

New facilities add bright prospects for canola

Continued from 14

At 6,500 barrels per day, that could require as much as 350,000 tonnes of canola oil feedstock, if it was all run on canola, and produce between 300 and 325 million litres of oil per year. That, says Gustafson, is about 30 per cent of the canola oil used domestically across Canada in 2019.

And with the provincial and federal government hoping to increase crushing capacity to 15 million tonnes from 10 million tonnes by 2025, Gustafson says the renewable diesel refinery provides a reason to warrant the increase.

"Bringing this value-added processing here in Canada increases that demand for domestic products. It increases the demand for oil, which also increases the demand for domestic crushing."

While the benefits for the agriculture industry are clear, Gustafson admits the benefits of renewable diesel, when compared its biodiesel and fossil fuel counterparts, may not be as readily apparent to the average consumer.

According to Gustafson, biodiesel is closer to a vegetable oil, while the more dramatic refining process that renewable diesel undergoes leaves it looking more like a jet fuel.

This process includes hydrogen and a catalyst, and by using canola as a starting point "no ash or metals" are left in a vehicle's engine when it burns the product.

"The renewable diesel is a drop-in fuel. It's so chemically similar to fossil diesel you can run 100 per cent renewable diesel in any engine, and it will run it just fine," Gustafson said.

"The big drawing card is that, with that 100 per cent drop-in, it's measuring out at about an 85 per cent reduction in GHG emissions throughout the carbon life-

cycle."

Noting that this means the renewable diesel can be used in anything from a Volkswagen Jetta, to a semi, to large industrial equipment, without anything needing to be added, Gustafson adds that the refinery will be a two-stage facility.

This will allow the facility to produce arctic grade renewable diesel with a

cloud point of -40 C, as well as sustainable aviation fuel.

"It's cool to see the way the industry is going, and the direction that fuels and renewable fuels are heading," he said. "We're really excited. We think there's lots of growth opportunity and potential coming down the pipe for the industry itself."



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Moe sees lots of opportunity with irrigation expansion

By Brian Zinchuk,
Local Journalism Initiative
Reporter, *Estevan Mercury*

One of the cornerstone announcements in the last year for the Saskatchewan agriculture sectors has been the launch of the Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Project by the provincial government.

The April 6 budget was the first provincial budget since that announcement, but so far, the dollar figures are relatively small – just \$18.9 million this year for the Westside Expansion Project. But Premier Scott Moe sees a big future, a little further down that water pipeline, as it were.

Asked when will we start seeing big dollars towards that \$4 billion project, Moe replied, “The first phase of that project, I believe, is a pegged at about a half a billion dollars. That’s the expansion of the west side, which will open up ... acres for irrigation. It is really the start of building that industry, that irrigation industry, and changing even the crops and the value of with the crops that we grow in that area, which ultimately leads to the attraction of different value-added food processors that we currently don’t have here in the province.”

He said that would lead Saskatchewan to then leverage the strength of that industry to expand to the entire west side and then ultimately come down with the lower Qu’Appelle project, providing that important water security to communities like Moose Jaw and Regina.

That water security isn’t only important, in the food processing industry, but also in other industries, like the steel industry and potash, that use water. Moe said that it would and provide water security for that entire economic package and ultimately for the people of southeastern Saskatchewan.

“What you’re seeing is we’re moving as quickly as we can on this file, ensuring we’re doing our due diligence at ev-

ery step of the way. But we’ve had the design and architecture engineering firm has been awarded, as we know, to a Saskatchewan firm. And they’re working on some of the design and ultimately, working towards a construction contract where we would start actually moving dirt for that Phase 1 of the project. That’s where we’re into. And moving through Phase 1, you’re going to see that same design and engineering firms start to turn their sights on to Phase 2, as we expect that Phase 1 will have very rapid uptake by the folks that are in that area.”

Moe said it would “most certainly will start to build a very different agriculture industry in certain parts of this province than we have seen in Saskatchewan, over the course of the history of our province, and ultimately, provide that water security for various other industries and municipalities to have for years in the future as well.”

Other ag announcements

The 2021-22 provincial budget includes a \$23.1 million increase to the Ministry of Agriculture budget which will help the industry grow and ensure Saskatchewan producers are able to continue supplying the world with safe, high-quality food, according to a Ministry release. The \$386.9 million agriculture budget represents a six per cent increase from the 2020-21 budget.

“The importance of a secure, reliable and safe food supply chain is essential for our citizens and for our economy,” Agriculture Minister David Marit said in a release. “The 2021-22 agriculture budget will once again fully fund business risk management programs, provide a record level of per-acre coverage under the Crop Insurance Program, continue last year’s



predation caused by wildlife, to address stronger commodity prices. This program is available to all Saskatchewan producers; you do not need to be an existing Crop Insurance customer to qualify for coverage, the Ministry said.

The Ministry of Agriculture said it “remains committed to funding innovation and growth in the industry. The 2021-22 Agriculture budget will also once again include \$32.9 million in funding for agriculture research, which matches last year’s record level of funding for research.”

record investment in agriculture research, and make important investments in irrigation expansion.”

The agriculture budget includes a \$20.6 million increase to business risk management funding, compared to 2020-21. This will provide \$265 million to fund a suite of business risk management programs, which are delivered as part of the federal-provincial Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP).

The \$150.1 million 2021 Crop Insurance Program includes average coverage of \$273 an acre. This is a new record for per-acre coverage under the program and represents an \$11.1 million increase from 2020-21. The 2021 Crop Insurance Program featured additional options for producers seeking to insure their tame hay acres, an increase in Native Forage Establishment Benefit coverage, updates to the base grade for large-seeded Kabuli chickpeas, the introduction of the Commercial Vegetable Pilot Program, and increases to the establishment benefit values for canola, lentils, chickpeas and corn.

This year’s budget also contains an additional \$2 million for the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program, which compensates Saskatchewan producers for

crop damage and

Additional investments will also be made to expand irrigation in Saskatchewan, with an increased \$2.5 million for irrigation development projects. This funding will help to advance projects in areas outside of the Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Project, through existing irrigation development programming. Expanding irrigation is part of Saskatchewan’s 2030 Growth Plan. The Growth Plan also aims to increase crop production to 45 million tonnes, increase livestock cash receipts to \$3.0 billion, double agriculture value-added revenue to \$10 billion and expand agri-food exports to \$20 billion. Once again, the Agriculture budget includes \$71.2 million for strategic programs under the CAP agreement. CAP programs provide funding for agricultural research, markets and trade, value-added agriculture, environmental sustainability and public trust.

The Ministry said that 2020 once again demonstrated the resilience of the Saskatchewan agriculture sector. Producers harvested the second-largest crop on record at more than 39 million tonnes. Saskatchewan agri-food exports also reached a new high last year of \$16.9 billion, accounting for more than 55 per cent of total provincial exports in 2020.

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Dairy farmers find solutions for milk surplus

By Alison Sullivan

Back in February of 2020, Farm Credit Canada had outlined four major trends to watch in 2020 for the Canadian dairy industry. Consumer demand was expected to remain strong, foreign market access was expected to expand, economic resilience was to be tested, and the balance between domestic consumption and production was as always going to be a delicate balance.

No one predicted, even with the global COVID-19 pandemic practically on our doorstep, the turn of events that were about to happen. As the pandemic took hold and schools, restaurants, and businesses started to shut down amid stay-at-home orders, demand for certain agricultural products came crashing down.

The 'delicate balance' mentioned by FCC just a few months prior had been tipped, leaving not just the dairy sector, but other livestock sectors, scrambling to find an open market or processing plant for their product.

By mid-April, Canadian producers had started taking turns dumping milk. While producers were com-

pensated for dumped milk, it was still an exceptionally difficult task for them to carry out.

On May 5, the federal government announced a \$200 million increase in the Canadian Dairy Commission's (CDC) lending capacity to allow them to store more cheese and butter. They also announced the Surplus Food Purchase Program which would provide an initial fund of \$50 million to redistribute food surpluses to food organizations serving those in need.

The contributions from the federal government were helpful in mitigating some of the waste and helping redirect milk to other markets. By mid-May,

over 1 million litres of milk had been donated to food banks in Quebec alone.

Despite quick action on the part of the federal government, the CDC, and dairy producers across the country, many still had to dump milk throughout the year.

To try and help reduce waste, some farmers came up with creative ways to use their milk that couldn't be picked up instead of dumping it. Whether it was investing in a cream separator to make a few products for the family at home or hiring a licenced cheesemaker to come and turn their tank into cheese, each found their way of dealing with the loss.





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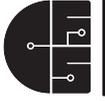
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Connectivity key to rural Sask.'s future

By Jordan Twiss

As Canadians become further removed from the farm gate, their concept of the farm — how it operates, and what life is like there — has become a still-image of the agriculture industry of the past.

For some, this means farms are still thought of as sprawling fields of wheat or corn, or vast swaths of pastureland dotted by cows.

While this vision is an inaccurate representation of the modern farm, Jeremy Welter, District 6 Director of the Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS), says he understands where the misconception comes from.

“When people picture a farmer in their mind, usually, and incorrectly, technology is the farthest thing from their mind,” he said. “The reality is that technology, even on the farm, is as much an integrated part of our day to day lives as any of the big machinery we use.”

Calling technology an essential tool in any producer's toolbox, Welter says the vast majority of producers now practice broad acre farming, and make use of GPS navigation to eliminate overlaps, drive straighter down the field, and decrease fuel, fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide consumption.

As for the big machines themselves, most of them come with cell phone chips pre-installed, allowing dealers to diag-

nose problems and perform updates and repairs remotely.

“The reality at this point is that most of our lives happen, to some extent, online,” Welter said, adding that this is as true for farmers and rural residents as it is for those who live in urban centres.

While this may not be an issue for those who live in cities, where internet connectivity is available at the click of a button, it's becoming a more evident and costly problem for those who live where internet service is spotty or unavailable.

“For producers who run significantly newer equipment, a 10-minute phone call into the service centre to make an adjustment on their combine turns into an \$800 or \$1,000 bill because their combine is sitting in a no-service area,” Welter said.

The issue of rural connectivity has been on APAS' radar for a couple of years now, and the organization had done some preliminary research into the matter. However, Welter says it wasn't until the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic that the full extent of the disparity between rural and urban internet access came into sharp focus.

What's more, it's not just farmers who pay for a lack of access to reliable and affordable internet services, but anyone who calls rural Saskatchewan home and who needs internet access for online shopping or banking, telehealth services, and distance learning.

This means rural women, many of whom contribute to their farms or households by running businesses on the sides, are disproportionately impacted by a lack of internet service.

“It's not just something

that affects us in our business, it affects our families as well,” Welter said.

Hoping to address this issue, APAS formed the Rural Connectivity Task Force in September 2020 and spent six months meeting with academics, researchers, policy experts, and government officials from different levels and branches, in hopes of gaining a fulsome view of how to address the issue of rural connectivity.

While much was learned over those six months, Welter says he was both surprised and not surprised to learn that neither Canada's three large telecommunications companies, nor the provincial government, seem to have a game plan.

“There doesn't seem to be a cohesive plan to connect all of Saskatchewan to some type of affordable, accessible high-speed internet. There's just lots bits of pieces,” he said.

This, and other findings from APAS' six-month long investigation, are encapsulated in the Rural Connectivity Task Force's final report, which was released at the end of March and includes 43 recommendations to improve rural internet and cellular service in Saskatchewan (and across Canada).

Of those recommendations, Welter says there are two key ideas that wouldn't be too difficult for the provincial government to act upon.

First, the report calls upon the province to enact a dig once policy of laying down fibre when workers are already in the ground doing other infrastructure work. Noting that the most expensive aspect of internet rollout is the labour involved in laying down cable, the report says this would eliminate those costs and that the fibre can always be connected at a later date.

Second, the report recommends that

the province seize the advantage of having a Crown telecommunications corporation in SaskTel. Elaborating on this point, Welter says SaskTel is expected to be profitable, but is also expected to act in the public interest.

With estimates that the rollout of high-speed internet to every home in Saskatchewan could deliver an annual boon of \$1.2 billion to the provincial economy, Welter says the province should make ongoing investments in rural internet services.

This, he adds, could take the form of capital investments, but it could also mean allowing small, local internet providers to access SaskTel's infrastructure at cost, thereby improving their competitiveness.

“Rural Connectivity shouldn't be looked at as an expense, it should be looked at as an investment, in much the same way as an investment of education,” Welter said.

“The benefits to the entire province are quite literally incalculable.”

Looking forward, Welter says the Rural Connectivity Task Force's report will become a living document, which the organization will bring to its meetings with government officials to make its case for continued investment in rural internet and cellular services.

In the meantime, both the provincial and federal governments have released 2021 budgets that contain promised funding for these exact initiatives.

In the provincial budget, SaskTel is spending \$85.8 million to continue its Fibre to the X program, which delivers high-speed internet to homes and business across the province. Of this, \$18.2 million will be spent in communities outside the province's nine major urban centres and on Phase 1 of the Rural Fibre Initiative.

Meanwhile, last week's federal budget added \$1 billion to a fund for improving high-speed communications in rural and remote areas, bringing the total to \$2.75 billion by 2026.

Those funds will go into the Universal Broadband Fund, which is designed to support the installation of “backbone” infrastructure that connects underserved communities to high-speed internet.

Ottawa says the additional money will keep it on track to have high-speed broadband in 98 per cent of homes by 2026, and reach 100 per cent coverage by 2030.

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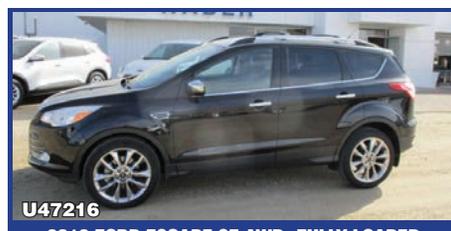
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APAS optimistic bill may lead to carbon tax exemption for grain drying

By Rob Paul, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter, *The World-Spectator*

A Saskatchewan farm group is optimistic that a private member's bill will lead to an exemption from the carbon tax for grain drying and heating on farms, which are dependent on natural gas.

Bill C-206 has passed its second reading and will be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food before returning to the House of Commons for its third reading. If the bill passes through the House it will allow for carbon tax grain drying exemptions.

The bill was introduced by Northumberland—Peterborough South MP Philip Lawrence and seconded by Provencher MP Ted Falk. It received support from all Conservative, NDP, Bloc Quebecois, and Green Members of Parliament.

The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) has supported the passage of Bill-C-206, which would exempt on-farm natural gas and propane use for grain drying and heating from the carbon tax. APAS has been pushing for carbon tax exemptions since the tax was introduced by the federal government.

"Our members have been very concerned about the impact of the federal carbon pricing system on unavoidable energy inputs like fuel to dry grain or heat livestock facilities," said APAS President Todd Lewis. "We have been calling for the federal government to recognize these impacts and provide relief through exemptions, or rebates at the very least. We would like to thank the members of the House of Commons that heard the concerns of producers."

Cost estimates developed by APAS in 2019 and updated

in 2021 showed a \$1.04 per acre production cost increase for wheat, rising to \$4.44 per acre by 2030.

The APAS estimates were calculated using key indirect costs that are not exempt from carbon taxation, such as rail and road transportation, electricity, and grain drying. These costs would be even higher in years like 2019, when most of the grain and oilseed crop required grain drying due to a wet harvest.

"We have argued for years that producers cannot pass these additional costs along to our customers, and that they further reduce our financial viability," Lewis said. "This additional cost of carbon taxation does not help to solve the problem of carbon emissions."

In December 2020, the federal government announced that the carbon tax will increase to \$170 per tonne by 2030. In January, APAS released updated estimates of the impacts the carbon tax will have on agriculture.

"Our updated numbers show that the cost of producing wheat could go up to over \$12.50 per acre in 2030 due to the carbon tax," said Lewis. "This cost increase is carried entirely by farmers and can't be passed along to our customers. We're looking at a reduction of net farm income by hundreds of millions of dollars in Saskatchewan alone, and the modest rebates provided by the federal government won't make up for these losses. It's unsustainable for our members."

"The carbon tax is designed to provide incentives to reduce energy consumption, but these dramatic cost increases will decrease our ability to adopt the new technologies that help us do just that. In some cases, producers will pay for efficiency gains like high-capacity grain hopper cars through their freight rates, and yet those cost savings will go to the railways. Our members expect us to

stay on this issue until our concerns are heard."

Lewis isn't only worried about the economic impact of a carbon tax, but APAS has concerns that it will actually cause a negative environmental impact as well.

"When you add costs to a producer's bottom line it creates incentives for them to convert grasslands and other natural carbon sinks into cropland just to remain viable," he said. "That works directly against the goals of the policy. Agricultural producers have waited decades to see some recognition of our environmental stewardship, and we have seen a lot of lip service, but not much concrete action."

With the bill passing through its second reading in the House, Lewis sees it not only as a big step for the agriculture community, but a big step in members of parliament gaining a better understanding of grain drying and how impactful the carbon tax will be on it.

"The C-206 passing (second reading) is good news, especially with the people voting in favour of it being all the opposition parties and even one member of the Liberal caucus did as well," he said. "I think having support from all parties is pretty significant—even the Green Party is on our side with it."

"Obviously we've gained some traction and understanding around how important grain drying is and there really are no alternatives to using propane and natural gas to dry grain. I think that was a real positive and after the bill passed the government has said they're going to look at grain drying so there's been some movement there as well whether it be with a rebate program or an exemption or whatever they're going to come up with. It's very positive on both sides and we've seen all political parties in Ottawa recognize that it's an issue."

Since the introduction of the carbon tax, Lewis and APAS have made lobbying for exemptions a priority and now they're beginning to see the hard work come to fruition.

"We've had a long sustained lobby on this and I know we'll continue to push it every chance we (get to) talk to decision makers," he said. "It goes to show with the passing of C-206—especially in a minority parliament—how important this is to be in touch with all parties down in Ottawa. You never know where support might be needed and it's always good to talk to opposition and government members and that's something we've really strived to do over the years. We want to approach everyone in Ottawa to tell them what we're lobbying on and what our concerns are and certainly in a minority parliament it's paid some dividends."

Seeing their efforts pay off has been huge for APAS says Lewis, and it only furthers their drive to continue to ensure there's a stronger understanding of agriculture and the negative impact a carbon tax can have on Canada's producers.

Continued on page 21

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APAS optimistic bill may lead to carbon tax exemption for grain drying

Continued from 20

"Farmers support the ag groups and certainly our membership has given lots of feedback about Bill C-206 and also another bill about farm transport," he said. "Those are both good examples of long-term lobbying efforts that we've been doing for a number of years.

"Sometimes it seems like you're out there just spinning your wheels, but we're finally getting some traction—especially on the carbon pricing model. It's so important to get these exemptions right to start with and we look forward to continuing to tell agriculture's story when it comes to things like carbon sequestration and carbon sinks on both pasture land and crop land in Saskatchewan, we're world leaders and hopefully we'll see some traction on that—same thing with clean fuel standards. The carbon file is getting to be more and more relevant and of course agriculture is really part

of the solution."

The environmental changes in modern agriculture over the last few decades have been vast and Lewis thinks there's starting to become a better grasp by decision makers of just how important these changes have been.

"I think there is a general understanding now," he said. "We saw last week, members of parliament from coast-to-coast—it's safe to say that two to three years ago they didn't even know the grain was dried—voting on this. There's more and more understanding around modern agriculture and what we have done for the environment and there's a lot of opportunities for recognition of what we do. We're always trying to make improvements, nobody is saying that agriculture can't improve its carbon management, but at the same time, we've been doing it for years and we will continue to with or without carbon pricing."

Future-friendly crops: A national goal

With climate change becoming a more prominent issue in the world, many people are concerned about how it will affect agriculture – and by extension – food supply. Farmers are at the mercy of Mother Nature and irregular rainfall and heat waves can make or break crops across the country.

By looking at how plants respond to environmental stresses, plant physiologists across Canada are working to help ensure Canadian farmers can grow successful crops year after year. By focusing on physiological traits and how they respond under stress, researchers are working closely with breeders to develop plant varieties that can better perform under extreme climates.

From the Atlantic provinces to the prairies and all the way to British Columbia, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) plant physiologists are working together to evaluate plant varieties that will succeed through a variety of environmental stresses in the future.

Plant Physiology on the Prairies

In Saskatchewan, AAFC research scientists Raju Soolanayakanahally and Jatinder Sangha have spent years researching prairie crops and how they react to stresses. By collaborating with plant breeders, they are poised to identify physiological traits that improve crop yields and prepare for climate change across the Prairies.

Plant physiologist Raju Soolanayakanahally's research is focused on canola and how it's affected by drought and heat stresses. Combinations of these two stresses can decrease crop yields significantly costing farmers' money and resources. Identifying canola lines that use water and nitrogen more efficiently is a key step to improving yields under stress conditions. "We're screening

large numbers of canola lines to determine which ones can make the most stress-resilient crops," says Soolanayakanahally. "Stress-resilient crops save farmers' money and resources, helping Canadian farmers succeed even through climate change."

Located in southern Saskatchewan, Jatinder Sangha is focused on wheat, a common crop of the semi-arid prairies. "We're working to create better varieties for farmers," says Sangha, "Improving crop resiliency, productivity, quality and profits are areas that growers can get excited about." Sangha is also involved in research about how to improve screening of Deoxynivalenol (DON), a toxin produced by Fusarium head blight disease in wheat that affects crop growth, and is supporting the work to develop plant breeds resistant to disease. By collaborating with wheat breeders, plant pathologists, geneticists, biochemists, and even engineers at AAFC, these experts are driving innovation that helps Canadians.



Dr. Jatinder Sangha stands in front of some of the many wheat plots he studies near Swift Current, Sask.



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Calls to Farm Stress Line increasing

By Rob Paul, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
The World-Spectator

Many producers have turned to the Farm Stress Line to help deal with some of the stress and feelings of isolation brought on by the job.

Acting Executive Director of Saskatchewan Mobile Crisis Services which oversees the Farm Stress Line, Jan Thorson, says that in the last quarter of 2020 the agency an increase in calls.

"I can certainly say for the last quarter with what we have statistically available to us, yes we did see an uptake over the summer and into the fall. We don't have our early winter statistics back yet, but I would suggest that there's been a slight drop-off just because of the time of year and the stresses of farming aren't as great in the winter in many cases. We suspect that will turn around again in the spring and we will see more calls to the line," Thorson said.

The Farm Stress Line provides a service to producers in Saskatchewan who feel the pressure of their job and provides an opportunity to normalize their concerns.

"The Farm Stress Line is a gateway service. It's a place to bring your immediate concerns, talk with a professionally trained counsellor who can help you normalize some of the things you're going through, and help you decide if you need more help. We have a resource

bank of referrals that we can make for people if they feel they need more help. I think the main thing we do is provide normalization, assure people that this is a normal response to a very difficult situation across the globe. We encourage them to call us at any time as often as they need to if that will be helpful for them," said Thorson.

Concerns raised by producers were largely around the stress of being isolated during the pandemic, with the public health orders making it difficult to meet in person. Thorson noted that the increase in isolation due to the pandemic has led to increased depression amongst the producers who have contacted them.

"The main issues brought up to us are around mental health concerns, concerns about depression, isolation, those kinds of things. Family disputes and addictions too."

Thorson explained that they have been implementing a new system to help track COVID-19 related concerns from producers as they currently do not have a system in place.

This new system as it's implemented will provide Mobile Crisis Services with additional information and will better allow them to keep track of statistics.

"It's not something that we track spe-



or zoom meetings. I would really encourage them to reach out to someone they're close to at least once a day."

Thorson also reminds producers to participate in some self-care, which can help reduce stress.

"Go easy on yourself, everybody is suffering right now and it's okay to not be managing this as well as you may think you should be. Whatever you feel you need to do to make yourself feel better is fine unless it's destructive.

Eat properly, get some rest, exercise, all those things contribute to your overall well-being all the time and they're particularly important during a pandemic."

If a producer is feeling that they need additional help, Thorson says that they provide recommendation services to callers who feel they may need them. This service gets callers in contact with professionals who can better help them.

Thorson explained that they see seasonal increases and decreases in calls to the Farm Stress Line, but have been seeing more since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Farm Stress Line is available 24/7 and can be reached at 1-800-667-4442

The Mobile Crisis Services also provides services for gambling addictions and a suicide hotline as well as a general crisis hotline for those who need it.

With the stress of COVID-19 at the forefront of many producer's minds, Thorson reminds farmers of a few ways to deal with some of the stress.

"I would say, particularly during COVID, it's very important to maintain contact with your friends or family, whether that be through telephone calls

specifically with our statistics, but we made some changes so we will be able to do that, but it won't be until down the road until we get that data back. But I think what's been hard for farmers has been the isolation that the current health orders have produced. And I'd say that across the board for all our clients, that's been very difficult for people, particularly people who live alone or do not have access to a friend or family group, don't have great wi-fi or internet access."

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Barley genome: a gift beer drinkers can toast

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) has led the first project to sequence a Canadian variety of malting barley. While this might not immediately excite the average barley consumer, it is a big step towards better barley and better beer — one worth raising a glass to!

Simply put, a genome is the genetic code of a living organism. By understanding the genetic code of crops like barley, scientists are better able to predict how the crop will fare under different conditions, such as drought or extreme temperatures, or what quality the end product might have. In turn, this allows plant breeders to select favourable traits. These traits make the crop more profitable, which appeals to farmers and end-users. And that means more barley for all of us.

“As new sequencing technology is evolving, the process of sequencing an entire genome is easier than it was just a few years ago, but assembling a big genome like barley is still not a piece of cake,” notes Dr. Wayne Xu, who works at AAFC’s Morden Research and Development Centre, in Manitoba. Dr. Xu is the biology study leader in bioinformatics and led the assembly of the barley variety AAC Synergy genome. “Nowadays the problem is not about generating sequencing data — the problem now is to have bioinformatics experts and hardware that can compute the data.”

For comparison, the human genome, completed by a multinational team of researchers in 2002, took 12 years to assemble and cost almost \$3 billion dollars (USD). The much larger wheat genome took 14 years to assemble and was completed in 2019. Thanks to advances in bioinformatics, it cost just \$75 million (USD).

International collaboration on sequencing the barley genome began in 2006, but not until 2019 did work begin that focused exclusively on one of Canada’s most planted malting barley varieties: AAC Synergy. Amazingly, the se-



Dr. Ana Badea assess barley in the greenhouse of the Brandon Research and Development Centre.

quencing and assembling of this large genome was done in just one year!

This work is part of a larger project that looks at both barley and oat genomes. It’s called “Targeted and Useful Genomics for Barley and Oat” or “TUGBOAT” for short, and is led by two AAFC scientists, Dr. Nick Tinker (lead) and Dr. Ana Badea (co-lead).

“Not only does this add to the international research community’s understanding of the barley genome, it gives Canadian researchers and breeders more data about the barleys adapted to Canada,” said Dr. Tinker. “By working on both oat and barley, our team is learning more about how to integrate this information into breeding programs, and we make better use of experts who can contribute to both crops.”

Dr. Tinker adds, “It’s important to remember that genes are like needles in the proverbial haystack — and we have only just finished finding the haystack!”

Breeding for beer, feed, and food

As a barley breeder, Dr. Badea is focusing on the development of barley cultivars for western Canada — where about 95 per cent of Canada’s barley is grown. She notes that this genome work is essential for diversity analyses, gene discovery, and molecular marker development, which is important in breeding.

Because North American barley has evolved distinctly from European varieties since it was introduced in the 1600s, the team expects there will be small region-scale differences in the crop’s quality and tolerance to environmental stressors. These could only be discovered by having the full DNA sequence for Canadian barleys, such as AAC Synergy, to compare to barley genomes of different origins. Since many traits are controlled by the presence or absence of genes, having only one reference genome means researchers would never find these genes if they were not present in that one reference genome. These detailed differences are key in breeding and genetic work.

Given that it normally takes about a decade to develop a new crop variety, these genomic tools are an important leg up in ensuring the breeders are on the right track as early as possible.

“Since AAC Synergy is a high yielding malting barley, it will give Canadian breeders the ability to make selections for yield and malting quality at early stages in the breeding program — this could greatly increase the chances of developing good new malting varieties,” says Dr.

Badea.

But what’s the big deal about malting barley? Why are researchers so focused on it? It is the barley used in beer, and it requires special traits to do its job in the beer-making process. It is the highest quality available — it gets the premium price into producers’ pockets. Canada is known as a world leader in high quality malting barley.

First, the barley must be one of a handful of varieties recommended for malting, which involves years of malting analysis to ensure the variety is likely to produce grains that will meet the quality test. Secondly, the grain must be graded as malt quality when the producer delivers it to his or her buyer. In a given year, ap-

proximately 75 per cent of the harvested malt barley does not meet the grading standards for use in brewing and is subsequently used as live-stock feed.

During the past decade, of the total global barley consumption, about 65 per cent was used as feed, about 20 per cent for industrial use (which includes malting), and a small amount (five per cent) was used for food, while the rest was used for other purposes.

So while beer drinkers might not spend too much time thinking about barley genomes, they can rest assured that the barley breeders and researchers are. And it’s helping to improve their future pints of beer.

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Feds to sow farm-based climate research hub in Sask.

By Nick Pearce, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter, *The StarPhoenix*

The federal government wants to plant the seed of an open air climate change laboratory on Saskatchewan farmland.

Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Marie-Claude Bibeau wants the lab to act as a hub, bringing farmers and scientists together to find best practices for a sector facing the brunt of climate change.

"The aim of this program is for every province in Canada to have at least one hub of collaboration," she said on Thursday.

"Each hub will centre on real farms where farmers and researchers can co-develop and widely share their best practices."

The federal government has earmarked \$185 million over the next 10 years to kick-start the project. The first phase launches April 1 and aims to create proposals for the hubs, known as "living labs," by offering grants of up to \$100,000.

The second phase is slated to begin in the fall; up to \$10 million is to be spent per project.

Indigenous organizations and non-profit groups may also be considered for funding, a news release added.

The money is an expansion of the federal government's living labs program, which is currently active in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island.

Some of the practices up for study include cover crops, intercropping, conversion of marginal land to permanent cover, shelterbelts,

nutrient management, and inclusion of pulse crops in rotations, a Thursday news release said.

Federal funding for farm research is positive, but "the devil is always in the details," said Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) President Todd Lewis.

If the projects are successful, it could reveal valuable information about farming in Saskatchewan, he said.

Saskatchewan producers are open to research opportunities and benefit from close ties with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, he said. First Nations in Saskatchewan with large agricultural footprints may also be strong candidates, Lewis added.

Farm groups encouraging their members to participate could help uptake, but that also goes for individual producers looking to improve their best practices.

Lewis pointed to shelterbelts as an example of a strong possible research project. Many of the lines of trees and shrubs forming barriers on farmland have been removed in Saskatchewan, making them prime targets for study.

Ongoing issues with pollinators may also mean they're well suited to be re-established, potentially as a collaboration between researchers, canola growers and APAS members, Lewis said.

"Hopefully, the money's accessible and we're able to get some good projects up and running."

U of S research to catch cattle diseases early

By Nick Pearce, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter *The StarPhoenix*

Gregg Adams can imagine saving a herd of cattle from an outbreak of a deadly disease in the span of hours.

The University of Saskatchewan professor is heading a multidisciplinary research project that could bring high-tech solutions to age-old problems of disease facing cattle and bison herds.

"Our new genomic and imaging technology allows us to look at little molecules like DNA and microbes ... opening a window that we never could see through before," Adams said.

"It's going to open up a lot of possibilities that we can't imagine at the moment."

The project, called "Integrated omics for sustainable animal agriculture and environmental stewardship (IntegrOmics)," collects big sets of data like genetic information from animals and helps connect it with physical traits, he said.

That means a farmer can soon pluck a hair from an animal, feed it into a hand-held device, and get a detailed assessment of the animal's genetic traits that was once unimaginable. With the information, farmers can

spot resistances to maladies like bovine respiratory disease — one of cattle's biggest killers, Adams said.

From there, farmers can select animals for breeding with inherent disease resistance.

Another example Adams uses is tackling pregnancy loss in a herd. Previously, taking samples to a lab for a postmortem could take a week to 10 days when intervention is most needed, he said. The new tools would allow that action to be taken before an outbreak occurs.

The technology has the potential to be used for bison conservation efforts as more First Nations reintroduce the animals to their lands, he noted. Researchers can use the data to find why some bison carry an endemic disease, while others don't. Comparing the groups can create a screening tool to flag animals with resistances.

DNA sequencers used to be the size of football fields, but now they can be carried in the palm of a researcher's hand, Adams noted. He said they even have the potential to address problems like mad cow disease, assuming the tools are available at the time.

"One's imagination is the limit," Adams said. "It's kind of overwhelming at first. You go, 'Wow, look at the possibilities.'"

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Under the provisions of *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulations Act, 1997*;

Notice is hereby given that Martin's Lake Regional Park has applied to the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA) for a Special Use - Sports Facility Golf Club permit to sell alcohol in the premises known as Martin's Lake Clubhouse at NW 29-46-07 W3 Leask (RM) SK.

Written objections to the granting of the permit may be filed with SLGA not more than two weeks from the date of publication of this notice.

Every person filing a written objection with SLGA shall state their name, address, and telephone number in printed form, as well as the grounds for the objection(s). Petitions must name a contact person, state grounds, and be legible. Each signatory to the petition and the contact person must provide an address and telephone number. Frivolous, vexatious or competition-based objections within the beverage alcohol industry may not be considered and may be rejected by the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission, who may refuse to hold a hearing.

Write to:
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority
Box 5054
REGINA, SK S4P 3M3

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BULLS FOR SALE
- Big Valley Charolais, polled yearlings & long yearlings, breeding for calving ease, good temperaments, milk and hair coats. Contact Ervin Lavallee at Mayfair: 306-246-4673 or call/text 306-549-7485. 5-21

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Black Angus Bulls, Private Treaty. Low to moderate feed ration, extensive vitamin and mineral program, semen tested, up to date vaccinations, low to moderate birthing weights. 4km south of Shellbrook Campground on pavement. Watch for signs! West side. We don't just raise bulls, we develop them. Special thanks to past and present customers Cell: 306-747-9559 Home: 306-747-3321 14-25

RED AND BLACK
quality Salers purebred registered bulls and replacement heifers for sale. Robert Stieb 306-747-3302 8-17

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- Smooth Brome, Meadow Brome, Alfalfa, Timothy, Clovers, Cicer Milkvetch, custom blends available. Delivery available. 306-342-4290 or 306-342-7695, Siklenka Seeds, Glaslyn, Sask. 15-24

LAND FOR RENT
PASTURE LAND FOR RENT in Shell Lake. Contact 780-296-4800. 4-20

WANTED
WANTED - A small riding garden tractor/tiller in good condition. Call Sandra 306-468-2734 3-17

HELP WANTED

DELARONDE RESORT IS HIRING
a Resort Assistant. \$17.50/hour 35 hrs/week starting July 1/21. No experience necessary. Email resume to rhaselfstorage@gmail.com 1-17

SHELLBROOK MOTEL hiring for one laundry and one housekeeping position. Please call or drop off resume at motel. 306-747-2631 TF

SERVICES

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Rosalyn or Donna
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MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

FOR SALE - Two slip tanks and two storage tanks, 500 and 1000 gallon with pumps. Call 306-466-7733. 3-19

FOR SALE - Railway Gravel at Village of Parkside, \$10.00/yard. Contact Village of Parkside 306-747-2235 (Tuesdays) or David Moe 306-747-2275. 2-17

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FOR SALE - 2014 Elkridge 5th Wheel Camper, 3 slides, full bath, King size bed, a/c & many more features. Clean and gently used. Call 306 883-7305 Ask for Paul 3-19

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FOR SALE - 12 ft. Aluminum boat with 4.5 hp Mercury motor, very good condition. Located at Emerald Lake. Call 306-948-7629 for details. 2-17

HAY FOR SALE

ROUND HAY BALES for sale. Ph: 306-468-4101 2-18

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4:00 p.m.

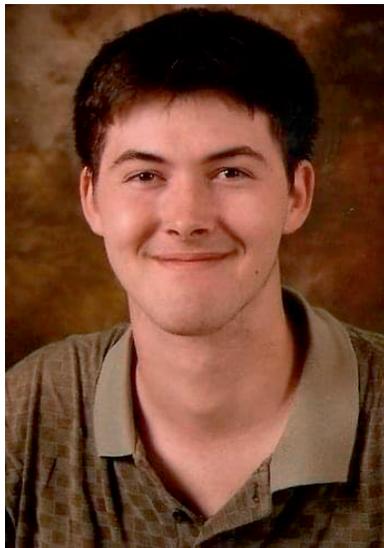
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Email: **chads@sbchron.com**
Shellbrook Chronicle
Spiritwood Herald

Classifieds Work!
306-747-2442



Missing: James Turgeon

Date of Birth: Jan 25, 1990
FROM: Battleford, SK
Weight: 250 Lbs.
Eyes: Green/Grey
MISSING SINCE: April 17, 2012
Height: 6' 4"
Hair: Brown
File: 2012-432352

CHARACTERISTICS: James is soft-spoken. He is very polite and has a gentle nature.

PARTICULARS: He enjoys social interactions, has a good sense of humor and enjoys learning.

Anyone with information, please contact Local Police or Child Find at 1.800.513.3463 or 306.955.0070
All calls are confidential - you do not have to leave your name

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