

"Last year we had sub-moisture to get the crop going, but then we never really received any significant rain until about mid-June last year and the crops had started to suffer at that point. This year with no sub-moisture we wouldn't have made it to that point without this rain.

"There's enough to get it going now, but we'll need more rain in the future like June or July to get a good crop."

Duchek notes that the rain also helped his pastures begin growing grass for cattle, but dugouts continue to remain at low levels.

"Any new dugouts only have a foot or two of water and the older, established dugouts aren't in much better shape unless they're fed by a ditch. More rain will really help that.

"As far as grass, none of the pastures were growing yet due to the lack of moisture also. But now we're seeing the grass has poked up and started greening up."

The dry conditions have led to an increased number of flea beetles, Duchek says. He says that the moisture will help plants outgrow the beetles, but it remains a concern.

"The guys are seeing big numbers of flea beetles already as of two weeks ago when they were seeding. So that's going to be a concern, especially if the canola is slow to get going. The flea beetles will basically chew it up as fast as it comes up. But now that there's moisture, we'll need it to warm up a bit so the canola will be able to outgrow the flea beetles," said Duchek.

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SPRING 2021
Mining, Energy & Manufacturing



All Canadian farmers take on debt—how do you manage yours?

BY TREVOR BACQUE
Farmers of all descriptions will take on debt during their farming career. For some, it's paid off nearly as quickly as they acquired it. For others, debt may follow them their entire career. In either scenario, or one unique to your farm, the natural question arises: How do you manage it?

There are many correct answers, but it must work for the farmer to manage, draw down or eliminate debt. Times of uncertainty can make debt even more precarious.

When it comes to farm debt, one main concern is cashflow, according to Jennifer Hoogendoorn, MNP's Manager of Tax and Assurance, in Clinton, Ontario.

"What is [a new asset] going to bring to your table?" she says. "If you're going to build a new barn, is it going to increase productivity? If so, by how much?"

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Manitoba Crop Alliance and U of M advancing Canadian agriculture through new research facility

Manitoba Crop Alliance contributes \$500,000 toward Prairie Crops & Soils research facility

Manitoba Crop Alliance (MCA) is contributing \$500,000 to the University of Manitoba (UM) towards the building of the Prairie Crops & Soil Research Facility (PCSRF). The PCSRF will further strengthen the UM's already well-recognized agronomy and crop production teaching and research programs. Construction of the new facility will begin next year.

"I thank our research collaborators at MCA for their leadership and vision in the support of the new PCSRF, one of the Faculty's most significant renewal strategies for research in crop production. This gift represents investment in agricultural research by Manitoba's farmers that will foster the development of integrated and resilient agronomic systems to the benefit of Western Canadian producers," says Dr. Martin Scanlon, Dean, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, UM.

The PCSRF will increase the capacity for crop research and allow scientists



A rendering of the Prairie Crops & Soil Research Facility.

to better integrate soils, crop, entomology and livestock research to make crop production in Manitoba more sustainable. Farmers in Manitoba will

benefit from research topics including agronomic and cropping systems for optimized performance and longer-term sustainability, weed management,

advanced crop protection, new cultivars and crops, profitability of nutrient strategies, and carbon benefits of crop production practices.

"MCA wishes to express our gratitude for the UM's continued commitment to the improvement of facilities and equipment that are so essential for advanced modern research and the training of highly qualified personnel," says Fred Greig, Chair of MCA. "We anticipate this expansion and modernization of research capacity at the UM will accelerate the growth and health of our industry by putting innovative solutions in the hands of our farmer members."

MCA values the partnership with the UM and are currently supporting 30 projects totaling approximately \$500,000 per annum. MCA will continue to work together with the UM to address research priorities and communicate research results to our members.

Hon. Warren Kaeding, PAg.
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Mixed margins expected for cattle and hogs

BY MARTHA ROBERTS,
 China's seemingly insatiable demand for feed has kept livestock production costs high throughout the rest of the world. Feed costs have most recently fallen somewhat but they'll continue to take a chunk of revenues from both cattle and hog producers over the next three months. However, profitability in the two red meat sectors is showing different outcomes. Margins are expected to be mixed for Canada's cattle and hog sectors as finishers and feedlots struggle with rising feed costs in the short term.

In February, we identified African Swine Fever, feed costs and growing global demand for red meats as the three dominant forces impacting profitability of the Canadian red meat sectors. They are still exerting dominance, with the added uncertainty of weather-related impacts on global feed crops in 2021.

Hog sector to benefit from elevated hog prices

Prices should continue to improve over the outlook period from our February outlook forecasts. The average annual prices for each class of cattle and hogs through 2021 remain higher than 2020 prices. While most of this year's prices are expected to also be higher than the five-year average,



Alberta fed and feeder cattle will remain lower as backgrounders and feedlots find themselves sandwiched between high feed

costs pushing up slaughter rates and packers buying cheaper cattle now for fall delivery.

Farrow-to-finish operators will continue to benefit from the strong rebound that started last fall. They have much to look forward to in the next three months including the upcoming barbecue season and the enhanced likelihood of reduced restrictions. One possible caution: lingering slowdowns in pork production can impact margins in eastern Canada.

A resurgence of ASF in China and elsewhere across Asia and Europe continues to drive global pork markets and the sharp rise in prices seen since February. It seems highly unlikely that China will be able to manage the virus for possibly another two to three years, prompting speculation that their imports of both pork and beef will remain elevated until an effective vaccine is available (Figure 1).

Demand is also strong in North America, where a growing pent-up demand, the

summer season and reopening of food services are fuelling better retail sales and prices. Production in both Canada and the U.S. is expected to remain strong throughout the outlook period.

China's pork imports were at an all-time high in March of this year and their pork production in Q1 is reported to have jumped 31.9% from a year earlier. While it's certain their demand is strong and consistent with the robust economic rebound of 8.4% projected in 2021 by the International Monetary Fund, that kind of growth in Chinese pork production and imports will, with little doubt, prove to be unsustainable for the rest of 2021. It may also be that they will even have dramatically slowed by the end of the outlook period. In the short term, pork imports may continue to be strong, but at some point, further Chinese imports will depend on their success (or lack thereof) in containing ASF and rebuilding the hog herd.

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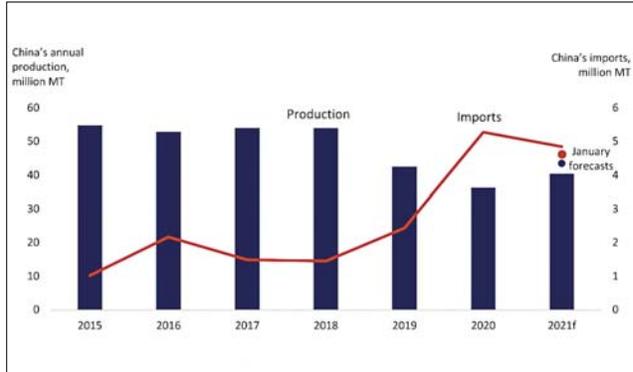
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LIVESTOCK PRICES	2021 YEAR-TO-DATE \$/CWT	2021 FORECAST \$/CWT	5-YEAR AVERAGE	RELATIVE TO 5-YEAR AVERAGE
Alberta fed steer	\$150	\$145	\$160	⬇️
Alberta 550 lb steer	\$230	\$220	\$240	⬇️
Alberta 650 lb steer	\$190	\$175	\$200	⬇️
Ontario fed steer	\$145	\$145	\$145	➡️
Ontario 550 lb steer	\$220	\$220	\$215	➡️
Ontario 650 lb steer	\$180	\$180	\$185	⬇️
Ontario market hog	\$90	\$95	\$90	➡️
Ontario feeder hog	\$140	\$145	\$100	➡️
Manitoba market hog	\$90	\$90	\$75	➡️
Manitoba feeder hog	\$150	\$130	\$125	➡️
between Shead	\$60	\$60	\$60	➡️

FEED COSTS	2021 YEAR-TO-DATE \$/TONE	2021 FORECAST \$/TONE	5-YEAR AVERAGE	RELATIVE TO 5-YEAR AVERAGE
Feed barley (ASB)	\$215	\$230	\$222	⬇️
Corn (CNS)	\$205	\$210	\$195	➡️

FEED RATIOS	2021 YEAR-TO-DATE	2021 FORECAST	5-YEAR AVERAGE	RELATIVE TO 5-YEAR AVERAGE
Cattle - barley ratio	21.9	20.2	25.6	⬇️
Cattle - corn ratio	20.0	18.4	29.3	⬇️
Hog - barley ratio	13.1	12.5	15.5	⬇️
Hog - corn ratio	12.4	12.1	16.2	⬇️

Arrows indicate a higher price ⬆️ moderately higher ➡️ neutral ⬆️ moderately lower ⬇️ or lower ⬇️



Cattle and hog prices continue to rise above 2020's prices. Sources: Statistics Canada, AAFC, USDA, CanFax, CME Futures, and FCC calculations.

In April, USDA forecasts stronger Chinese pork imports and weaker production than in January. Source: USDA.

Mixed margins expected for cattle and hogs

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Hog finishers and cattle feedlots strain with growing feed costs

The hog and cattle markets differ somewhat in their outlook because hog futures have been rising faster year-to-date while cattle futures have declined recently. The North American hog backlog was cleared before the cattle backlog and production was able to respond to increased Chinese demand due to the ASF resurgence. Cattle futures are expected to pick up from their recent declines and stay steady to slightly rising.

Cattle basis levels have improved in the last month to turn positive, as packers have become more aggressive. This implies strong demand from the sector as they continue working through the back-

logged slaughter numbers. If basis levels remain strong, the relatively weak margins we expect now could improve by the end of the outlook period.

Feed prices facing sustained pressure from economic recovery and weather

While feed prices are high now, they may face sustained pressures throughout the next three months. The summer is expected to see more driving, stronger fuel demand and more corn and soy used to support them, helping keep prices elevated. Without an improved forecast for moisture, given dwindling stocks and the strong and growing demand for corn, both North and South American production may not be enough in 2021 to meet that demand.



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All Canadian farmers take on debt— how do you manage yours?

Continued from Page B2

A new implement shed, while attractive, should be reviewed with prudence to determine what financial benefits, if any, come with its construction.

"If the implement shed is worth it and saves wear and tear on the equipment, there still has to be a cashflow consideration of how that's going to play out. When considering a combine purchase, the price of the shed should be included in the calculations."

Hoogendoorn says farmers restructure existing debt for many reasons, including changing life goals, new business opportunities or lower interest rates.

But she offers a word of caution about interest rates and suggests that even though a number may seem appealing, it must be carefully considered.

"Doing something for the sake of a low interest rate does not make sense in and of itself," she explains. "If you can't pay for it at 5%, don't do it at 2% unless you're willing to sell the same time everyone else is."

Simply covering interest payments has longer-term implications, as well. Notably, if a farmer's financial picture changed and a sale was forced, how would they truly feel about being in such a position?

In Southern Alberta, seed grower Rick Stamp knows debt is a part of farm life. He's been dealing with debt ever since he and his wife Marian began their operation 40 years ago. Today, their debt load is "very high, but not uncomfortably high."

Part of that debt stems from the family's recent infrastructure upgrades at their

seed facility, retail and a string of land acquisitions.

One way they manage debt has been to lock in low interest rates instead of paying rent every year. Still, the land must be profitable, and it comes down to knowing costs of production and staying up on markets to help determine cash flow.

"With strong commodity prices, it's easy to get caught up in saying, 'things are going to be great, prices will go up,'" he says. "You have to be very realistic about what you're getting into and not over-project how things will be."

In Stamp's geographic area—a region known for hailstorms—being hailed out is a perennial concern and is always on his mind. The weather event keeps him humble to keep his debt servicing conservative.

Annually, Stamp spends a full week locked in a room with his financial team, reviewing every single line item related to the farm. That strategy week clearly outlines plans for the farm's future.

Without conversations with the trusted inner circle of farm advisors, financial planners and family members, Stamp suggests he might not be where he is today.

"You need people to tell you the truth 100%. We have it analyzed properly, so we're not making feel-good decisions," he says, adding that, as a farmer, if you can't say why you are taking on the debt—either to produce more or be more efficient—you shouldn't take it on. Period.

His conservative approach to farm debt means that after four decades, he can rou-

tinely leverage assets to expand and grow the farm for his sons, making him happy the debt is now working for him.

Debt is a fact of doing business in farming, but how the debt is managed, including interest rates, differs for every

operation. Experts advise against increasing debt for the sake of low interest rates or just covering interest payments. Lock in low interest rates when possible, and overall, dedicate time every year to a full review of the farm's financial picture.

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A photo of the Ceres Global site at Northgate, Sask as it exists today.

Ceres Global announces plans for new canola crushing plant near Oxbow

Ceres Global Ag Corp announced plans last week to build a \$350 million integrated canola processing facility in Northgate, Saskatchewan, south of Oxbow to help meet growing global demand for canola products.

The state-of-the-art facility will have capacity to process 1.1 million metric tons of canola and refine over 500 thousand metric tons of canola oil, for both food and fuel, annually.

"This is an exciting time for Ceres Global as we position ourselves to take advantage of the unprecedented demand for oilseed crush in North America," said Robert Day, President and Chief Executive Officer at Ceres.

"While there are multiple drivers contributing to this demand, the most important is the movement towards green energy and the need for vegetable oil as feedstock for the production of renewable diesel. We have been analyzing canola crush at Northgate for several years as its location along the Canada-U.S. border is ideally located to originate canola seed from our farmer partners, and with a direct connection to BNSF Railway, it provides the most efficient access to the U.S. market and U.S. ports. Our Northgate facility includes a 2.7 million bushel shuttle loading grain elevator and two 120-car loop tracks, providing 'construction-ready' infrastructure and shortening the timeline to complete this project."

The facility is expected to be operational by summer 2024 and is expected to result in the creation of over 50 full time jobs in Saskatchewan, which is the largest canola producing province in Canada.

Premier Scott Moe, Premier of Saskatchewan said "Adding value to agriculture products right here in Saskatchewan will help us reach the goals set out in our Growth Plan. We welcome Ceres Global's investment in Northgate to support and provide southeast Saskatchewan growers with a unique and valuable option for

marketing their canola. With its direct connection to the BNSF railroad, Ceres can offer Saskatchewan growers access to a variety of markets in the United States."

Jim Titsworth, Director of Agricultural Development from BNSF Railway said: "Demand for renewable diesel feedstocks is rapidly growing. The BNSF network is ideally suited to supply the production, processing and distribution of these feedstocks. A crush plant at Northgate, SK will provide an important source of canola oil to meet the growing demand. Northgate has a unique location, both in Canada's canola growing region and with direct rail access to the major renewable diesel and food processing markets via BNSF's network. This allows Ceres-produced canola oil to have an advantage in this rapidly growing marketplace. That same network also results in advantaged animal feed market access for canola meal. BNSF is excited to add this facility to its growing customer investments in the renewable diesel market."

Estevan Mayor Roy Ludwig added: "The on-going partnership with Ceres has been great for the community of Estevan and surrounding Rural Municipalities. As Estevan's Canola Crush facility, we are excited that Northgate will support families for years to come with added jobs and grain delivered to a premium market."

"With this investment by Ceres, our capacity for value-added production within our province will be further increased, producing more high-quality canola oil and meal for export to current and new markets around the world," Trade and Export Development Minister Jeremy Harrison said. "This is good news for jobs and our economy in Saskatchewan, and this also supports our Growth Plan goal to increase agri-food exports to \$20 billion in the years ahead."

"Today's announcement by Ceres is an important step forward in growing our agriculture sector and ensur-

ing our producers are able to keep more value from the commodities they produce," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "We are excited that Ceres has decided to locate their facility in Saskatchewan, joining the growing list of companies who recognize our industry for the high-quality and reliability that we are known for around the world."

Goals in Saskatchewan's Growth Plan for 2030 include crushing 75 per cent of the canola produced in the province, growing Saskatchewan's agri-food exports to CDN \$20 billion, increasing agriculture value-added revenue to \$10 billion, increasing the value of exports by 50 per cent, and growing private capital investment in Saskatchewan to \$16 billion annually.

Ceres Global, along with shareholders, VN Capital Management, Highbridge Capital Management and Whitebox Advisors, are engaged in discussions with other interested financial and industry players to fund the project.

Ceres Global is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and together with its affiliated companies, operates 13 locations across Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Minnesota. These facilities have an aggregate grain and oilseed storage capacity of approximately 32 million bushels.

Ceres Global has a 50% interest in Savage Riverport, LLC (a joint venture with Consolidated Grain and Barge Co.), a 50% interest in Farmers Grain, LLC (a joint venture with Farmer's Cooperative Grain and Seed Association), a 50% in Gateway Energy Terminal (an unincorporated joint venture with Steel Reef Infrastructure Corp.), a 25% interest in Stewart Southern Railway Inc. (a short-line railway located in southeast Saskatchewan with a range of 130 kilometers), and a 17% interest in Canterra Seed Holdings Ltd.

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Seeding and camping and grandkids—it's a good life

The countdown is on and we can see the end in sight—of seeding that is. If it hadn't been for the rain, we would have been done. Of course no farmer in his or her right mind would turn down rain in a very dry year just to be able to say they're done. When I heard those first raindrops fall the other morning (on my camper roof), I was elated. And not just for the rain that was falling, but at the thought of actually eating at the kitchen table instead of on the tailgate of a truck!

On the first day back in the field and in the twins' direct (few words) manner, they told me Grandpa was seeding on the 'long quarter' though they had just gotten off the school bus and I wasn't sure exactly how they knew or if they were accurate. But of course they were and another meal in the field was quickly devoured so hubby could carry on. "I'll be home by eight," he says.

Back at the farmyard, I stop by the greenhouse where I can see one of the boys watering flowers. "Wanna see my wheat, Grandma?" he asks as he shows me his container of four-inch high blades of wheat. "And here's my field peas, and the canola is in this one," he continues. "It's not up yet," he says. I concur as I inspect the little four-inch container of black dirt.

Later, and only because we have finally had some rain, the farm grandkids and I attempt to get a fire going. It's kind of exciting that, after a very dry spring and no campfires out by Grandma and Grandpa's camper near the shop, we can now start a fire. Of course the wood is wet and that's a story in itself, but finally, with a few back issues of the World-Spectator (sorry, Kevin), our fire is up and running and it's time for the marshmallows. I think the twins each roast one before their dad pulls up and lifts out a five-gallon pail of fertilizer and sets it on the ground.

Not a word is spoken between father and sons, but suddenly, after enjoying the company of the grandkids around the fire, they are gone. Poof! Just gone. What the heck, I ask myself and then I hear the faint sound of some rattling little tires—here comes one boy behind the fertilizer spreader, the other behind the wheelbarrow. At least we know what takes precedence in their mind and it isn't Grandma or even marshmallow roasting. Oh well, the lawn has now been fertilized—let's hope they didn't overdo it!

The Lighter Side of Life...
DOWN ON THE FARM

by donna beutler
FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST
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By the time the lawn is fertilized, it's nearly 9:30 and I can hear the call from the house: "Boys, it's time for bed," as they have one last two-minute sit-down by the fire and talk about what they will do after school the next day. Needless to say, whatever it is they have planned, it will be something done outdoors.

At 10 pm, still planted by the dying embers of the fire, I see truck lights come across the field and up to the shop. "It's past 8 o'clock," I say to him. He frowns but there's no response. I doubt he's even remembered he said he'd be back in the yard by 8. And really it doesn't much matter lol. I head into the camper, chilled to the bone, ready to make a direct line to my bed. He, on the other hand, decides (after he showers) that he might as well pre-cook breakfast (ewwww) so he can get an earlier start in the morning (as if 5:30 isn't early enough). Whatever, dear, I think as I tap the thermostat up a couple of degrees and climb into bed.

The most wonderful thing about camping at the farm is seeing the grandkids of course. The town grandkids sometimes join the farm grandkids for some good ol' outdoor fun and the odd trek through the camper door to grab a snack or two. Gramps and I can barely keep the snack supply replenished! I bought chocolate bars a couple of weeks ago, 22 of them to be exact because they were on special, thinking they would last for six weeks. I obviously misjudged because they didn't make the six-day mark!

Time at the farm (for me) is not just about meal-making or grass-cutting (which I love to do), but also being able to play some board games with the kids. My granddaughter (12) and I were in the camper playing 'hangman' the other day, just relaxing and enjoying the day when we both stopped at the same time and listened intently. "Did you hear something?" I asked her. There were no men and no boys around the yard, just her and I in the camper and her mom, presumably in the house. We continued playing and again, there's this sound. It almost sounded like someone screaming. "What is that?" I asked. "Oh, don't worry," she said, "It's probably just mom." I jump up ready to go to my daughter-in-law's aid when my granddaughter says, "It's just Joe, Grandma. He'll be attacking mom. Happens all the time." And so, relieved to know 'Mom' is okay (I guess), we carry on with our game. Who would think gathering the eggs would leave you beaten and bruised. That's one crazy rooster, that Joe!

A couple of nights ago, one of the twins was very proud of the pail full of slough grass he brought to show me. The intense deep green colour and textures were impressive. "Wow," I said to him. "Where did you get this?" "The dugout," he answers. As my mind is telling me not to overreact, my mouth is saying, "What dugout? Where? When were you at the dugout? You went to the dugout alone?!" I can't tell you how relieved I was to hear him say, "No, I wasn't alone," before I realized exactly what he was going to say: "My brother was with me." I try to appear calm and relaxed as I suggest perhaps having an adult along to the dugout is a good idea in the future.

It's a good life, this farm life, I'd say. It would have been better this year had I not marketed all my canola away before the price went up but hey, life is good and I for one try to take joy in every moment. I have even learned to relax and put my feet up a lot more than I ever did when I actually lived on the farm and you know, it's okay to do that now and then. My guy, of course, might not agree, at least at this time of year, but here's hoping that all our farmer friends get a chance (after a busy season) to do just that—put your feet up and enjoy some relaxing moments with family and friends!

Crop report: 86 per cent of Sask crop seeded

Even with the prolonged rain experienced across the province over the past week, producers were still able to seed throughout all regions. Eighty-six per cent of the crop was seeded in Saskatchewan as of May 24, which is ahead of the five-year average (2016-2020) of 77 per cent for this time of year. Recent rains will greatly improve crop germination and emergence in many parts of the province that were delayed due to dry conditions.

The southwest region is the farthest along with 91 per cent of the crop seeded. Eighty-nine per cent has been seeded in the west-central, 87 per cent seeded in the northwest, 86 per cent seeded in the southeast, 85 per cent seeded in the northeast and lastly, 77 per cent seeded in the east-central region of the province.

Steady rain was experienced across the province, especially in the south, which saw some very high rainfalls. The Limerick area received the most with 116 mm. The Indian Head area received 108 mm and the Odessa area received 100 mm. The rain will delay seeding for some producers where soils are slow to drain but it is still very welcome to help crop and pasture growth.

Cool, cloudy days and

rain showers have helped improve moisture conditions in many parts of the province. Cropland topsoil moisture is rated as six per cent surplus, 80 per cent adequate, 11 per cent short and three per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as four per cent surplus, 66 per cent adequate, 26 per cent short and four per cent very short. Pasture conditions are rated as zero per cent excellent, 17 per cent good, 39 per cent fair, 34 per cent poor and 10 per cent very poor.

Earlier seeded crops have started to show good emergence, but cool night time temperatures have slowed growth in some areas. In

general, crops are normal in development stages for this time of year, but some crops are behind due to an unusually cool spring and limited moisture. Most of the crop damage this week was due to strong winds, light frosts, limited moisture and flea beetles.

In Southeast Saskatchewan, there were large amounts of rain reported in the region, which slowed seeding progress slightly, but 86 per cent of the crop has now been seeded. This is up from 79 per cent last week and just slightly ahead of the five-year average (2016-2020) for this time of year of 81 per cent. Germination of earlier seeded crops has been slow due to

cool temperatures and poor moisture conditions but the recent rainfall should allow crops to develop quickly.

The recent rainfall has improved the topsoil moisture levels across the region. Cropland topsoil moisture is rated as 17 per cent surplus, 70 per cent adequate, 10 per cent short and three per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as eight per cent surplus, 62 per cent adequate, 24 per cent short and six per cent very short. Pasture conditions are rated as zero

per cent excellent, 14 per cent good, 42 per cent fair, 40 per cent poor and four per cent very poor.

Even with the delayed emergence and growth from the dry soil conditions most of the crops are normal in their developmental stage for this time of year. Most areas reported minimal crop damage, but the majority of crop damage that did occur this week was due to frost, limited moisture and flea beetles. Some areas saw localized flooding; rainfall runoff will hopefully improve the

water levels in dugouts in the region.

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Samantha Sikora took this photo of Norenda Farms filling their tanks while seeding canola near K2 Mine at Esterhazy. The photo was submitted as part of the World-Spectator's spring seeding photo contest.

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Integrate data to drive profitability

BY PETER GREDIG, AGRISUCCESS

With more avenues for data generation on the horizon, finding a way to pull it all together and derive value from it is more important than ever. GPS technology has been the driving force for data generation in field crops, but with the internet of things, robotics and connected sensors, all sectors of agriculture are challenged to find ways to integrate and optimize all the data available to them.

Farmers have been collecting data in a serious way since the mid-'90s when yield monitors first appeared and began collecting yield and grain moisture data every two seconds as the combine moved across the field. Today, farmers are able to collect data from many sources including planters and seeders, sprayers, plant health imagery from satellites and drones, weather data from service providers and connected weather stations, connected soil and crop canopy sensors, equipment performance data, and more.

Making data-driven decisions

The dream solution would be software or platforms that allow you to dump all available data into a system that will churn it all into solutions and better management decisions.

Jordan Wallace is the owner of GPS Ontario and has been involved with GPS hardware and data management software for over 20 years. "For grain growers the goal has always been to get to the point where we are making data-driven management decisions," he says. "The holy grail of data management is to track all cost of production elements across the entire operation, create management zones, and use variable-rate technology wherever possible and profitable." In many cases, Wallace sees data being loaded into platforms that aren't considering the cost of production and financial analysis.

"There is software and services that make it very easy to import data from equipment and other sources, but the financial aspect is missing," he says. Wallace adds that there are also options that allow for bringing in crop production costs and profitability calculations. "But they're

more complex and require more effort from the farmer to keep updating the numbers and being diligent to make edits if plans change through the growing season. It's great to have all the data in one place, but what decisions are enabled by the data, and is it driven by profitability?"

Wallace sees potential for agronomic and financial data to go beyond simple treatments to where producers can make more impactful changes to their overall production practices. "We made a switch to strip tillage on our own farm five years ago because we had gathered all the data to show it would be a more profitable alternative."

Quality is key

Leanne Freitag is a digital integration specialist with Bayer Crop Science based in Ontario. Her job is to help farmers make use of their data. "The first thing I would say is don't let equipment be a limiting factor if you are trying to pull all your data into one platform. There are solutions to make equipment compatible and bring your data together even if you are using different brands or the equipment is more than a few years old."

Freitag says that getting value out of data integration is less about pulling reams of data from a large number of sources, it's more about being diligent that the data you are generating and importing into your system is of good quality and means something to you. For some producers, it means assessing yield at the end of the season to make hybrid and variety decisions for next year. They can also analyze yield results to see what management practices worked or didn't work so they can fine-tune things for next year. Others may want to look at layering more data and incorporating variable planting rates and fertility.

"Farming is a team sport and integrated data platforms allow everyone involved to be able to see what's happening in one field or all fields. Having all the field informa-



tion in one spot makes it easy to create a report card at the end of the season. Digital data does not replace human knowledge and expertise, it complements your management skills. As we move to more sensor-driven data, we will be able to address solvable problems in real time rather than just using this year's data to make decisions for next year," Freitag says.

Set realistic objectives

Both experts agree that blindly dumping data into an integration platform is not going to magically spit out solutions. It's up to the user to direct what data is included and there should be defined objectives. Is the goal to simply do a better job on seed selection or placement, fertility or fungicide applications or is it about a complete overhaul of the farm's production practices?

There are many options available to help you aggregate your data and pull more meaningful conclusions from all the numbers. Equipment companies, seed and crop protection companies, farm management companies, after-market precision ag hardware companies and independent software developers all have products in this space. Some are free, some require a subscription. Some are very simple and straightforward; some are more complex and require more effort and input from the user.

The most important first steps in the data integration process are to make sure your data is of good quality and select the platform that works best for you.

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Balancing tax rules with corporate farm structure

BY MATT MCINTOSH

Renting out land held under a corporation brings a higher tax rate once the rental income exceeds \$50,000—and it's something tax experts suggest landowners keep an eye on.

The \$50,000 threshold on tax rental income from land held inside farm corporations came into effect several years ago and, for tax purposes, should be considered the same as dividends and other forms of passive income.

According to Julien Grenier, an accountant and partner with Winnipeg-based Talbot and Associates, land rent is currently taxed at a passive rate in the corporation—50% up front, followed by a 30% corporate tax refund when dividends are paid to shareholders. Personal income tax is then paid on the dividend in an individual's personal return.

Why the higher rate?

The purpose of higher corporate rates, says Grenier, is to prevent investment-type income from accumulating inside a corporation. Land rent, like interest, falls into this category. The \$50,000 dollar rule is designed to give the corporate renter a reasonable initial break from higher rates. Once income creeps above that dollar amount, however, the small business deduction starts to erode. At \$150,000, the deduction no longer exists.



"It's something farmers have to watch for. Your tax rate is going to be 27% versus 9%," says Grenier in reference to Manitoba's tax rates, though he notes most provinces are within the same general range – nine to 13.2% on the low end, and 23 to 31% on the high.

"The amount of passive income is what can create a grind to your small business deduction, ultimately affecting the amount of tax you pay on your active income."

Accumulated corporate capital

A second grind can hit farmers when their farm corpo-

ration accumulates over \$10 million in capital. Though a large number, high land values and expensive equipment can quickly add up. Additionally, debt does not count as a deduction against corporate capital.

This reality has many looking for different ways of structuring their farm corporations – dividing farms and machinery among family members, for example. While possible, Grenier says the wider risks of doing so need to be carefully considered, including how the alternative structure would look to an auditor.

Developing a different income strategy is another option. Taking a more involved approach through joint ventures and other business arrangements is, in Grenier's experience, increasingly common.

Accelerating succession planning is also a possibility. Though if chosen, the exiting generation needs to put more emphasis on what their retirement should look like and how it compares to their children's ideas, rather than taxes.

Bottom line

Once considered a viable retirement revenue, land rental income now comes with tax laws that impact tax rates. Experts advise farmers be mindful of the tax rate and consider other options that may be more viable for retirement income.

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Jean Decorby took this photo of Spy Hill's JC Farms wrapping up 2021 seeding. The photo was taken as part of the World-Spectator's spring seeding photo contest.

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