

AUGUST 2025



Ashley Bocek took this photo of a wheat field south of Moosomin.

Producers looking at slightly later harvest due to cooler than normal year

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A cooler than usual summer means that harvest could be a bit later this year.

Some experts have noted that the summer of 2025 is the coolest in five years. In 2021, Saskatoon had 32 days where temperatures topped the 30°C mark and Regina had 33 days where the mercury surpassed 30°C. This year, Saskatoon had six days of 30°C or higher and Regina saw nine.

It has been a cooler and wetter than normal summer in Saskatchewan. This summer also saw an abundance of wildfire smoke, which had its pros and cons for plant development.

"That's the idea—trees, plants, they consume carbon," said Kevin Wilson who farms just south of Wawota. "There's been a lot of talk that it's beneficial for the crops. We'll wait and see."

Despite getting his crop in the ground in early May, Wilson isn't anticipating an early start to harvest on his land.

"It varies; there's some crops that are coming in quick," he said. "If the weather turns around, if we could get some heat, it depends whether guys have desiccated or not, or whether they're waiting for that. Our little wheat patch here, we desiccated it so it's dead ripe, and our barley is ready to be swathed and go down, too. We had that seeded on the 6th of May, so it's been that type of a year

where the humidity, the cool, and the dampness allowed the crops to continue to keep growing and not ripen really fast."

In the Rocanville area, Rylar Hutchinson believes there might be a chance that he gets in the field before the calendar flips over from August.

"I haven't knocked anything down, but I did spray my wheat yesterday (August 19), so give it seven to 10 days, and I'll be looking at trying some of my wheat—weather pending," he said. "It could be close to the last weekend of August before I try."

As with many producers, Hutchinson's canola crop will remain standing for a few more weeks.

Continued on page 3 ESR

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Producers looking at slightly later harvest due to cooler than normal year

Continued from front

"Canola is a bit out yet to spray, then it's a good two weeks of waiting," he said. "There's a break in the wheat and canola this year since we had that three-inch rain at the start of May, and post ones seeding for a good week and half."

In the Gerald area, Kevin Hruska is eyeing the first weekend in September, noting this year's harvest will be "a little bit delayed."

"I don't think we'll go until September 5, 6, or 7, somewhere in there," he said. "We're not even pre-harvesting yet, we're delaying for a few days. We've been having really showery, wet weather. We're not flooding or anything like that, but we're getting a couple of tenths here and there, and it's really delaying things, it's slowing things down."

Despite the wet and cool weather, Hruska is pleased with what he's seeing in the fields.

"The canola is still growing and filling," he said. "We've got quite a bit of rain, and the canola really turned around. The wheat crops look excellent and so do the canola crops. Unless we get some kind of surprise, we have really good crops."

Near Moosomin, there are some producers already beginning harvest with a head-start on peas.

"There are a few guys started around here on some barley and peas, and I think as a general first consensus, things are looking pretty decent," said Moosomin-area producer Trevor Green. "I have a neighbor doing some peas, and they seem to be hauling a lot of them off the field, so they must be doing good."

Green anticipates starting harvest operations before the end of August.

"I would imagine we'll be into barley by next week," he said. "I have some green feed we're going to try and knock down tomorrow and get wrapped up before we get started and hopefully get that done. I would say probably by next week we'll be in the barley for sure."

While what's in the field is looking good, Green says what it's selling for is another story.

"When you start seeing \$7 (per bushel) wheat, it's pretty tough to make a go of \$7 wheat," Green said. Another example is canola being in the \$13 per bushel range—which was not bad 10 or 15 years ago, but with the rising costs of land, inputs, and equipment, when market prices are not following suit, it's hard for producers.

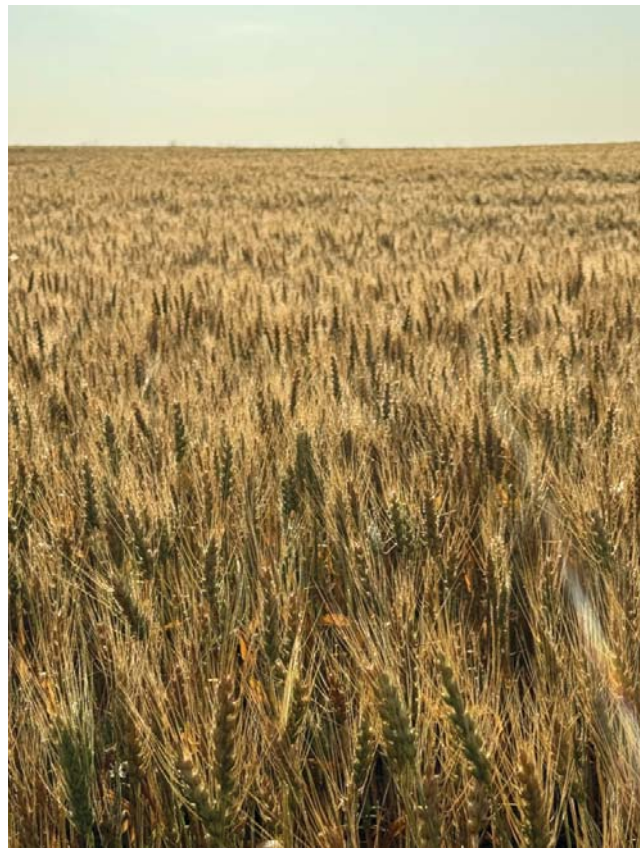
"When we saw that \$20 canola, that just put the price of all the combines up, the air seeders up, the fertilizer up, and then all that quantity prices drop back down, and all that stuff stayed up," Green said. "Every time it does that cycle, everything goes up but the farmers' margin!"

Conversely, on the cattle side, the recent rains have been a boon for pastures.

"I've heard of a little bit of second-cut hay getting taken off," Green said. "We're grazing annuals right now—we've taken our cows off of the pasture and we're grazing annuals now—so they're in nice, lush green stuff three quarters of the way up their back, so they're pretty happy!"

Insects also seem to have been mild this growing season with a very light presence of flea beetles overall and some late-season grasshoppers, which Green believes won't amount to much damage at this point.

"They'll run out of steam here pretty soon," he said. "When everything turns brown, they'll start going away."



Ashley Bocek took this photo of a wheat field south of Moosomin.

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The 118-year-old barn being restored by Little Rainbow Ranch near Moosomin.

New lease on life for 118-year-old barn



BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

There's a barn at the Little Rainbow Ranch near Moosomin that's close to a milestone birthday, and it's starting to show its age. Built in 1907—almost 120 years ago—Perry Rasmuson's barn received an upgrade this summer, including the replacement of some beams.

"It had been lifted in the '80s and a new foundation put on it, but the tin was getting tired," Rasmuson explained. "We had a couple of big wind storms the last few years, and the tin was starting to come off."

Over the course of around 10 days, Rasmuson and a few other family members stripped

the tin, replaced rotten wood, and strapped the 118-year-old landmark in preparation for new tin to be installed.

"I've got a guy hired that's going to do the tin work," he said.

After all those decades of protecting shelter for livestock, Rasmuson says the barn remains a vital part of his mixed cattle and grain operation to this day.

"Half of it's a horse barn, and the other half we use for calving, still," he said. "We lifted up one wall and rebuilt the wall that was starting to give away on some of the plates that were starting to rot. It's just sitting there strapped, we're probably going to try and get it tinned next

week or the week after, so hopefully everything goes on as planned."

It's been a decent growing season on Rasmuson's land, with the cooler than usual summer pushing harvest back a little bit.

"Some things are maybe a little bit behind where they would normally be, but we've been really fortunate with the amount of rain we've had; just about right, actually," he said. "We could have maybe

had it a wee bit sooner, but you don't dare complain when there's other people around the province that are less fortunate."

With the recent wild weather that plowed through the area last

week, one can't help but pause to reflect on how many storms the barn has endured over the years.

"There wouldn't be too many buildings around that could tell its stories, I imagine," Rasmuson said.

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Wilsons hosting 10th annual Old Tyme Harvest

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

In what's become a local tradition, the Wilson Old Tyme Harvest south of Wawota will mark a solid decade on Saturday, August 30.

"We've attended some of the threshing steam shows in other areas, other museums have them," explained Kevin Wilson. "We just decided about 10 years ago that it was time we tried having a little venue of our own. Every year it grows, it gets bigger and bigger every year."

The event is a chance to see some of the earliest farm machinery in the area proving its worth. Some of the equipment is in excess of a century old, including a wooden threshing machine dating back to 1919. Over the years, the Wilsons have seen a wide range of age groups enjoying the event, some who have experience using the older equipment and those who have never seen the equipment outside of a museum.

"A lot of people reminisce about it, it's kind of a blast from the past," Wilson said. "And for the younger generation that has no idea of how the pioneers used to farm, it's a good education."

Every year, the Wilson family balances holding the event with their own operation. This can be tricky some years, depending on what the crop conditions are like as the busy harvest season approaches.

"There's museums and established venues around the countryside where they continue to have these," Wilson said of the special demonstration day. "What we're doing is our own personal venue. Of course, it's family-operated, and we've been working on some of this stuff al-

ready for a month. Now it's 'go time' here, and we continue to work on it. With this old stuff, you never truly do get everything done prior to the day because it's just such a monumental task!"

The Old Tyme Harvest kicks off with a tractor parade at 10 am where people can see firsthand some of the equipment that helped break the land—or at least make things easier on many farms.

"We parade a few of our own tractors, we try to put people on them that have that skill," Wilson explained. "It's a smaller parade where we drive some of them, and people actually get to see them running versus on static display."

Following the tractor parade is the antique combining demonstration slated for 11 am with threshing happening a little later at 2 pm.

"We're featuring our combines this year," Wilson said. "We got quite an array of combines, but we also want to go right from field to fork, so we'll thresh the wheat, clean it, crush it, mill it, render it into a dough. We've got an old wood cookstove set up in a bakery here, and the idea is to bake a rendition of buns or bread that day and the public can sample it, too."

The threshing will also feature people familiar with safely operating the machinery to illustrate how much work truly went into processing the cut wheat.

"The threshing machines, we've got three of them," Wilson said. "We run them, we pitch the sheaves into them, and we have a certain amount of the public help out with that as well. There's an inherent danger to it too, right? There's big old flat belts driving these machines and everything is



The threshing at last year's Wilson Old Tyme Harvest.

open. There's a lot of caution and care that you have to take."

New this year will be a restored pioneer house, which will be an interesting addition to the farm's collection.

"It was just a small wood structure building, it was never a house, but we've turned it into a house," Wilson explained. "It's been all re-sided with the old siding, old windows, and door in it, and a little veranda on it. It's all painted up and the inside may be a little bit more modern than we would have liked, but we were utilizing materials that we had on-hand here to keep it a reasonable budget."

Inside the new addition are some local treasures of historic and sentimental importance.

"There's some old furniture in it, some old displays, and I've got my cousin's World War II uniform on display," Wilson said. "The beauty of it is, there's a cot in there and if anybody wants to spend the night, we've slept in it a few times. You're quite able to do that, too."

The pioneer house is part of the growing line of outbuildings that the Wilsons encourage visitors to check out.

"We've got a little bakery here set up now, and an old British American Oil and Gas shed

amongst our other buildings, too," Wilson said. "That part of it's growing. We want to set up a blacksmith mechanic shop here next year, so that will be an addition."

Depending on weather and harvest conditions, the Wilsons usually see around 100 people at their event each year.

"It's the 10th anniversary, we're expecting pretty good attendance this year, maybe a little bit above average," Wilson said.

The Wilson farm is nine miles south of Wawota on the 603 grid, and lunch will be provided for a modest fee by the United Church Group.

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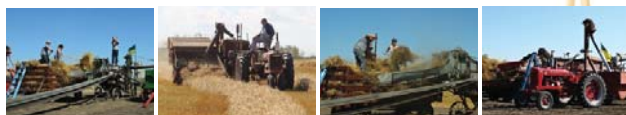
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Canada's agri-food sector is being used as collateral in unrelated industrial policy fights

China's announcement this week of a 75.8% tariff on Canadian canola seed, effective Thursday, is not an isolated policy shift—it's the latest escalation in a trade conflict that Ottawa itself helped set in motion.

Earlier this year, on March 20, Beijing imposed 100% tariffs on Canadian canola oil, canola meal, and peas, along with an additional 25% on lobster and pork. These measures were already weighing on our agri-food exports.

The catalyst for this latest blow came in September 2024, when the federal government moved to impose 100% duties on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), aligning itself with Washington's protectionist stance to safeguard the North American EV market. Days later, China launched an anti-dumping investigation into Canadian canola, culminating in this preliminary 75.8% duty—collected as a deposit—while a final ruling is still pending.

Let's be clear: There is no dumping of Canadian canola into China. Dumping implies selling at prices below production costs or below those in the home or other export markets, typically to capture market share unfairly. Canada's canola market is highly transparent and globally competitive—these allegations are without merit. What China is doing is strategic—they know canola's economic and symbolic weight in Canada.

The very name "canola" comes from "Canada Oil," a 1970s innovation that transformed rapeseed into a high-value, versatile oilseed crop. It is both an economic powerhouse—worth \$43 billion annually—and an emblem



Sylvain Charlebois

of Canadian agricultural ingenuity. By targeting canola, Beijing isn't just disrupting trade—it's striking at the heart of Canada's agri-food brand.

The timing is no accident. With harvest just weeks away, farmers have little capacity to pivot to alternative buyers. Australia may pick up some of China's demand, but it cannot replace Canada's supply capacity. This means the immediate economic pain—falling prices, reduced revenues, and likely losses—will be felt disproportionately by Canadian farmers. What might have been a break-even year is now a probable deficit for many producers.

The backdrop to all of this is Ottawa's high-stakes bet on the EV sector. Despite nearly \$50 billion in combined federal and provincial investments, Canada's EV industry is faltering. Sales are dropping, mandates are clashing with market realities, and major projects are delayed or shelved. Without a significant acceleration in charging infrastructure, policy recalibration, and restored in-

vestor confidence, the sector risks collapse.

The federal government's trade stance is effectively protecting a fragile EV industry at the expense of a robust and profitable canola sector. One is speculative and policy-driven, the other is market-proven and globally competitive. The policy choice here should be obvious: Canada must either adjust its EV tariff position toward China or carve out exemptions to protect agricultural exports. Beijing has made its expectations clear.

This latest dispute is part of a broader pattern of trade isolation. In the past year alone, three major economies—China, India, and the United States—have imposed or escalated measures against Canada's agri-food sector. India has maintained tariffs on lentils and other pulses since mid-2024, the U.S. continues to levy higher duties on softwood lumber, steel, aluminum, and certain agricultural products, and CUSMA disputes are adding non-tariff friction.

The lesson is simple: Canada is more geopolitically isolated today than at any point in recent memory. Our agri-food sector is being used as collateral in unrelated industrial policy fights. Unless the federal government recalibrates its trade strategy, Canadian farmers will keep paying the price for political decisions made far from their fields.

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois is Director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University, co-host of The Food Professor Podcast and Visiting Scholar at McGill University.

Crop report: Harvest progress slow due to scattered rain, thunderstorms, humidity

Harvest progress was slow last week due to scattered rain showers and thunderstorms. Humid mornings across the province made for short harvest days and poor desiccation weather. Farmers are looking forward to higher temperatures this week to speed up crop maturity.

The provincial harvest progress total last week was three per cent, which is behind our five and 10 year averages. The combination of rainfall, humidity and low temperatures delayed crop development and harvest progress. The southwest continues to lead in harvest progress, sitting at eight per cent harvest completed. This is followed by the southeast at four per cent and east central at two per cent. The west-central, northeast and northwest parts of the province all sit at one per cent harvest complete.

Harvest progress advanced for all crops over

the past week. Provincially, winter wheat leads harvest progress at 46 per cent followed by fall rye at 44 per cent and triticale at 34 per cent. Field peas and lentils lead harvest for spring-seeded crops with 12 per cent of lentils and 17 per cent of peas combined. For cereals, barley is leading harvest with eight per cent harvested followed by durum at five per cent, oats at two per cent and spring wheat at one per cent. For oilseeds the only crop started is canola and it sits at one per cent combined.

Rain fell across most of the province last week. The highest rainfall recorded fell in the Yorkton area with 95 mm, followed by the Swan Plain area with 78 mm and the Calder area at 76 mm.

Rain showers across most crop districts increased topsoil moisture levels last week. Provincial cropland topsoil moisture is 80 per cent adequate, 10

per cent short and two per cent very short with eight per cent reporting surplus moisture. Hayland topsoil moisture is 73 per cent adequate, 19 per cent short, three per cent very short and five per cent reporting a surplus. Pasture topsoil moisture is 67 per cent adequate, 24 per cent short, three per cent very short and six per cent reporting a surplus.

Crop reporters were asked to report on livestock water supplies and quality this week. Provincially, 67 per cent of reporters are saying there are no water shortages occurring or anticipated to occur for livestock producers. Reports indicated 17 per cent have moderate shortages, 14 per cent are reporting shortages to happen in the next one to two months and two per cent have severe shortages. Most producers are currently not concerned about water quality. Producers can visit their local regional office

to have the quality of their livestock water sources tested.

Crop damage over the past week was mainly due to bertha armyworms with damage and spraying happening mainly in the central and north parts of the

province. Grasshopper presence is starting to be noted across the province. Crop lodging, due to wind damage, was reported across the province along with hail damage in isolated areas. There was localized flooding reported

in the southern part of the province due to heavy and fast rainfall last week.

Harvest is a very busy and stressful time for producers and they are reminded to take safety precautions in their work this fall.

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GIFS at USask receives \$1.6 million investment from PrairiesCan

The Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS) at the University of Saskatchewan has received a \$1.6 million investment from PrairiesCan to support a genomic selection-based accelerated breeding program.

The funding was part of a \$4.6 million announcement to support multiple initiatives within Saskatchewan's agriculture sector. The announcement was made by the Honourable Eleanor Olszewski, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan), during a visit to GIFS on Tuesday.

"PrairiesCan's latest investment builds on its earlier investment into GIFS, strengthening our outcomes-driven, team-based model. By integrating cutting-edge platforms—high-throughput genotyping, engineering biology and data analytics—we deliver real-world impact through market-facing programs like our FCC Accelerated Breeding Program and Biomanufacturing," said Dr. Steven Webb (PhD), GIFS CEO.

"Our unique model—unmatched in Canada and uncommon globally—closes a critical innovation gap, reducing risk and accelerating the path from discovery to market for partners."

"The Global Institute for Food Security at the University of Saskatchewan is committed to providing innovative so-



lutions to feed the world's growing population," said USask Vice-President of Research Dr. Baljit Singh

(PhD). "By building a robust accelerated breeding program, we aim to further enhance the inroads

we've made in this growing field. These enhancements would not be possible without the continued

support of PrairiesCan, and we thank them for their support and dedication to advancing and elevating the positive impact for Canada's agri-food sector."

GIFS is developing a genomic selection-based accelerated breeding program that will extend advanced breeding capabilities to companies and breeding organizations,

bringing higher-yielding and higher-quality livestock, pulses, and other crops to market quicker. This investment builds on previous support to GIFS, including \$2.5 million in 2022 which helped build Canada's only biomanufacturing facility advancing sustainable agriculture and innovative food ingredients.



During a visit to GIFS the Honourable Eleanor Olszewski, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, announced investments into multiple projects within Saskatchewan's agriculture sector.

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FCC extends trade disruption support to canola producers

In light of continued global trade disruptions, including new tariffs affecting Canadian canola seed, Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is reiterating its support for agribusinesses, farm operations and food processors through its Trade Disruption Customer Support program.

"The agriculture and food industry is resilient, but global trade uncertainty can create real pressure on cash flow and operations," said Justine Hendricks, President and CEO at FCC. "Our role is to ensure our customers, and the broader industry, have access to the capital and flexibility they need to adapt, stay competitive and keep delivering high-quality products to markets at home and abroad."

The program offers relief for existing customers and new clients who meet lending criteria. The program offerings include access to an additional credit line of up to \$500,000, new term loans, and the option for existing FCC customers to defer principal payments



for up to 12 months on existing loans.

FCC will continue to work with industry part-

ners to ensure that Canadian agriculture and food businesses can navigate changing market condi-

tions and keep the industry moving forward despite uncertainty.

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tomers are encouraged to contact their local FCC office or call 1-800-387-3232 to discuss their individual

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Young Innovators: USask researchers giving canola producers never-before-seen insight into their crops

Golden fields of canola flourishing against a bright blue sky might just be the quint-essential image of a Saskatchewan summer. With 12 million acres of canola grown across the province every year, the crop's delicate yellow flowers are a common and beautiful sight on any given Prairie highway.

By ERIN MATTHEWS

To get a bigger picture of canola's growth cycle, University of Saskatchewan (USask) graduate student Hansanee Fernando is turning her attention towards the sky, past the whips of cotton clouds, and into space, where she is harnessing satellite imagery to help canola producers monitor and grow healthy crops.

"My PhD work aims to support farmers by identifying key growth stages and estimating yields, or how much the crop will produce, early on," said Fernando. "I'm hoping to empower farmers to make informed decisions and optimize their management practices while potentially reducing costs, within the growing season."

To achieve this, Fernando is collecting images from open-source satellites and using these to map large scale sections of farmland across Western Canada. While optical satellite imaging is a commonly used technique that captures clear, crisp pictures of the Earth below—like you'd see on an online map—there are certain limitations that prevent researchers from collecting certain types of data using these satellites. Fernando, instead, is using radar images on top of optical images, a promising technique in agricultural mapping that can catch complementary details over large areas of land.

"Using radar for agriculture is relatively new and with it we can see the whole picture, not just the colour of crops, but also the structure of the crops grown," said Fernando. "Optical imaging doesn't work well in rain or cloud cover, while radar can penetrate through the clouds to give you the full picture. So, you could capture 10 out of 10 images with radar while with optical you may only get three out of 10 on a cloudy day."

According to Fernando, she is the first at USask using this kind of imaging for crop monitoring on a larger scale which allows her to gather insights for farmers like key growth stages of their canola crops, such as when a field is flowering, and even estimates on how much the crop could produce before the end of the growing season.



USask graduate student Hansanee Fernando is using satellite imagery to help canola producers monitor their crops.

"Once I've collected all the data, I want to design an app that would allow farmers to zoom in onto their field and be able to identify the day their canola started flowering or see other information that's important for them," said Fernando.

Fernando said her research, and the app that she plans to develop from it, would benefit not only producers but municipalities and crop insurance companies, who would be able to use the same data to help process claims after damaging storms or droughts.

Fernando's passion for agriculture first started at home in Sri Lanka, where she finished her undergraduate degree.

Now, as a PhD candidate in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, Fernando is a part of USask's Agronomic Crop Imaging (ACI) team. ACI uses precision agriculture

techniques like unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology and machine learning to tackle complex agricultural challenges. The ACI lab is run by Fernando's supervisor, Dr. Steve Shirtliffe (PhD).

"Dr. Shirtliffe was one of the main reasons I chose to continue my PhD here," said Fernando. "His mentorship aligned perfectly with my goals and passion for remote

"The University of Saskatchewan's reputation as one of the top universities for agricultural research inspired me to apply for a master's program here and I was impressed at how advanced and well-resourced the Department of Plant Sciences was, it far exceeded my expectations."

— Hansanee Fernando

sensing in agriculture and his guidance and expertise have been instrumental in shaping my research and career."

The future is bright for Fernando, who plans to continue exploring her interests and passion in learning and research after completing her PhD. Beyond her work in agriculture, Fernando has a passion for reading and dreams of writing a book one day, to share her experiences and knowledge and inspire others to pursue their passions.

"Whether in academia or industry, my ultimate goal is to work in a field where I can analyze images and data. As long as I can keep solving problems and uncovering insights, I feel fulfilled in my journey," said Fernando. "I want to keep doing work that can help farmers. I work closely with many producers, and they are so excited about the work I am doing and it makes me feel good knowing I am having an impact."



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Second farm, distant location: Can it be done?

Brian and Louise knew from an early age that their children, Isaac and Emma, aspired to be the seventh generation of their family to farm. They also knew the existing operation was not large enough to support three families if both children chose to farm full time. They started thinking about this when the kids were young because they felt that a transition to the next generation would start earlier than it did with their parents. With land prices at record highs, they needed a creative plan that allowed their children to farm if they chose to.

Expanding north: A strategic decision to secure the future

When an opportunity arose to purchase land two hours north at half the price of local land, they discussed it as a family and decided to proceed. With guidance from their banker, accountant and lawyer, they set up a second corporation to hold the new land and make dividing the farm business between their children easier. In hindsight, this also proved helpful in allowing them to better benchmark the success of each operation, which was a huge benefit in decision-making.

Initially, the new land was rented out when the children were teenagers. It wasn't feasible to move equipment to both locations for a small acreage. The logistics of getting labour in two places at once were too much. Over time, they acquired more land at the second location. When Isaac and Emma began driving, it became feasible for the family's time and energy to be split between the operations.

They set up a second corporation to make dividing the farm business between their children easier.

The children were able to expand the new farm more rapidly than their home operation and eventually grew it to a comparable size. At that point, it made sense financially and logistically to start farming it themselves.

Capitalizing on differences

The differences in growing seasons be-



tween the locations allowed planting to be spread over a more extended period. By choosing seed varieties with appropriate maturities, they could effectively spread harvest timing across locations. Most years, they were able to finish seasonal tasks for each crop at the home operation before moving to the new one.

While land was less expensive in the new location, equipment was not. Moving all their equipment between the operations would be time-consuming, stressful and costly. However, having two full equipment fleets was also expensive and tied up a lot of capital. In the end, they settled on having a complete set of planting and tillage equipment at both locations. Their grain trucks moved between locations, and a custom operator sprayed at the north location.

Balancing logistics

In the early years, Brian spent a lot of time at the new operation, setting it up to his satisfaction, clearing and tilling and working on the buildings and equipment. He built strong relationships with many neighbours and suppliers in the area. It

took trial and error and advice from local farmers to learn the different agronomy realities. Initially, there was some resistance and curiosity from the locals, but the family worked hard to overcome that.

Growing into roles

Having two locations allowed Isaac and Emma to grow into their respective roles and responsibilities. After college, Emma returned to the farm full time, while Isaac already worked off the farm part time.

It evolved to the point where Brian and Emma spent a lot of time at the new farm learning the logistics and agronomy details together. Eventually, Emma took ownership of a lot of the decisions there. This arrangement also allowed Isaac to flourish. With Dad less present, he took a more active role in the management at the home

farm.

Louise managed the financial and administrative tasks for both locations and corporations. She was careful to ensure that the two operations were kept as separate as possible. Crops were marketed to different locations and expenses were paid by the appropriate entity. Both locations had their own accounts for government programs and crop insurance. While the bank required some guarantees from the original operation to fund the initial acquisitions, they were able to keep all borrowing tied to each location. Having two corporations was critical to maintaining this segregation.

Challenges pay off, opportunities realized

Expanding through a second location wasn't easy. Brian and Emma spent a lot of time and money driving between the operations. Family and social functions were often missed because it wasn't always possible to come home for just a few hours. Planning and time management were crucial.

However, expanding further north has provided a financial opportunity that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. There were logistical, operational, financial and social challenges, but today, the new operation is generating as much cash flow per acre as the home operation.

The original objective was to create an opportunity for both children to farm. More than 10 years since they started the plan, Brian and Louise are confident they've succeeded. They now have an option for one family to live at the second location or continue operating it as they are now. A third option is to sell it and capitalize on the growth to reinvest at home.

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Building a positive work culture on the farm

BY BECKY ZIMMER

Creating a positive work culture is essential in modern farm management. It benefits both family-run farms and operations with outside employees.

During peak seasons like seeding and harvest, the demanding hours can be challenging for everyone involved. However, by fostering a supportive and respectful environment, farm operators can make these busy times more manageable and rewarding for themselves and their employees.

Good leadership bolsters employee retention, recruitment

In light of the growing mental health conversation in agriculture, workplace culture is changing, says Bonnie Taylor, a registered social worker and psychotherapist based in Wellesley, Ont. People are finding ways to ensure their employees feel valued, which can help businesses retain employees, especially with labour shortages affecting many farming operations.

Demonstrating respect, patience and a positive attitude sets an example for others. "Leaders who ask themselves, 'How am I controlling my temper? How am I demonstrating to others that I show respect?'...they're the ultimate role models for their employees," she says.

Reflecting on your own behaviour can help to set an example of the supportive culture you want to cultivate.

"Being known for having a great work environment can also be a form of recruitment," Taylor says. If employees like where they work and feel respected and valued, they'll be more likely to pass the word on to friends and relatives who may also be looking for a positive workplace.

Role of communication and vulnerability

"Saying, 'Hey, I'm scared or exhausted or frustrated,' can be liberating," Taylor says. But it can also be difficult for someone to be vulnerable and open about their feelings.

Respecting and validating this openness is important.

For example, telling someone how they should feel instead of acknowledging their feelings can quickly cut the line of communication, leaving an employee feeling alone, Taylor explains. Employers and employees need to feel comfortable talking. This is part of trust-building.

The benefits of a supportive farm workplace

When an employee feels they have purpose and motivation, and that they're working with someone instead of for them, everyone benefits. "That could mean higher profits, stronger goals for growth, and everyone pulling in the same direction as a team that cares for one another," Taylor says.

She adds that while not everyone is in a position to make decisions about the direction of the farm, it's important that everyone understands the shared goals they're working towards. Being recognized for how one's efforts contribute to those goals can help build morale.

Recognize and value employee contributions

Farm work often involves risks, especially when using heavy machinery and managing livestock. If the team looks out for one another, that could also mean lower in-



jury rates. "At a time when we're more connected than ever, it's easy to give someone a call to ask if they need a break or some food after running the combine all day," Taylor says.

Also, know that recognition can look very different from one employee to another.

Not every good effort or great idea needs to be publicly celebrated if that will make someone feel uncomfortable, Taylor adds. In some cases, a private conversation would go further.

Group recognition, like an after-harvest supper or get-together, is also a great way to unwind, debrief and cel-

brate a demanding harvest. It doesn't have to be extravagant, especially if the operation had some setbacks that were out of their control.

"Setbacks are disappointing to everybody, but the farm manager can show support for their employees and build a positive workplace by saying 'OK, we're still going to have our end-of-year celebration. You all did an amazing job despite some things being out of our control. There was nothing else we could have done, so let's still recognize what we were able to.'"

While farming will always be a demanding profession, respect, communication and recognition can make the workplace a great place for everyone.

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Boosting Canada's agricultural productivity through investment and innovation

BY BETHANY LIPKA, BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE ANALYST, AND ISAAC KWARTENG, SENIOR ECONOMIST, FCC

Canada's agricultural sector stands at a pivotal moment, as global food demand intensifies, profit margins tighten and climate pressures mount. Ag tech innovation offers a powerful solution, but research alone isn't enough. We must accelerate commercialization of these technologies and create an investment environment that attracts venture capital. Innovation, boldness and ambition are urgently needed.

Despite our reputation as a global leader in food production, Canada lags international peers in ag tech investment. Indeed, the country captured less than 2% of global venture capital ag tech deal values in 2024 compared with 45.3% for the United States. U.S. venture capital ag tech deals that year outvalued their Canadian counterparts by a ratio of 23 to 1. This imbalance is reflected in the relative importance of U.S. and Canadian agriculture and food exports, with the U.S. ranking 1st globally (accounting for more than 9% of global exports), and Canada rank-



ing 8th (capturing less than 4% of global exports). We

remain an important linchpin in the global food sys-

tem, relative to our size. But we could be doing better.

To remain competitive, we need to increase research spending and foster a thriving ecosystem in

which startups, researchers, and investors collaborate to bring breakthrough technologies from lab to field. As a new report by FCC Thought Leadership shows, it's time to look be-

yond our borders and find opportunities to import innovation to Canada. The opportunity is immense—and the time to act is now.

Continued on page B17

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Governments meet with canola industry leaders to address tariffs

On Friday, Premier Scott Moe, along with Trade and Export Development Minister Warren Kaeding and Agriculture Minister Daryl Harrison, met with Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Heath MacDonald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister Kody Blois and leaders from Saskatchewan's canola sector to address the recent tariffs imposed by China on provincial canola exports.

The group called on the federal government to take quick, meaningful action to resolve the current situation. "The Government of Saskatchewan condemns China's punitive tariffs on canola, which directly impact Saskatchewan families," Moe said. "This is an urgent situation for Saskatchewan producers and we must work together to find immediate solutions."

Earlier this month, the Chinese government imposed

a 76 per cent tariff on Canadian canola exports—on top of existing tariffs on canola oil and meal. These measures are widely seen as retaliatory, following Canada's decision to place tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles.

"Saskatchewan is one of the largest canola producers in the world, supporting thousands of jobs and driving economic growth across Canada," Moe added. "As a province that exports nearly 70 per cent of everything we produce, we will continue to champion free and fair global trade."

"Farmers are being used as a pawn in the current geo-political environment. Unprecedented market closure amidst an already stressful time of year has a compounding adverse effect on farmers," SaskOilseeds Chair Dean Roberts said. "Today's dialogue with government leaders centered on practical solutions that

could be activated to support farmers' livelihood in the short-term."

Saskatchewan produces 55 per cent of Canada's canola, and accounts for 21 per cent of global canola oil exports.

Canada exports nearly \$15 billion annually in canola seed, oil and meal.

In 2024, Canada exported almost \$5 billion worth of canola seed, oil and meal to China with over half of those exports attributed to Saskatchewan.

In 2024, China was Saskatchewan's second-largest export market, receiving nearly \$4 billion in agri-food products.

In 2025, canola was seeded on over 12 million acres in Saskatchewan—nearly one-third of the province's total seeded area.



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		Small Animals & Tack	5 p.m.
		Horse Sale	7 p.m.
24	Wednesday	29th Anniversary Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
26	Friday	Cows / Bulls	8 a.m.

- OCTOBER 2025 -

1	Wednesday	Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
3	Friday	Cows / Bulls	8 a.m.
		McIntyre Family Horse Dispersal	6 p.m.
8	Wednesday	Simmental Bonanza Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
10	Friday	Cows / Bulls	8 a.m.
15	Wednesday	Charolais Extravaganza Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
17	Friday	Cows / Bulls	8 a.m.
19	Sunday	Sheep / Goat	1 p.m.
		Small Animals & Tack	5 p.m.
		Horse Sale	7 p.m.
22	Wednesday	Angus Showcase Sale Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
25	Saturday	North American Auctioneer Contest Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
29	Wednesday	Angus Showcase Sale #2 Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
31	Friday	Cows / Bulls	10 a.m.

- NOVEMBER 2025 -

5	Wednesday	Presort Feeder Sale Hereford, Shorthorn, Speckle Park Gather ..	10 a.m.
		Bred Cow Receiving	2 p.m. - 10 p.m.
7	Friday	Cows / Bulls & Feeders	8 a.m.
		Bred Cow & Heifer Sale	1 p.m.
9	Sunday	Sheep / Goat	1 p.m.
		Small Animals & Tack	5 p.m.
		Horse Sale	7 p.m.
12	Wednesday	Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
14	Friday	Cows / Bulls & Feeders	8 a.m.
19	Wednesday	Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
		Bred Cow Receiving	2 p.m. - 10 p.m.
21	Friday	Cows / Bulls & Feeders	8 a.m.
		Bred Cow & Heifer Sale	1 p.m.
26	Wednesday	Regular Sale	9 a.m.

- DECEMBER 2025 -

3	Wednesday	Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
5	Friday	Bred Cow & Heifer Sale	1 p.m.
10	Wednesday	Presort Feeder Sale	10 a.m.
12	Friday	Bred Cow & Heifer Sale	1 p.m.
16	Tuesday	Bred Cow & Heifer Sale	1 p.m.
17	Wednesday	Regular Sale	9 a.m.
19	Friday	Bred Cow & Heifer Sale	1 p.m.
22	Monday	Bred Cow & Heifer Sale	1 p.m.



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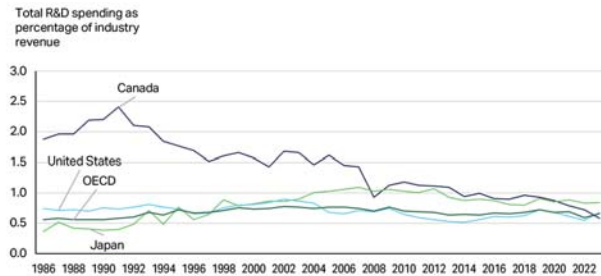


Figure 1: Agriculture R&D spending as a percentage of industry revenue

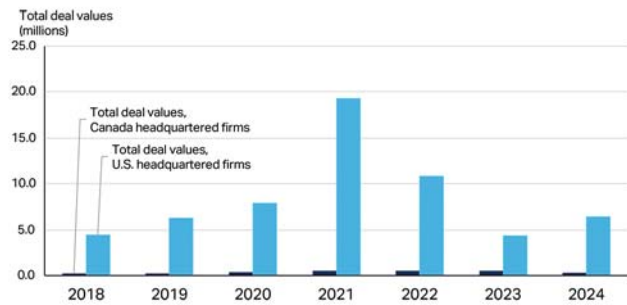


Figure 2: Global ag tech venture capital deal values for Canada and the U.S.

Boosting Canada's agricultural productivity through investment and innovation

Continued from page B14

Current state of investment

Here's why. Research and development (R&D) not only drives innovation, it also helps power the economy. It's estimated that every dollar invested in agricultural R&D yields a return of \$10 to \$20. Until the mid-2000's, Canada was a global leader in agricultural research and development (R&D), ahead of the U.S., Japan, and OECD average. Today, that is sadly not the case.

The importance of increasing ag tech investment in Canada

How to proceed? The way forward is clear: By invest-

ing in the commercialization and adoption of emerging technologies both at home and abroad – such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and data-driven tools – Canada can significantly enhance agricultural productivity and efficiency, bolstering its position in the global food system.

How to catalyze investment and innovation in Canadian agriculture

The report provides some key recommendations for boosting agricultural investment and innovation in Canada:

- Drive agricultural knowledge generation with a strategic focus
- Seek strategic opportunities at home and abroad

- Strengthen the ag tech ecosystem
- Harvest low-hanging fruit
- Focus on sustainability

An industry call to action

In short, the future of Canadian agriculture lies in our ability to innovate and adapt. Embracing new technologies and investing in research and development is crucial to boosting productivity and ensuring the sector's future growth and sustainability. By fostering a culture of innovation, we can address current challenges and seize new opportunities resulting in a \$30 billion opportunity for Canadian farmers.

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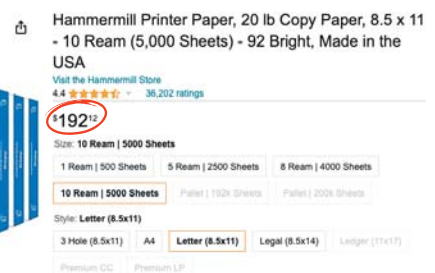
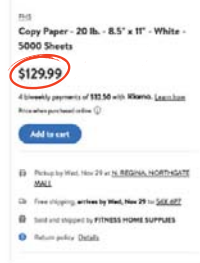
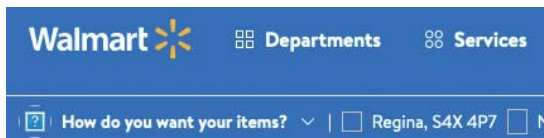
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It's harvest time in Saskatchewan!

It is perfectly still. The campfire brightens the darkness that is all around us, its orange glow warm and welcoming. The sky reveals a star or two above us. It is a beautiful night, this mid-August, pre-harvest night, our first back at the farm camping near the old shop as we prepare for the harvest that is just around the corner. It's darker sooner now, reminding us that we are truly entering into the fall season. And as the night grows darker, the stars fill the sky in a remarkable display of the beauty of creation.

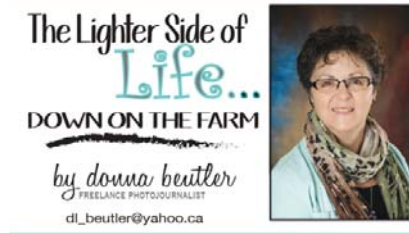
The twins (14) join us around the fire. They have been busy keeping the lawn and farmyard trimmed up but bemoaning the breakdown of the tractor and tiller that they so faithfully use. It's always a somewhat bittersweet time of year as we approach the third week of August. It will mean a loss of those wonderful summer days filled with farm work, golfing and fishing for these young fellows but a gain of seeing and being with friends every day at school. For this Grandma, I miss seeing them around the farm but I'm guessing I'm going to see them lots during noon hours in town as well as suppers in the field!

Speaking of suppers in the field, I have done a bit of work on my six-week menu, 'bit' being the key word here. Very little work on it might mean a repeat of my scant two weeks of menus over and over again. Sigh.

Our last adventure of the season saw us taking one last trip of the year up north to our son and his family's fishing camp. As we headed up towards Flin Flon, MB, we listened to a Whitewood Museum podcast hosted by our niece (Museum employee) featuring our son talking about farming, his chosen occupation. I feared he might be too honest as in, "My mom always told me never to farm," but he said it much more gracefully than that and when asked what stories he remembered about life on his farm that his mother had put into a "Down on the Farm" book (essentially a compilation of these columns), he didn't respond with, "She wrote a book?" Whew! Worried for nothing!!

In the podcast they spoke about cattle farming and grain farming and how things have changed over the past 25/30 years in the world of agriculture – the challenges, the opportunities, the changes and the way of life it is for those who love agriculture. Yes, it's a lot of hard work, but the rewards, though not always financially, are worth every minute of it.

Our up-north trip in early August was more than we could have ever asked for. We fished and we painted cabins and we cooked and we ate and we hiked and just had the best time ever. I am not sure our son was all that im-



pressed with the load of curtain rods I took into camp on our boat ride across the lake but in the end, hubby and I installed new curtains in every cabin. Now they may not match or speak "up north" exactly, but they are blackouts and by my estimation, one hundred times better than what was there before.

As someone who doesn't actually fish, I decided I would tackle my fear of riding in the little 'tin' boat and get out there and learn to actually fish. Wyatt was the most patient teacher of all time as we headed out across the lake (okay, across the bay). My first catch was a log and the second was a rock. Sadly, the rock won and I lost said grandson's leader and hook and had my first lesson in what not to do. The bonus was I didn't fall in the water which is something that would totally freak me out, so fearful am I.

The burned-out forest surrounding Pine Point Lodge as we hiked along and up to the top of the cliffs was a reminder of the devastation that fire brings; the lone purple flower growing amongst the blackened trees also represented the new life and new growth that those forests will eventually see.

One of our adventures took us to a sand bar a few miles away from camp, and again, dodging my fear of jumping into water (albeit only knee-deep water) allowed me to enjoy some great times with the family, tubing, catching minnows in their hands, and ewwww, leeches too, picnicking on the pontoon boat and just enjoying the sunshine, the company and the laughs, including our youngest granddaughter's question out at the sandbar, surrounded by water: "Where can I wash my hands?" I think it is fair to say the grands had a blast and Grams

loved every minute of her time there, with one exception

..... The farm grands had taken their one-year-old pup up to camp. The afternoon before our departure, I had been feeding pup some yogurt-covered raisins, not knowing grapes and raisins are toxic for dogs. So, when she went missing (more likely in a dead sleep somewhere) that night and didn't respond to our calls for her, I was certain I had been instrumental in her demise. Fortunately, she was alive and well and come morning, she happily hopped aboard the boat and then back at Cranberry Portage's dock, she had the privilege of being the first dog ever to get to ride in Grandpa's half-ton. Grams looked a bit skeptical but when he saw puppy laying on her blanket with her nose pressed to that a/c vent on the back of the console, he had to agree (well perhaps 'had' is a too strong a term) she was going be pretty comfortable riding home with us.

And now, back on the farm, with a summer full of memories to treasure (including a family photo which we actually remembered to do) and a summer full of grands coming and going, we are turning our minds toward the work at hand.

The combines and swathers are ready or being readied and our mindset is changing to all the things that need to be done. While my guys talk machinery, I am attempting to do some frozen meal prep and put away some baking, complaining all the while of course lol. If someone had the plan, I could implement it; I just hate coming up with the 'plan.'

A hail storm earlier in August did some damage to the oats and canola crops so adjusters have been out and about checking crops to determine the extent of damage. When the adjuster was checking one of our canola fields, he sent a text with a photo showing where someone had driven through the crop, totally trampling 'paths' throughout the crop in what appears to have been done by both a half-ton and a quad. To say we were shocked is an understatement. The destruction continued onto the neighbour's canola in the next field as well. It's unbelievable to me that anyone could be so disrespectful as to knowingly destroy crop just for the heck of it, but that's life, isn't it?

As August turns into September and harvest gets going or continues as the case may be, full speed ahead, we wish all our ag friends a safe and successful fall. It's a big job to take the crop off every fall but we hope it's all worth it in the end! Happy harvesting folks!!

Cultivate financial literacy, boost farm resilience

By MATT MCINTOSH

Financial planning professionals spend years acquiring the experience and skills to do their jobs effectively. This is a level of training most people don't have — but that doesn't mean financial literacy is unattainable.

For Lance Stockbrugger, Saskatchewan farmer and veteran chartered accountant, taking steps to better understand what the numbers are telling you is an important means of improving the profitability and stability of your farm business.

It will also equip you with essential tools to navigate your business effectively. Understanding financial management will empower you to speak the language of your advisors, ensuring clearer communication and more productive consultations.

By improving your financial capability, you can foster stronger, more strategic conversations with stakeholders and advisors.

It will also equip you with essential tools to navigate your business effectively. Understanding financial management will empower you to speak the language of your advisors, ensuring clearer communication and more productive consultations.

It also helps you to calculate costs accurately, negotiate the best deals and make informed decisions to protect your bottom line. By improving your financial capability, operators can foster stronger, more strategic conversations with stakeholders and advisors, ultimately leading to smart management and long-term success.

Learning opportunities

An ideal time to develop better financial knowledge is in school, Stockbrugger says. Not everyone can or wants to attend post-secondary education for finance and business, but taking courses is an option. Courses, seminars and opportunities that actively connect you to mentors and advisors can drive learning.

"You can also get involved in organizations. It helps you see how other businesses run and how they're financially reporting and managing things," Stockbrugger says. Joining a municipal council or the board of directors of a local grain terminal — the latter being something Stockbrugger himself has done — are two examples of such opportunities.

Stockbrugger notes that the sheer number and variety of financial courses and tools available can make it challenging to find one suited to your knowledge level.

FCC's Manage Your Farm Finances program is an example of an effective (and free) course series. The three-part series includes informational sessions with financial experts, case studies, exercises and other resources designed to help people with varying degrees of financial literacy actively learn analytical techniques relevant to their farm operation. Stockbrugger — who helped develop the course — says the idea was to ensure as few barriers to entry and as much flexibility as possible.

"I like the course because it gets down to the basics," he says. "You can go through it at your own pace. If you find an exercise too simplistic, you can skip it. Or if it's hard, keep doing it until you get the right answers."

Leverage advisor teams

Maintaining relationships with trusted financial and legal advisors is essential, says Stockbrugger, who stresses prioritizing expertise over a multitude of opinions. Clients, however, shouldn't expect advisors to know it all.

"No one knows everything," Stockbrugger says. He recommends having multiple advisors with diverse expertise, though usually one or two will "rise to the top," offering key support and insights for different business scenarios.

"Take that one individual you really trust and make them that key go-to person. Then, utilize their network. They work with different people and their own team, who they call on to help."

Stockbrugger emphasizes that effective financial advising requires genuinely engaged clients who understand their business. Without this, meetings are less productive and both sides may feel unsatisfied. Clients who invest in financial literacy generally see better returns, are equipped to make more informed business decisions and often have lower advisory costs.

Use smart tax strategies

Tax and business planning are linked but not the same, yet Stockbrugger often sees farm owners mistakenly treat them as such, sometimes taking undue risks or missing opportunities in an effort to not pay as much tax.

Deferring grain cheques — not requesting payment from the company that bought your grain — to avoid tax is an example. In such cases, the commodity provider essentially provides an unsecured line of credit to the grain purchaser. If that purchasing company collapses, though, the money owed to you can disappear.

Another common strategy is to incorporate a farm to capitalize on corporate tax rates and increase the amount of available net income. While incorporation has many benefits, says Stockbrugger, understand that personal income, among other tax realities, still applies.

"So many people got into corporations and didn't understand what that meant. One main misconception is that after a farm is incorporated, they sometimes feel no need to pay further personal taxes. This can cause a lot more tax problems in the future when it comes time to retire or transition the farm," Stockbrugger says.

Honest communication is key

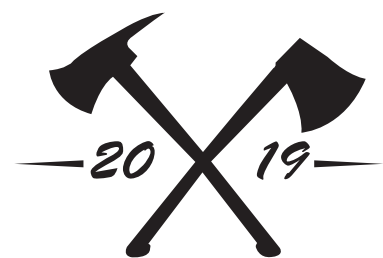
Regardless of your level of financial literacy, Stockbrugger reiterates the importance of honest communication — with both advisors and yourself.

"Accountants like to say numbers don't lie. They tell the true story of financial efficiency and profitability. Embrace the numbers and ensure you use them to your fullest abil-

ity."

Investing in your financial literacy is one of the most impactful steps you can take to ensure your farm business's profitability and resilience. Free resources like FCC's Manage Your Farm Finances program or paid courses tailored to your needs can provide invaluable insights in bite-sized pieces.

Whether you're just starting or looking to sharpen your skills, gaining knowledge bit by bit can help you to navigate complex decisions and build a stable, sustainable operation.



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What key performance indicators should I track in my farm business?

HEATHER WATSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FARM
MANAGEMENT CANADA
OTTAWA, ONT.

Setting and tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) is essential for long-term farm success. After all, you can't manage what you can't measure, right? How do you know if you're on track if you haven't figured out where you want to go?

Start with defining what success means to you, your farm, family and farm team. Profit and productivity are usually the first things that come to mind. What about health and harmony? Growing the skills and confidence of the team? Positioning the operation for a successful transition?

It's crucial to choose KPIs that align with your goals. Next, determine the best way to measure success and track your progress toward reaching your goals.

Here are some KPIs you may want to think about for your farm:

- **Financial prosperity** – cost of production, profitability, liquidity and cash flow, and debt repayment

- **Production/productivity** – yield, quality, labour, equipment and livestock efficiency, animal health and welfare

- **Market growth** – customer satisfaction and loyalty, market share, pricing, sales, products sold

- **Technology and innovation** – use of smart technology, return on investment, new products or processes, operational efficiency

- **Risk management** – insurance coverage, emergency preparedness, crop/livestock loss, climate and severe weather adaptation, diversification, regulatory compliance, wills and estate planning

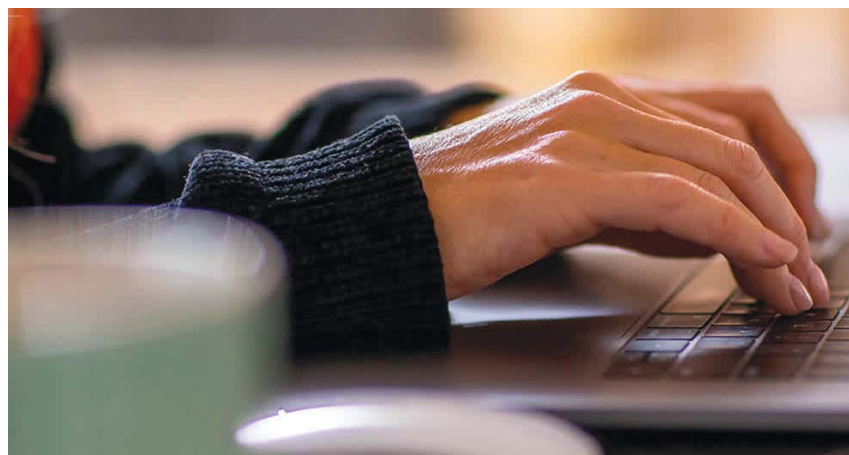
- **Environmental stewardship** – inputs, energy and water usage, soil health, emissions, carbon sequestration, waste management and biodiversity

- **Human resource management/personal well-being and growth** – effective communication, onboarding, skills development and coaching, mental and physical health, employee turnover, labour efficiency

- **Farm transition** – retirement planning, tax planning, successor grooming, family and farm team harmony

Bear in mind that some KPIs may overlap; for instance, technology investments, production efficiency and financial performance are interconnected. While production records are often well-kept, financial records can be less thorough, and it may be even harder to track metrics like family and team harmony or if the next generation is prepared for transition.

To begin, gather key farm



team members to discuss priorities and agree on what KPIs matter most. Including input from your professional advisors can also add valuable insights. Once you've set your KPIs, establish a review schedule with regular check-ins to track your performance.

Setting and regularly reviewing these KPIs will help you make data-driven decisions, improve farm performance and stay resilient within your ever-evolving business environment. It will also help engage everyone on the farm and get them excited about helping drive it toward long-term success.

DR. LARRY MARTIN
LARRY MARTIN AND ASSOCIATES
CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

I've been teaching farmers business management for decades, most recently through the mini-MBA-style program Total Excellence in Agricultural Management (CTEAM).

One issue I find with some farm operators who've taken my courses is that they don't have enough focus. The first step in deciding what key performance indicators (KPIs) to track is identifying where you'd like to focus.

A KPI is a key quantifiable indicator of progress toward a specific objective. So, what are the specific objectives you'd like to work on? Let those be your guide. Every person and every farm will have somewhat different KPIs.

For example, I've worked with grain farmers at a stage where the problem is related to either production or marketing. We gauge that by looking at their gross margin ratio (%GM). If the benchmark %GM is 70% and they're operating at 58%, there's a problem. The %GM is one KPI that needs to be tracked – that is, the cost inputs per dollar of sales.

Once you've identified the weakness, figure out the source. In the above example, hiring an agronomist

helped to determine how the %GM could be optimized by applying fertilizer at the ideal rates for the current conditions. KPIs require monitoring and adjusting to reach your goals. Assess if the external environment (like weather) is still what

you predicted when setting the plan.

To stay on target, you may need to change your plan if something outside of your control is affecting your KPI. Determining which KPIs to track comes down to having a strategic management

process in place. A successful farm operation is about paying attention to detail and responding.

In horticulture, a typical KPI is labour cost as a percentage of sales. I've seen farms with labour costs at 60% of revenue – sixty

cents of every dollar goes to labour. To improve, operators could either reduce labour or increase sales strategically. This might mean optimizing marketing, automating tasks or finding innovative ways to increase sales with your labour force.

Regardless, decision-making can feel overwhelming without KPIs in place. KPIs give you focus. I've seen farm operators begin to relax when they see how simple it can be to track and adjust. They see that the problem is clear – and tracking KPIs shows them how they can quickly get to the point where a problem feels manageable. They don't feel overwhelmed or anxious all the time.

Years after the course, we asked some past students about the impact of strategic management planning – including tracking KPIs – on their farm management. Their answers were always similar: "It has helped my family life and

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Kevin Weedmark took this photo of crops at sunrise south of Moosomin last Friday.



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