



A farmer swathing canola north of Moosomin.

Kevin Weedmark photo

Farmers in southeast say crops looking better than expected

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Farmers in southeast Saskatchewan have started harvesting and say this year's crops are coming in better than anticipated.

Murray Bruce, who farms near Moosomin, said he started harvesting on Aug. 21.

"We've gotten 1,200 acres done. So far the yield is looking quite encouraging," said Bruce.

"It kind of makes you wonder where it came from considering how dry this year's summer was, because we didn't get any rain this summer.

"There must have been lots of reserve moisture in the ground to get the bushels that we're getting. It's quite encouraging what the yields are looking like."

Bruce said the biggest challenge he faced during this year's season was lack of moisture.

"We're expecting the crops to be on average, like a

good average crop," he said.

"It will depend on mother nature when we finish harvest, on how long this kind of weather lasts. It would be nice to be done by the middle of September."

Farmers in the Moosomin area say yield looks encouraging

Wendy Schatz Leeds, Agronomy Lead of Sharpe's Crop Services in Moosomin, said farmers in the Moosomin area have begun harvest.

"We're just starting harvest. There isn't a ton of crop off yet, they're not quite dried down yet," said Schatz Leeds.

"We're getting to the point where we're reaching physiological maturity and some producers have created a phase for dry down. We're now just getting to that point where they would be ready to harvest."

"Some of the malt barley has come off, I think producers are happy so far with the malt barley yields. Peas also

yielded okay, considering the year. We're just getting into wheat, and it will be a few weeks before canola is ready."

Due to communities in the southeast area of the province receiving no rainfall throughout the month of July, Schatz Leeds said the final outcome for all crops will depend on the weather conditions in the next few weeks.

"It will be a wait and see to see how things look. The plants developed really well considering we had minimal rainfall," said Schatz Leeds.

"We had really healthy plants for the most part. We'll just have to see how everything sets seed."

"There was a point when they were setting seed for both canola and wheat, when it was warm out and they don't like that, but I think there was also cool periods. We cooled off at night."

"I think for the most part we should be okay with our development."

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Kevin Weedmark captured this photo of ripe wheat in a field north of Moosomin last week.

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Advancing beef cattle fertility

Lloydminster-based multi-partner project spans Western Canada

The Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network (CAAIN) has unveiled the third of seven stories showcasing the agtech research and innovation being developed by the recipients of funding made available through its 2021 Open Competition.

CAAIN's mandate from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada is to fund technological responses to the most significant opportunities and challenges facing the nation's agri-food producers and processors. That means supporting promising efforts with the potential to provide economic or environmental value. The featured stories demonstrate that CAAIN is doing just that, as do the 129 collaborations the organization has nurtured and the \$31M it is investing in 24 projects with a combined total value exceeding \$100M.

"A lot of research has focused on evaluating and improving the fertility of bulls," explained Darrell Petras, CAAIN's CEO. "That's understandable given the potential value a single male can provide to a ranch. Less effort has been devoted to developing predictive analytics for use with heifers, leaving a significant gap this project seeks to close. A partnership such as this one, which includes three post-secondary institutions, two technology companies, farmers from across Western Canada, and a research organization, facilitates exactly the kind of collaboration our agri-food sector needs to advance innovation."

Based out of Lakeland College's Lloydminster, Alberta, campus, Precision Ranching for Improved Reproductive and Grazing Efficiencies carries a total price tag of \$1,295,508. CAAIN has committed \$143,237 to the project, which focuses on evaluating existing technologies to identify ways to assess a range of factors that indicate a heifer's fertility and track bovine grazing patterns in real time. The goal is to predict the heifer's ability to produce quality offspring, allowing farmers to avoid investing in animals unlikely to pro-



vide a return on investment. Once a cost-effective suite of effective tools has been selected, an application will be developed to integrate all the relevant data, allowing ranchers to access information about every member of their herd on a mobile device, saving them time and greatly increasing profitability.

Project Story: Precision ranching for improved reproductive and grazing efficiencies

A childhood spent on a Manitoba farm and in 4H, a bachelor's degree in Agriculture and Extension, a master's in Ruminant Nutrition, and a PhD from the University of Alberta? Susan Markus seemed destined for her current role as a Lakeland College livestock research scientist. "It's not just the ag stuff," she points out. "The

extension studies are almost as important. At the time I didn't know what that meant, but they effectively provided me with knowledge transfer tools that have been invaluable throughout my career. And never more than now when I regularly communicate with, and provide guidance to, farmers and students." Add the importance of knowledge transfer skills to her leadership of the CAAIN-supported project, Precision Ranching for Improved Reproductive and Grazing Efficiencies, and one can appreciate how perfect Dr. Markus' background is for the work she so enjoys.

Her blend of private-, public-, and academic-sector experience provides a perspective that serves her well as she manages the Precision Ranching work. "I know what I know, and I know what I don't know. That's allowed me to put together a strong team, which matters when you're conducting this kind of research. The re-

sults we're seeking cannot be generated in a vacuum. There are too many moving parts, and success depends on coordinating the activities of a group of highly competent professionals."

The team must be excellent to deal with such a demanding topic. The project came to be in part because Lakeland College recently introduced a degree in Agricultural Technology. The emphasis on AgTech made Susan wonder if there weren't ways to assess bovine fertility using existing automation, thereby reducing the manual labour requirements of operating a commercial ranch. A cow's ability to produce viable offspring may not seem important to the layperson, but it's a critical component of livestock operations. Without fertile cows, there is no source of revenue.


"We need to find a way to determine early on which heifers must be removed from the herd because they are unlikely to conceive. That way the rancher is not needlessly investing in an unproductive animal," she explains. "One avenue we're exploring is to insert a rumen bolus into the heifer to measure changes in temperature and movement, both of which can be indicators of a female's estrus. The technology we're using was developed for the dairy industry, and we're hopeful we can create an algorithm that will make it applicable to beef cattle as well. A number of relevant factors can be assessed simply by examining the heifer visually. We're trying to look 'under the hide,' so to speak, using verifiable, quantifiable, and reliable data sent directly to the rancher's computer or mobile device. We think that in addition to the heifer's fertility potential, the bolus' readings should also be able to give the farmer 24 to 48 hours' advance notice of a calf's birth-information that helps with resource allocation. This project is about increasing the efficiency and profitability of livestock operations, so the more data we can generate, the greater the value the associated technology will provide."

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How to identify verticillium stripe

BY COURTNEY BOYACHEK

Verticillium stripe is the hottest new disease in canola world, rising to yield-damaging levels in Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan and found in all growing regions across the Prairies. Many farmers and agronomists are learning how to tell it apart from blackleg or sclerotinia stem rot. This article provides the keys to accurate verticillium stripe identification.

Symptom one: Stem striping. When the crop is full height but still green, canola plants infected with verticillium stripe will often have a two-toned stem—half healthy and green and half discoloured and drying down. This is where the “stripe” name comes from. Leaves can show similar symptoms—healthy on one side, diseased on the other. You will not see stem or leaf striping with blackleg or sclerotinia stem rot. Sclerotinia will cause stem discoloration, but it will not stripe half the stem.

Symptom two: stem cross section discoloration. Verticillium stripe infects roots and enters the plant’s vascular system. Verticillium hyphae and conidia fill up the vascular system, giving the stem cross section a greyish colour. This is easily confused with blackleg. We have two tips to distinguish the pathogens. With



These stem cross sections show the differences between verticillium stripe (left), blackleg (middle) and a healthy plant (right).

blackleg, stem tissue infection tends to be darker and cause distinct wedge shapes of black. Verticillium is lighter grey and more general throughout the cross section. And two, blackleg stem discoloration is confined to the crown area at the base of the stem. Verticillium darkening can extend well up the stem.

Symptom three: black specks. As verticillium infection advances, microsclerotia will start to form on the underside of peeling stem skin. These can be found all the way up the stem. Verticillium specks may seem similar to blackleg pycnidia, but they’re much smaller—more like powdery pepper. In some cases, blackleg pycnidia

will have a purple-pinkish ooze of pycnidiospores around them. Blackleg pycnidia are also confined to a lesion no more than a couple centimetres in size. If you see pink and specks confined to a lesion, it’s blackleg.

Symptom four: stem peeling and weakening. Peeling stem skin is a symptom of verticillium stripe. Under that peeled outer layer will be the microsclerotia, often taking the shape of faint black vertical striping. Severely diseased stems may break off and can be confused with lodging. Sclerotinia stem rot will also cause weakened brittle stems, but sclerotinia will not have the stripy, speckly microsclerotia. Sclerotinia



Left: As verticillium infection advances, microsclerotia—tiny specks—will show up on the underside of peeling stem skin and throughout the inside of the stem. **Right:** Verticillium darkening can extend well up the stem. Infection can also hollow out the stem core. Blackleg cross-section discoloration is confined to the base of the stem and will not cause stem hollowing.

stem rot will cause the entire stem tissue to shred, not just the outer layer. Inside the stem, sclerotinia will form sclerotia bodies—the canola-seed-sized resting bodies. Verticillium stripe does not produce sclerotia bodies.

The ideal time to scout for verticillium stripe is at harvest when symptoms are most obvious. No fungicide or soil amendment is known to be effective on verticillium stripe, so ac-

curate identification is all about future management.

Verticillium microsclerotia are soil-borne, so steps to keep soil in place could provide some reduction in spread. Two- or three-year breaks between canola crops are good disease management in general, but verticillium microsclerotia can remain viable for many years. Plant tolerance or resistance is likely to provide the best solution, and plant breeders

are looking into this trait.

Blackleg and sclerotinia stem rot, if those are the diseases present, are more manageable through genetic resistance, crop rotation and fungicides.

For more on verticillium stripe identification and management, read the verticillium stripe chapter at canolacyclopedia.ca and “Verticillium stripe—identification and management” at canolawatch.org/fundamentals.

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Farmers in the southeast say crops are looking better than expected

Continued from front

She spoke about the different challenges she thinks farmers faced during this season.

"I don't know if there was a big challenge, I think we had a fairly nice year, aside from the fact that we could've used maybe one rainfall at the end of June and beginning of July," Schatz Leeds said.

"But again, you have to be careful what you wish for because sometimes we get these big dumps during that time of the year, and you end up drowning acres and it's not to our benefit.

"I think that would've been the only thing, if we had just maybe a nice little shower at the end of June and beginning of July, more widespread. There was some showers going through, but not widespread. Certain areas got a little more than others in rainfall, but we're still way below average.

"To me, I believe we're seeing some weed resistance show up. As an agronomist, like myself, we'll have to work with producers to learn how to control specifically kochia.

"I believe I saw quite a bit resistance in kochia this spring, we're going to have to work as a group, the agronomist and the farmer, to figure out a solution on how we're going to deal with that."

Although the Moosomin area faced below average rain during July and August, Schatz Leeds said the spring weather gave farmers a good start to the season.

"We were well below normal, we were 20 per cent of normal rainfall. We were definitely below normal in moisture coming from the sky, but we did have really good soil moisture going into the spring so that helped us."

The majority of farmers should be finished harvesting by the end of September, said Schatz Leeds.

"I would think we should be wrapped up easily by mid-to-end of September, end of September for sure because we probably have about three weeks of harvest left," she said.

"Also, if we can all hope for fall moisture to help with spring, and thinking about fall applications for chemicals, to think about weed resistance and talk to an agronomist, like myself, to figure out the best solution for it."

Tim McCarthy, a farmer north of Fleming, started harvesting last week after the few days of rain passed through.

Based on this year's weather conditions, McCarthy was asked what he thinks the outcome will be for this year's crops.

"I think they're going to be better than we think. We had some good soil moisture here and the crops did pretty good, I think there's possibly some better yield than we think, but time will tell," said McCarthy.

The biggest challenge McCarthy faced this year was the weather conditions.

"The weather being dry was a challenge, as far as getting the work done, things went pretty smooth. We're just one or two rains short of it being a perfect



Elize Steyn submitted this photo of harvest started on August 16 at Eastview Farms in the RM of Silverwood.

year I think," he said.

"The moisture conditions were pretty good up until the hot spell in July, but essentially I think we're going to be pleasantly surprised. I'll know more in a couple of weeks."

Crop conditions looking average, says Esterhazy farmer

Kevin Hruska, who farms in the Esterhazy, Gerald, Lagenburg, and Bredenburg areas, said he started harvesting on Aug. 20.

"We went out and did a sample, we're just sort of assembling the crew and we'll be starting after this rain event is going on," said Hruska.

"We have a good-poor crop. The way the year was we're not going to complain. All of our friends out west are in worse shape."

Hruska said he noticed more areas across the farm were drier than others, due to a lack of rainfall.

"We had a really dry long spot without rain. We could have sure used one good rain in the middle of a six-week drought," he said.

"We had a few good rains off the start, we have one area that the clouds parted and missed us the whole year. It was variable to some extent, there was never a general rain, we relied on showers and the showers were sporadic so they zig-zagged all over the place.

"Typically showers cover the land like a screen saver does on your computer, where it runs around until it finally covers the whole screen, but unfortunately the one spot didn't have enough time to get there."

Like most farmers, Hruska said the biggest challenge for this year's season was the dry weather conditions.

"The seeding went well, the summer wasn't too hot, really the biggest challenge was praying for rain," Hruska said.

"In all honesty that was the thing that concerned us all year. We kept saying, could we get a rain, could we get rain, gosh if we could only get a rain. It would predict a 60 to 70 per cent chance of rain, and we would get just five drops.

"That would've been the biggest challenge. Prices are reasonable, holding costs was a challenge.

"Machinery costs have just gone berserk, just crazy. When Covid caught us machinery never became available and when we came out from the other end of Covid, now it's double in price."

Hruska said he expects to finish harvest by the beginning of October.

"I would think we'll go okay until the first week of October by the time we get done, but if I can speak for other farmers, a lot of other people will be done by September this year," said Hruska.

"There's going to be a handful of small farmers who are going to be done in August.

"We're going until October because we had later crops. Some that had later rain on it, we straight cut canola, it had to be sprayed off it was nowhere near ready, we had some damaged and delayed stuff, and it's going to drag us out.

"I think them later crops would've caught these last two rains which is actually going to be better. Also, we're large farmers, we do put a lot of acres onto one combine."

WSA announces half million dollar infrastructure crossing replacement program

The Water Security Agency (WSA) is launching a new \$500,000 cost-sharing pilot program that will assist rural municipalities (RMs) and irrigation districts with the cost of replacing aging infrastructure. RMs and irrigation districts replacing infrastructure like bridges or culverts that cross WSA channels are eligible for 50/50 cost sharing.

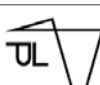
"This is another great example of WSA creating partnership programs to support rural infrastructure in Saskatchewan," Minister Responsible for the Water Security Agency Jeremy Cockill said. "As replacement costs for infrastructure continue to rise, WSA is partnering with RMs and irrigators to alleviate the financial impact of replacement, all while safeguard-

ing provincial infrastructure and protecting our communities."

To be eligible, bridges or culvert-style crossings must cross WSA canals or other conveyance while maintaining current flow rates.

"Thanks to a grant from the WSA Infrastructure Crossing Replacement Program, an RM can not only complete a bridge or culvert project, but the money saved can be used for other critical infrastructure," said Ray Orb, President of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

There is no deadline to apply to the program, and grants will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis. Costs incurred through March 31, 2024, will be considered.



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Drought support for Saskatchewan livestock producers on the way

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

On Aug. 21, the Government of Saskatchewan announced the province's support in providing up to \$70 million available to livestock producers to help support the costs of feeding livestock, to maintain the breeding herd in Saskatchewan.

With producers being impacted by the drought this summer, Ray Orb, president of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), said financial support from the provincial government will help farmers substantially.

"The money is being directed at the producers that need the most help," said Orb.

"I think it's going to be adequate help. We're kind of looking for the federal government's reaction, we haven't seen anything yet."

The Government of Saskatchewan's funding will provide eligible producers with up to \$80 per head to maintain breeding stock for beef cattle, bison, horse, elk, deer, sheep and goats.

The program will be administered by Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC).

With the provincial government responding to livestock producer's needs in an urgent matter, Orb said SARM is hoping the federal government will provide financial assistance as well.

"Livestock producers are wondering if they're going to get some help from the federal government on top of what the province is doing," said Orb.

"I think it's good what the province is doing and I think it's because they realize it's really important, that something needs to be done now."

"If you look at the \$80 the province is putting up, that's very similar to what they would've had to put up in 2021. So 40 per cent of their \$200 per head that was given to livestock producers in that year, that comes to \$80 from the 40 per cent, and the 60 per cent would be the \$120 from the federal government. That's where they got their \$200 in 2021."



"I think that's why the province is doing this, they're leading by example and putting that out there, hoping to convince the feds to throw in their share."

Orb explained how the drought across Saskatchewan has impacted livestock producers.

"There have been some producers that have sold some of their breeding herd already," Orb said.

"I've talked to some producers in the Caron area when I was down there for a meeting, one farmer told me he sold half of his cattle herd already. He said if he didn't get any rain this fall he would be looking at selling the rest, and he may not get back into cattle."

"It also goes to other people who have goats, sheep and things like that, if they're getting to the age where if they're getting out of something they're probably not going to get back into it."

"I think that's something the province is concerned about, is too many producers selling their breeding herds and getting out of the business because that's a big part of Saskatchewan agriculture."

"We want to promote this, especially to young people, but if you see too many of the more experienced people getting out I think it's going to deter younger people from

getting in, and that's not a good signal for the industry."

Other supports by the provincial government have been implemented to help mitigate the situation, including the Government of Saskatchewan and Canada's agreement to increase the 2023 AgriStability interim benefit payment percentage from 50 per cent to 75 per cent, so producers can access a larger portion of their final AgriStability benefit early.

SARM plans visit to Ottawa in Oct.

In October, representatives from SARM will be going to Ottawa to meet Canada's Agriculture Minister, Lawrence MacAulay, to discuss the association's priorities.

"We usually go to Ottawa in October, it's sort of our lobby the hill days," said Orb.

"We'll hopefully be getting a meeting with Minister MacAulay. We sent invitations to his office to see if we can get a meeting with him. If we haven't heard anything about help in Saskatchewan by then, I guess we're going to reformat what the province has been asking for when we get there, but we certainly hope that's not the case and that we can thank the minister of agriculture for their contributions to Saskatchewan agriculture."

"We'll also be talking to Minister MacAulay about, there seems to be fairly constant strikes at the Port of Vancouver. We've asked the transport minister before if the federal government would consider making grain transportation an essential service so that workers would not be able to go on strike, or at least they would have to have someone working there, to keep that port open because Saskatchewan producers lose a lot of money every day when the ships aren't coming in."

"Generally, I think it will be a discussion we have to have with the minister as well about some of the programs that the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) has, with the laws of strychnine. With SARM's registration to control Richardson's ground squirrel, we lost that and so we'll be talking to the minister about that again."

Agricultural water management funding now available

On August 11, the Water Security Agency (WSA) announced \$700,000 for agricultural producers and local governments to complete water management projects. This funding is part of a \$1.5 million two-year commitment announced in 2022-23 to support the continued growth of a sustainable and resilient agricultural sector in Saskatchewan.

"This Agricultural Water Management Fund addresses the cost burden

and other barriers producers and local governments might experience when planning water management projects in Saskatchewan," Minister Responsible for the Water Security Agency Jeremy Cockrill said. "This will provide landowners with the financial support and access to necessary advice, information, and tools they need."

Applicants can receive up to \$95,000 per project based on a cost-sharing approach. It can be used for qualified per-

sons support, technical and engineering costs, and mitigation and rehabilitation works for new agricultural water management projects.

This program is part of WSA's ongoing commitment to supporting the agricultural community in completing and maintaining responsible agricultural water management projects in Saskatchewan. In June, WSA announced a 50 per cent rebate of up to \$100,000 per application for channel clearing and drainage

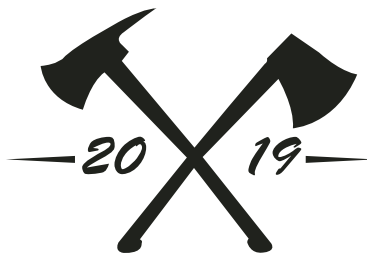
maintenance projects, which will help landowners proactively manage potential flooding and erosion concerns.

WSA is also consulting with landowners to develop an effective Agricultural Water Stewardship Policy that supports both agricultural producers and the environment. That policy is expected to be finalized later this year.

For more information about the Agricultural Water Management Fund, please visit wsask.ca

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USask-developed crop diagnostic tool gaining widespread use

BY MATT OLSON

As Karolina Pusz-Bochenska finishes her PhD in biology at the University of Saskatchewan (USask), the revolutionary crop diagnostic tool she helped develop is already evolving for commercial use.

By utilizing molecular testing techniques, Pusz-Bochenska and a USask research team – with the support of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) – created a cutting-edge tool that is already finding its way into research laboratories and the hands of farmers across the country.

“It’s very satisfying. The best part of my research is when I can harvest my creativity and create something that can later serve people,” she said. “The impact is very important to me.”

Pusz-Bochenska and the research team’s work revolves around the detection of aster yellows, a crop disease that can devastate wheat, barley, and canola yields.

Before the new testing method, diagnosing aster yellows in the field could take days or weeks. Aster yellows is transmitted via leafhopper insects, so the method developed by Pusz-Bochenska and the research team involves the molecular testing of insects and plant tissue in the field to immediately determine if they carry the disease.

Pusz-Bochenska noted the aster yellows testing method has been purchased by three companies, including a lab that works with the Ministry of Agriculture in Quebec. As she puts it, one of the highlights of this kind of work is when it gains widespread approval and use.



USask student Karolina Pusz-Bochenska is currently working on finishing a PhD in biology.

“Since accomplishing a PhD comes with a lot of sacrifice and you have to accept the notion of delayed gratification, this is an ultimate validation for my work’s importance and a driver for my future endeavours,” she said.

The research was initially published in Plant Health Progress in 2020. Since then, Pusz-Bochenska said the paper has been downloaded more than 10,000 times.

While the methods she and the research team developed have been used to diagnose aster yellows, she said the test could be altered for use in diagnosing other diseases in the future.

Their newest method explores what

Pusz-Bochenska calls a “multilocus sequence typing method.” While this method is lab-based, it provides more detailed information about which strain of the disease farmers or agricultural specialists are dealing with. Uncovering the genetic secrets of the aster yellows bacteria contributes to the development of better monitoring and control strategies for the disease.

Pusz-Bochenska called molecular diagnostics her “passion” as a scientist, and said she’s thrilled to see her work move from the lab into the field.

“So often, innovative discoveries go unnoticed because they do not make it beyond the academic realm,” Pusz-Bochenska said. “I hope that my story will inspire more scientists to be bold about their research.”

Pusz-Bochenska credited the researchers—both mentors and colleagues—that she has worked with at USask for their work on this project. Her graduate supervisors are Dr. Tyler Wist (PhD) with AAFC and Dr. Jack Gray (PhD) with USask’s Biology Department in the College of Arts and Science. As she looks ahead to finishing her PhD, Pusz-Bochenska lauded the faculty at USask for the experience she has had so far.

“My experience at USask is not just in the lab, and experiments and classes,” she said. “I always felt like I was part of USask in a broader sense. I’ve met amazing people here.”

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Outlook for livestock feed input suppliers mixed

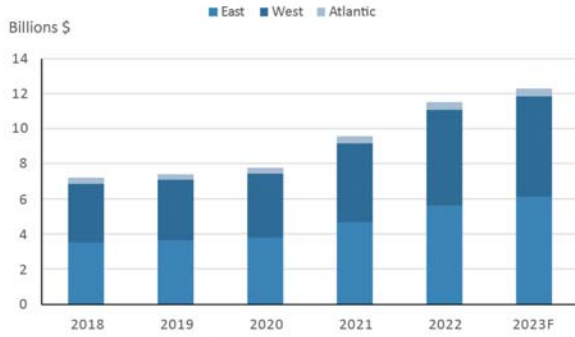


Figure 1. Canadian commercial feed market sales

BY LEIGH ANDERSON
FCC SENIOR ECONOMIST
The Canadian commercial feed market (for example, pelleted rations for cattle, dairy, hog and poultry) grew over 20% in 2022, reaching a record \$11.5 billion in sales. Most of this growth was driven by increases in feed grain prices stemming from Russia's war against Ukraine. The livestock sector has faced numerous years of tight feed supplies and expensive feed grains. High feed costs have pressured profitability throughout the Canadian livestock industry, including feed mill operators, as volatile commodity prices negatively impacted their margins.

We are projecting the Canadian commercial feed market to grow 6.6% in 2023 to \$12.3 billion, driven by strong livestock

receipts and feed grain prices that remain historically high. The Eastern Canadian commercial feed market is expected to have the largest growth at over 9% in 2023 to \$6.1 billion. Eastern Canadian growth is driven by its large dairy sector and an expanding poultry sector. In Western Canada, we are projecting a 4.0% increase in feed sales to \$5.7 billion, largely due to drought conditions and the need to purchase feed. In Atlantic Canada, we are projecting a 7.6% increase in feed sales but recent flooding in Nova Scotia could change that projection.

Drought conditions have once again led to rising feed costs

Feed grain prices did trend down through the first half of 2023. However,

drought conditions in North America have once again led to rising feed costs. Drought conditions have resulted in stressed pastures and reduced hay crops. Provincial crop insurance agencies in Western Canada have moved quickly to allow producers to move poor crops into alternative uses (for example, grazing or baling), which provides some relief to the drought-stricken livestock sector. Corn imports have also risen as the feedlot sector braces for tighter feed supplies as we head into the fall calf-run and winter 2024 feeding. Some cow-calf and feedlot operations have worked with their local feed mills to utilize screening rations with supplements to maintain herds and make up for poor pasture conditions. The fall calf run has al-



ready begun in regions facing extreme drought conditions that are forcing either an earlier weaning of calves or culling of cattle. Increased numbers of cows and heifers are heading to slaughter. A continued contraction of the North American cattle herd was expected as indicated in our top charts to monitor in 2023, but we now expect further contraction. Getting through the drought conditions will be key for these operations. The good news, if any during a drought, is sales are occurring at strong prices, providing cashflow for operations to re-build their herds once pasture conditions improve. However, rebuilding cattle herds following drought and culling is a multi-year initiative. The drought's impact on herd size will ultimately impact feed mill sales into 2024 and beyond. We are currently in a weather market, with volatile feed prices and a market that could now go in either direction depending on weather and its final impact on overall North American produc-

tion.
North American hog sector expected to contract
In addition to high feed costs, profitability challenges in the pork/hog

sector are having impacts throughout the supply chain. The North American hog sector is going through an economic down cycle. Hog herd size is expected to decline as the number of sows bred and farrowings decline across North America. A decline in the hog herd means reduced feed demand in the short run and will weigh on the commercial feed market as farrowings are reduced and fewer hogs are finished in Canada. Hog production declines are expected to occur as the North American sector adapts to reduced pork demand.

Continued on Page B14

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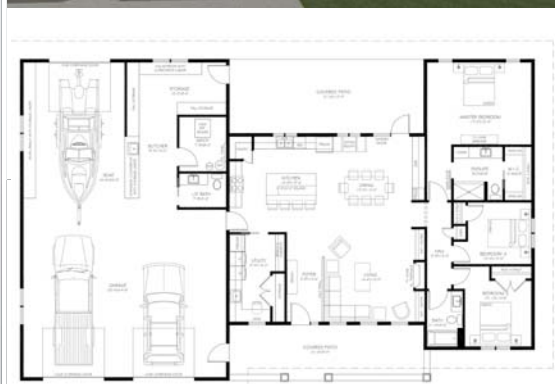


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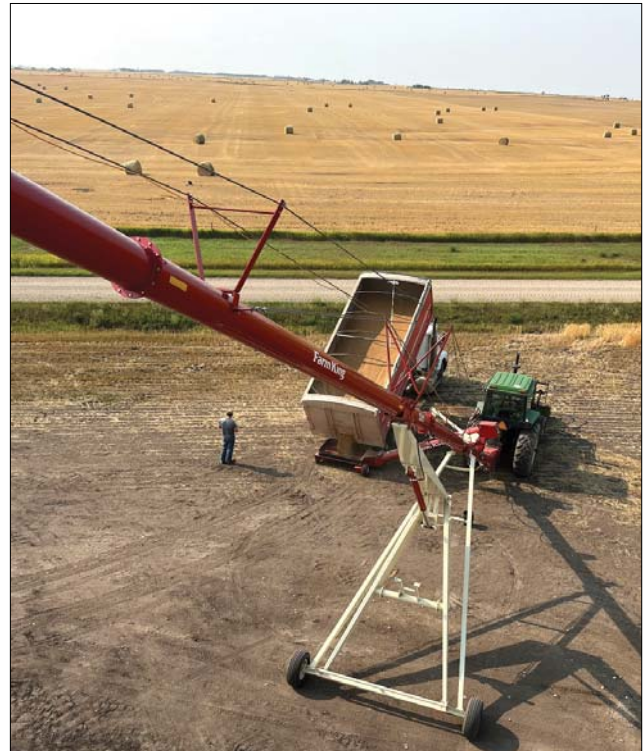
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Precision ranching for improved reproductive and grazing efficiencies

Continued from Page B3

Additionally, the team is evaluating the effectiveness of solar battery-powered GPS tags attached to the ears of cattle in British Columbia. This is specific to that province, because of a common practice that has animals grazing freely in forests, making it difficult for ranchers to know exactly where their animals are at any given time. This component of the research includes the use of drones to track the cows in harsher terrain. While this may seem unconnected to fertility, it's about overall herd management and sustainability, which makes it directly relevant to Susan's project.

"We are also experimenting with the value of using ultrasound to assess the maturity of a heifer's reproductive tract. This technology has existed for a while, but we wanted to dig a little deeper. In our first year of research, we noticed a correlation between a more mature reproductive system and earlier conception. That's useful. If a cow calves earlier in the season, her offspring will be bigger sooner, which is an advantage when the rancher goes to market. What's more, that use of ultrasound is inexpensive making it potentially even more valuable." She pauses. "Really, we're testing existing technologies to see which are effective and which provide the biggest bang for their buck. As we're only a year in, it's too early to draw conclusions. But I can say that so far, the techs tend to be validating each other's results. So, it may come down to price points. If we can identify cost-effective tools capable of predicting a cow's fertility, and then communicate that to farmers, we will be helping to make Canada's beef industry more viable."

The final piece of the puzzle has Susan working with a BC-based software company called LlamaZOO to develop a platform to compile the different data points into one mobile solution that makes it relatively easy for a user to access all the available information. A recent demo of



their progress showed impressive visualizations (i.e., digital twinning) of the ranch layout and cattle data points. CAAIN's support has made the project affordable for



the various industry partners, which include ranches in Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia. They pay for the technology being tested on their animals, but the funding allows them to recover 40% of their costs. The same applies to LlamaZOO, who need to pay for only 60% of their developers' time, an investment they're willing to make because they want to enter the AgTech sector. Exactly the kind of win-win scenario CAAIN was created to facilitate.

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Outlook for livestock feed input suppliers mixed

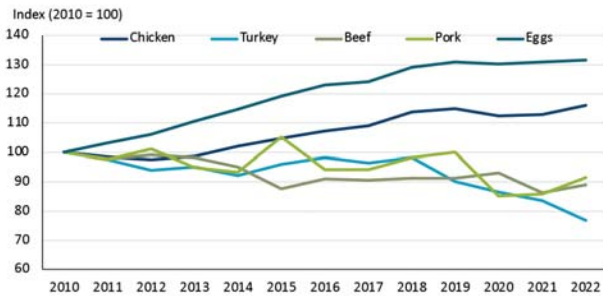


Figure 2. Canadian per capita consumption of selected meat proteins

Continued from Page B9
The current contraction in the hog sector is likely temporary as the hog sector expansion phase will once again return. The hog production contraction and expansion cycle is much shorter than beef at approximately four years.

Challenges in both the cattle and hog sectors will have far-reaching consequences for red meat production in North America and agribusiness input

suppliers.

Expanding poultry sector an area of growing opportunity

Canadians love chicken and eggs. Per capita chicken meat consumption is up 16% since 2010 and eggs are up 32% (Figure 2). Canada's population recently hit 40 million people and is growing at a record pace. Canada's population has a direct impact on the feed supply business, par-

ticularly in Eastern Canada with its larger presence of supply managed sectors (for example, poultry and dairy). Along with having nearly half of the Canadian population, Eastern Canada's immigration levels are rising, which is good news for the Canadian poultry industry (and to a lesser extent the entire livestock industry) and, subsequently, the commercial feed industry.

Growth of oilseed crush disruptor to feed rations

The Canadian canola crush sector is currently undergoing expansion driven by increased emission reduction mandates (for ex-

ample, clean fuel regulations) that are increasing biofuel demand. The crush sector is expected to add approximately 4.5 million tonnes of additional crush capacity by the end of 2024, and 2-plus million additional tonnes in the years following. The additional capacity represents over 3.5 million tonnes of additional canola meal produced. The increased meal will either be exported or used domestically. The most likely scenario is increased use in feed formulations and feed ingredient additives. In the longer term, how livestock is fed in North America will continue to evolve as the expanded soybean and canola crush sector disrupts the industry. It will structurally change what we feed livestock, especially if a surplus of meals become available and cheaper for the livestock sector.

Bottom line

Challenges in both the cattle and hog sectors will have far-reaching consequences for red meat production in North America and agribusinesses input suppliers. Feed mill profitability is expected to be volatile in the short term, but the future looks bright in the long term with additional supplies of feed options, including canola meal and canola screen-

ings, and opportunities to integrate soy meal into feed rations. A growing Cana-

dian population will continue to demand domestically produced meat.

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Les Jack is inducted into National Cutting Horse Association Hall of Fame

BY KARA KINNA

Rocanville's Les Jack was inducted into the National Cutting Horse Association Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Las Vegas on June 24, making him only the fifth Canadian to receive the honor since the association was started in the late 1940s.

Jack has been working with and showing cutting horses since the mid-1990s, a passion he has taken so seriously that he has earned multiple Canadian championships over the years, and an induction into the Canadian Hall of Fame two years ago.

Jack says being inducted into the national hall of fame in the U.S. is a huge honor.

"It comes down to your earnings," says Jack. "Every time we show a horse there are earnings that we get. I had to surpass the half million dollars worth of lifetime earnings."

"It's a pretty humbling deal. It's not a large group of people that get inducted into the hall of fame, as our cutting industry in Canada isn't as large as it is in say Texas and places like that. There haven't been a lot of Canadians inducted into the NCHA Hall of Fame."

"It's huge. I've been showing horses and have been involved in cutting horses since the mid-nineties. I started with no knowledge. I had lots of horse experience that I've had my whole life, but I got connected to some people and got involved in the sport."

"I was a pretty young guy at the time. I'm 56 and was born in '67, so when I started I was younger and I was fortunate to have some horse skills, just not enough skills to be successful with the cutting horses. But I've always been the person that when I decide I want to do something, I want to do it right and I give my full attention to it, and to be able to do that, I've also been very fortunate that I've had great family and we've had a successful business, so financially I could afford to do it later on."

"When we started our business I had to step aside, I couldn't show cutting horses because we had neither the time nor the finances. It's been around the last 20 years that I've been able to take time to train my horses and to develop and build my skill set so that I am able to go and be competitive at a world level."

"I'm pretty sure that I've won the Canadian title more times than anyone ever has in the history of the sport. We've put a lot of effort into it and I have a lot of people to thank for it."

Jack credits his family for supporting him, helping to run the family's business in Rocanville, and allowing him to show cutting horses over the last two decades.

He says he never wants to stop learning about the sport and the horses who lead to his success.

"I love the horses. I've got some natural talents and I know that I have a really good skill set at understanding a horse and understanding the quality of a horse that I need to be competitive. But in the same breath I also understand that it's the horses that have allowed me to get to the level that I am able to be at—



Les Jack with his family in Las Vegas at the induction ceremony into the National Cutting Horse Association Hall of Fame on June 24. From left are his son-in-law Kody Beckett, daughter Monica Beckett, mother-in-law Marilyn Hickie, wife Coreen Jack, Les Jack, and his parents Donna and Herb Jack.



Les Jack and one of his horses in action during a cutting horse competition.

and to stay at that level because I'm not done yet. Every day I'm working with horses. I'm here at the Canadian High School Finals for the rodeo right now, and I'm helping every kid that's in the cutting pen trying to get through some runs. So every day I'm trying to just be better at what I do because I'm not done. I'm learning every day and I'm here at a high school cutting championship and I'm settling the cattle—I'm involved in settling every herd and helping every kid and I'm the guy that learns from ev-

everything I'm going through.

"I read something one day that a friend of mine sent to me and it said, 'The people that think they're successful and aren't worried aren't nearly as successful as the people who think they're not working hard enough.' I worry that I'm not working hard enough to be successful. I don't sit back and say, 'Geez, I'm successful and I can't be beat.' I worry every day that I'm not putting in enough effort, either physically working my horses enough or mentally to get my game in plan.

"I'm the guy that's always trying to either outwork somebody or just to stay competitive. It's a competitive industry, it's a competitive sport and I can't stand losing, but in the same breath I can't stand not putting enough effort in."

What does Jack love so much about the sport of cutting horses in particular?

"When I was a kid we grew up with 4-H, we showed quarter horses, I roped and we were part of a rodeo club," he says. "I did all that and I would never, ever

stop a young person from delving into everything they could possibly do, because you meet so many good people and every opportunity is kind of like a branch on a tree and you just keep growing with it."

"To answer the question, really what drives me to cutting horses is the horse. These horses have to want to do their job because somewhere in the run, we could be as good of an equestrian rider as we can be and we can ride as good as anybody, but that horse has to take over. There will be some time, or several times, in that run where that horse has to be better than you. So you develop a relationship when you're training them because you can't take that want out of that horse. Those horses elevate you to a level because you need to get to their level."

"If you're going to be successful in this sport, in my opinion, you have to understand how to have a relationship with that horse so that it wants to do good for you and they want to take over in the right spots, but at the same time they need to be able to listen to you. It's hard to really understand, and for me to explain, because there's times when I'll put two feet into a horse and say, 'You've gotta go over here,' and then that horse goes, 'Nope, I'm reading this cow differently.' That tells you the high level of that horse when he takes over, buries his tail in the ground and gets in time with the cow and you're left there going, 'Thank you, you just saved me.'"

With multiple championships under his belt, and inductions into the Canadian and National Halls of Fame, what's next for Jack?

"You know I always say, and I say it fairly seriously—I will do this until I can't be competitive," he says. "That's what I always say. When I show up and I don't think that I can be competitive because of my physical weaknesses, my mental weakness, or maybe I'll lose the itch and I just don't want to be that competitive because it takes a lot of effort, I probably won't show anymore."

"But I expect it to be until I'm a fairly old fella. I love it, but in the same breath, at this point, I'm kind of getting to the stage where I really enjoy coaching young people and helping young people. I think that might be something that's in the works maybe for later where I help kids. I enjoy that, but in the same breath I have no intentions of not being competitive—I have no intentions of not seeking out or raising my next great horse."

"We breed our own mares and I've got a two-year-old that we've raised that I think is very good and I love that. He's a little over a year away, from being able to show for the first time, and I'm excited. I think he's another special horse."

"So that keeps driving you. It's kind of like the bait that just doesn't end and gives you hope. You have a great horse and you enjoy it and you appreciate it, but you're always looking for the next one coming."

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Top 4 Canadian agri-food exports to watch for the rest of 2023

BY MARTHA ROBERTS
FCC ECONOMICS EDITOR

Overall global trade is expected to flounder throughout 2023 amidst weaker global economic growth, troublesome inflation and geopolitical turmoil, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It's also changing shape, the UN's latest report notes, with "friend-shoring" (the prioritization of trade partners with similar political values) and less diversity of trade partners characterizing trade patterns since late 2022.

Production of many agri-food products is expected to increase in 2023 year-over-year (YoY), but some of the same forces could constrain their global trade.

Pork exports

For Canada, export volumes of four of our largest-value agrifood products show uniquely distinct patterns relative to levels achieved during the first three years of the pandemic (2020 - 2022). Pork volumes had fallen from their pandemic highs through the first four months of 2023 when they were more in line with volumes exported pre-pandemic in 2018 and 2019 (Figure 1). Similarly, export dollar values have declined. That was almost all due to a drop-off in our exports to China since 2020, when it was our largest market and our exports peaked.

In May and June 2023, exports picked up to levels that had stabilized YoY. While exports to China were still down, and export volumes to Japan, our third-largest market, had also fallen since 2020 by 21.5%, there was some good news.

Canada's pork exports to the U.S. thus far in 2023 are 33.6% higher than 2020 volumes. They've fallen YoY, but our 2022 volumes were the highest of the last five years by a considerable margin. The pandemic did not boost our pork sales there, and they've been growing strongly since.

China, Japan and the U.S. comprised 63% of Canada's total pork export volumes in 2022.

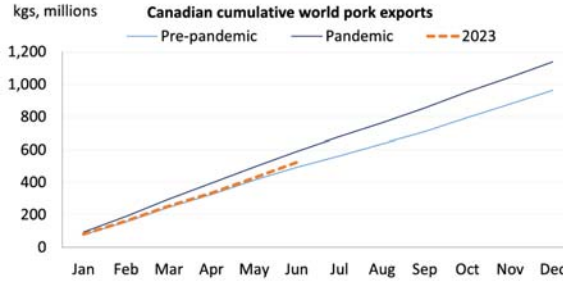


Figure 1: The pandemic boosted overall Canadian pork exports

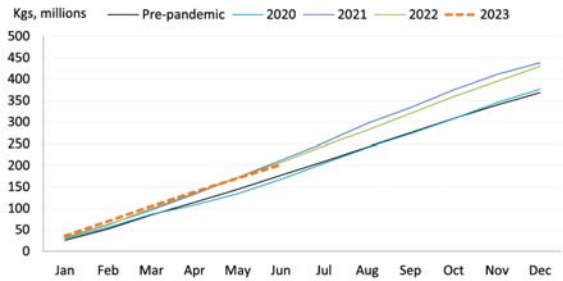


Figure 2: Beef export volumes rebound after pandemic decline

Beef exports

Canadian total beef export volumes since 2018 show an overall slowdown in 2020 and a steady climb through 2021 and 2022. In 2023, export volumes are 7% higher than the five-year average (2018 - 2022)

for the first six months of each year (Figure 2) and are on pace to beat the 2020 and pre-pandemic volumes. They have fallen off the pace set in 2021 and 2022. However, while export volumes are below 2021 and 2022, the value of beef exports continues to exceed 2022 record levels.

Exports to the U.S. have driven growth, where three-quarters of Canadian beef exports go yearly.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the U.S. to Canada's cattle and beef sectors. As the world's largest consumer of beef, they take a healthy chunk — nearly half — of our domestically produced cattle and beef, leaving Canadian producers in a precarious position should, as in 2020, exports to the U.S. start to fall off. But growth to other markets has been challenging.

China has used a single instance of BSE found on a Canadian operation in 2021 to justify halting all beef imports from Canada, a ban still active in 2023. Japan, the second-largest market for Canadian beef, while important is low volume but a focus on high-end cuts. Although our exports to Japan have grown between 2018 and 2022, they've remained low volume, with 13.5 million kilograms shipped there this year. This compares to the 160 million kilograms sent to the U.S. in the first six months of 2023. The situation is another reminder of the urgency to get more Canadian red meat exports over European borders.

Canola exports

Canadian canola export volumes are seeing some much-needed growth in 2023 after a steep decline in 2022 when supplies from the drought-ravaged 2021 crop weren't available. And the re-opening of China's border to Canada's canola in 2022, after three long years of Canadian producers needing to find alternate markets, is also helping (Figure 3).

The impact of the 2021 drought on canola exports was felt in a 29% YoY decline in that year's export volumes, followed by a further 32% YoY fall in 2022. Droughts elsewhere in key regions growing oilseeds used in vegetable oils, along with the growth of oilseed use in the rapidly expanding biofuels market, have produced a global shortage. In Canada, the extent of the damage wiped out the gains made in 2020, when exports climbed 42.8% YoY. Exports to Japan, our second-largest market, drove most of those gains, while growth in our exports to China is driving this year's growth. In fact, China was the top destination for Canadian canola each year except in 2020, between 2018 and 2022.

Continued on Page B19

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Governments of Canada and Manitoba investing up to \$2.85 million for Manitoba beef and forage initiatives

The governments of Canada and Manitoba are investing up to \$2.85 million over the next five years for Manitoba Beef and Forage Initiatives (MBFI) through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) in southwestern Manitoba, federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lawrence MacAulay and Manitoba Agriculture Minister Derek Johnson announced today.

"The Manitoba Beef and Forage Initiatives play an important role in peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and accelerating the adoption of best practices in the cattle sector," said MacAulay. "Support for the organization will ensure they're able to continue conducting innovative research that helps increase productivity while minimizing the sector's carbon footprint."

MBFI is a collaboration between Manitoba Beef Producers, Ducks Unlimited Canada and Manitoba Agriculture to undertake beef and forage research and demonstration trials with extension programming to support increased profitability and environmental sustainability in the beef industry.

"These funds will expand operational capacity for the MBFI program and will play a major role in continuing to create a successful and sustainable environment for beef producers," said Johnson. "The more Manitoba farmers can adopt practices and technologies to increase productivity, mitigate risk and minimize carbon footprints, it will only increase the overall sustainability on our landscape."

The funds will expand MBFI's operational capacity by creating additional positions to focus on technology and field operations, as well as supports for outreach to producers. Funds will also expand the Manitoba Advanced Grazing Systems Mentor Program, connecting producers to peers with real-world experience in di-

verse grazing management systems.

"Through ongoing engagement with our beef and forage communities, MBFI outcomes will lower risks for producers by scientifically evaluating existing practices or creating new practices to promote excellence, efficiency and sustainability of practice on farms," said Tracy Gilson, board chair, MBFI. "The commitment from our collaborators and the provincial and federal governments is critical to accelerating the beef and forage industries."

Developed in 2014, MBFI operates two research and demonstration farms in western Manitoba where farm practices are evaluated at a field scale, including a research herd of more than 130 cow-calf pairs. The Brookdale farm provides the ideal landscape to study the interface between cattle and wetlands, and the Johnson farm provides replicated pastures ideal for research.

Since 2018, MBFI has worked with 28 collaborators to deliver more than 40 innovative studies to improve economic and environmental impacts of beef production. Research and demonstration projects include precision ranching, rangeland drought response, soil health assessment, pasture rejuvenation, habitat assessment, herd health and forage variety testing along with others, noted Johnson.

The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3.5-billion investment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments that supports Canada's agriculture, agri-food and agri-products sectors. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5-billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.



Isabelle's pumpkins are ready to harvest! Cindy Cairns submitted this photo as part of the World-Spectator's Harvest Photo Contest. The photo was taken in Maryfield in her mom's garden.

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Top 4 Canadian agri-food exports to watch for the rest of 2023

Continued from B17

Wheat exports

Overall, wheat exports climbed 14.6% YoY in 2020. The pandemic has boosted Canada's wheat exports from the second quarter of 2020 until August 2021 (Figure 4). This coincided with a period during which concerns about food sovereignty and security were heightened by concerns of supply chain chaos, and the boosted volumes would have likely continued had the 2021 drought not also hit Canadian wheat hard. Post-harvest exports in 2021 dropped off a cliff, and 2022 export volumes were lowered by 50% for the year, despite the YoY production growth in the 2022 crop.

In 2023, the evident growth in 2022 picked up even more momentum. Exports to date are on pace to equal the volumes exported in the first six months of 2021 before the impacts of the drought were felt. While China, our largest export market for wheat, led the gain in 2020, it was also a leader in 2021 and 2022. But this year, growth in our wheat exports is also driven by increases in other key markets. Japan, the U.S. and Indonesia have either boosted or stabilized their import volumes of Canadian wheat over the last four years. Despite

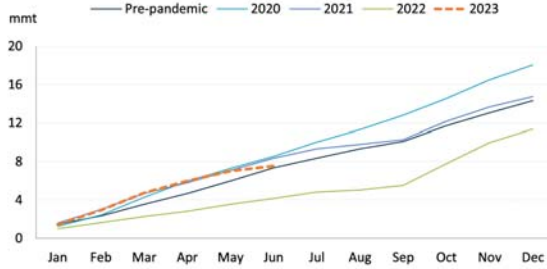


Figure 3: The year of the pandemic's start and the 2021 drought impact on canola exports

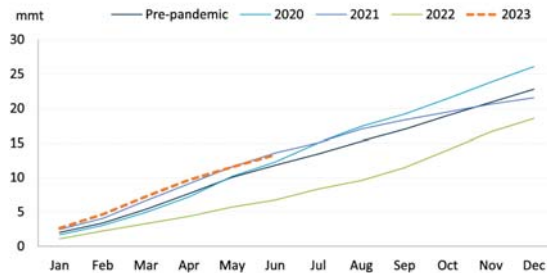


Figure 4: 2023 wheat exports pick up where 2022's growth led

reduced export volumes for both wheat and canola, strong global grain and oilseed prices following Russia's war against Ukraine meant the value of Canadian exports rose sharply as production recovered in the fall of 2022. Given the severity of the current drought impacts on Canadian crops and

livestock, export volumes will likely be impacted for the remainder of 2023 and into 2024. However, exports remain equally important to Canadian agriculture and may off-

set the impact of reduced volumes. The value of exports will largely depend on global supply and demand fundamentals and prices of both crops and livestock.

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