

OCTOBER 2023



Joey Light and Kevin Weedmark photos

Scenes from the 2023 harvest day for Harvest of Hope north of Moosomin, the largest Saskatchewan growing project for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

## Harvest of Hope wraps up 2023 harvest

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

It's been another successful year for the Harvest of Hope in Moosomin with the labours of many volunteers helping the ultimate goal of feeding the world. Harvest on the 275-acre project north of Moosomin wrapped up recently, and as the last bits of grain made their way into the bin, flakes of snow soon followed.

While there are still bills to be paid such as fall rent and fertilizer, an estimated \$84,000 was generated in gross revenue so far.

"There is an amazing community of farmers and agricultural businesses here

in Moosomin, and they've stepped up to partner with us to say 'we'd like to take all bite out of the issue of food security,'" said Kyle Penner, co-ordinator of the Harvest of Hope growing project. "As we wrap up the year, we will be putting the whole list together. I don't want to miss anyone right now."

Funds raised locally go to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which are then eligible to be matched by the government of Canada. With this support, the Foodgrains Bank (through 15 member agencies) can leverage donations from individuals, churches and businesses up to a 4:1 ratio. This means up to \$25 million each year devoted

to food assistance in the developing world.

"The incredible impact of charity work like this is why I stay involved," Penner said.

Some amazing statistics from the Foodgrains Bank illustrate the continued need for food security. The overwhelming majority of people experiencing hunger (98 per cent) live in developing countries. Ironically, many of those experiencing hunger produce food for a living (70 per cent). War is also a factor as 60 per cent of those who are hungry live in countries affected by conflict.

While thoughts turn to images of famine or drought as a root cause for this hun-

ger, a better explanation would be when people do not have enough nutritious food over a long period of time. An estimated 783 million people simply do not have regular access to nutritious food; 20 per cent of those are under the age of five.

This is the impetus behind the Harvest of Hope—to help feed the world through a local response.

The Harvest of Hope project is the largest growing project in Saskatchewan for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

As the farmers and volunteers gathered for the harvest, staff from Conexus Credit Union prepared lunch for the volunteers.

*Continued on page C2*



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# Harvest of Hope wraps up 2023 harvest

Continued from front

Harvest of Hope and other growing projects in Saskatchewan play a major role in supporting the Canadian Foodgrains Bank mission of alleviating world hunger.

Rick Block, Regional Representative for Saskatchewan of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, said the province alone contributed \$2.7 million last year to the non-profit organization.

"In terms of this past fiscal year, the Foodgrains Bank brought in a total of just over \$21 million in donations," said Block. "That's by individuals, that's by businesses, and also numerous growing projects and community events in Canada."

"There would be approximately 200 growing projects and community events across Canada. In Saskatchewan we have more of the community events, as well, we have just over 40 of these growing projects."

Funds raised from growing projects and community events are donated to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. The organization then provides food assistance for people in need around the world.

The federal government matches donations to the Foodgrains Bank, allowing the help to go further.

"Of that \$21 million of donations, Saskatchewan raised \$2.7 million of that total, and of that \$2.7 million, about \$1.2 million came from growing projects and a few community events," Block said.

"We're definitely just about that 45 per cent mark, and we reflected that in Saskatchewan."

"It might go down to 40 per cent if you look nation wide, but really that is a significant bulk of our donation income that really comes from the concept of people working together saying, 'hey, we're better off working together to help alleviate hunger.'"

"That's really been a blueprint of the Foodgrains Bank since day one, you even see it in the structure throughout the organization. All of these organizations that say 'if we work together, we're able to accomplish a lot more than if we were each an individual agency doing its own thing.' That's then reflected down to the community grassroots level. Harvest of Hope is a great example of that."

One of the growing projects in the province that contributes to Canadians Foodgrains Bank locally is Harvest of Hope in Moosomin. Harvest of Hope is the largest project in Saskatchewan.

Last year, Harvest of Hope brought in revenue of \$130,000 and after input costs, an estimated \$70,000 was donated to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Volunteers help take off the crop for Harvest of Hope.  
Joey Light photo



For this year, there are close to 35 growing projects in Saskatchewan.

"There's 33 registered projects, two of them are in limbo, but one of the projects, which is called Grow Hope Saskatchewan, has six locations," said Block.

"It's a bit of a network of farm families that offer acres. There are 37 field sites that are part of Foodgrains projects."

"Harvest of Hope in Moosomin really represents all the pieces of a traditional growing project."

With Harvest of Hope being the largest growing project in the province, Block was asked how it compares to other projects.

"You see a great cross-section of people that are involved, businesses will step up. For example whenever we are going out there, the Credit Union will say let's provide lunch, Borderland Co-op will provide fuel, companies are saying we'll bring machines, along with individuals who are offering the use of their machines and their time."

"One of the things that's very unique with Harvest of Hope is its size. It is the largest growing project in Saskatchewan."

"There are a few larger across Canada, but only a few—my guess is it would

be in the top five in the whole country. Harvest of Hope is at 288 acres, farming two quarter sections.

"At 288 acres, that's a lot of input. Often we see projects that are 80 acres or 100 acres, they can get a lot of their inputs often covered, but at 288 acres, that's going to require a good amount of partnership building and also some financial management."

"I really credit the Moosomin Harvest of Hope for the way they've done that. They have done that very successfully."

"Alongside growing projects, there are individual farms and farmers that continue on an annual basis. It might not officially be registered as a growing project, but they're providing grain donations on an annual basis, it almost acts like a growing project."

"We're in our 40th anniversary year, and there's always new people coming to the table to support our work, and there's people who have been doing it for 40 years."

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Canola 4R Advantage provides funding for fertilizer best management practices (BMPs).

# Experiment with three soils tests from one field

BY WARREN WARD

Want to take your fertilizer management up a notch? Here is a low-cost test that could provide some valuable insight into field variability: Choose an underperforming field and submit soil samples this fall from three target areas—hill tops, mid slopes and low spots.

The most common soil testing method is to submit one sample per field. The sample is based on 10 to 20 cores collected from mid-slope “average” areas, often split into 0-6” and 6-12” or 6-24” depths. Mid-slope areas are usually the most consistent, yield-wise, and account for most of the acres. So if farms are collecting one composite sample per field, this practice provides a good baseline fertilizer rate.

However, these mid-slope samples miss low-performing or inconsistent-performing hill tops and low areas. By spending a couple hundred dollars to collect and analyze two extra samples from one field, farms will gain new insight that could change the way they manage the farm.

For example, if soil analysis shows that hill tops are low in sulphur, farmers could spread extra sulphur on a few hills, since canola is a crop with relatively high sulphur requirements. Use those test hills as check strips, and see if they show a difference in next year’s combine yield map.

Consult with an agronomist to help decide how to use the results and whether targeted applications or check strips make sense.

Even if these extra two tests for one field don’t inspire a change in approach for 2024, they will provide some real numbers to quantify nutrient and soil variability. With that discovery, farms can start to see how, or if, that field variability might be enough to justify investment in a variable-rate system.

### The best time to soil test

Soil sampling just prior to seeding provides the most accurate measure of nutrients available to the crop, but fall soil sampling can be almost as accurate and has various advantages:

- Less time pressure to get samples collected and analyzed
- More time for fertilizer planning
- Potential to buy the right amount of fertilizer at a lower price

The best time for fall sampling is after soil has cooled to at least 10°C. Cool soils reduce the microbial activity that can mobilize nutrients. Soil samples collected after this activity slows down will more closely reflect spring soil nitrate content.

### Get funding for soil testing

Canola 4R Advantage provides funding for fertilizer best management practices (BMPs). The program can reimburse growers up to \$20,000 for soil testing and, if

growers choose, another \$20,000 for consulting services to develop field zone mapping for variable rate nitrogen.

To participate, growers are required to have a 4R Nutrient Stewardship Plan developed and verified by a 4R designated agronomist that covers the BMPs included in the application.

The application deadline is November 30, 2023. This intake will cover expenses invoiced and paid by growers between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024. Visit [canolacouncil.org/4r-advantage/](http://canolacouncil.org/4r-advantage/) for program details, eligibility and the new application portal.

Warren Ward is an agronomy specialist with the Canola Council of Canada. Email [wardw@canolacouncil.org](mailto:wardw@canolacouncil.org).

Find your **Right rate** with fall soil sampling

Learn more about funding available to initiate or advance 4R practices on your farm at [canolacouncil.org/4r-advantage](http://canolacouncil.org/4r-advantage)



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# AgriRecovery details announced for Saskatchewan

On October 20, Agriculture and Agri-Food (AAFC) Minister Lawrence MacAulay and Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit announced details of Saskatchewan's AgriRecovery Program, now referred to as the 2023 Canada-Saskatchewan Feed Program. Starting next week, producers can begin to submit applications to the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC).

"I've had the opportunity to meet with farmers and producers from across Western Canada and they've shared just how challenging this growing season has been for their operations," said MacAulay. "With a federal investment of \$219 million through AgriRecovery, we're helping them recover so they can continue to feed Canada, and the world."

"The livestock sector is a significant contributor to our provincial economy," Marit said. "It is important we are there for producers through the current challenges. The program will provide some financial relief to livestock producers, helping them to maintain the breeding herd by providing funding to address extraordinary costs caused by the drought."

This program covers 70 per cent of extraordinary costs related to feed and freight, incurred after May 1, 2023, through to the application deadline of March 1, 2024. Program funding will provide eligible producers an initial payment up to \$150 per head to help maintain the breeding herd in the drought regions. Based on available funding, additional payments will be issued to program participants. Eligibility is area specific, guided by the Canadian Drought Monitor. Producers will need to submit their receipts or appropriate documents for the extraordinary expenses. Eligible extraordinary expenses include purchased feed, self-hauling or transportation costs for feed or breeding animals, and/or land rented for additional grazing acres or additional feed production. Eligible animal species include beef cattle and other grazing animals, limited to bison, elk, deer, sheep, goats and horses. This program is designed to help retain breeding stock. Breeding animals



include females and males of the reproductive age of the species. A Saskatchewan Premises Identification (PID) is required to be eligible for the program.

Online application form will be available at scic.ca. This application process assists producers to determine if they have extraordinary expenses on their operation, including an Extraordinary Cost Assessment. The submitted application needs to indicate the number of breeding animals on hand, as of August 21, 2023, intended to be kept until January 31, 2024.

On August 18, Saskatchewan's Ministry of Agriculture announced the province has already committed up to \$70 million to assist impacted producers. Federal cost-share funding for Saskatchewan's AgriRecovery Program is up to \$77 million. AgriRecovery is a federal-provincial-territorial disaster relief framework to help agricultural producers with the extraordinary costs associated with recovering from disaster situations. AgriRecovery initiatives are cost-shared on a 60:40 basis between the federal government and participating provinces or territories,

as outlined under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP).

This announcement is part of a larger disaster response totaling \$365 million in federal-provincial cost-shared funding under the AgriRecovery Framework to help farmers and ranchers in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan with extraordinary costs due to this year's extreme weather conditions. Producers already have access to a comprehensive suite of business risk management (BRM) programs that are the first line of defense for producers facing disasters, including AgriStability, AgriInsurance and AgriInvest. With joint funding from the federal government and provinces, these BRM programs provide protection against different types of income and production losses. The federal government also announced an initial list of designated regions in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba where Livestock Tax Deferral has been authorized for 2023 due to extreme weather conditions.

"On behalf of Saskatchewan's cattle industry,

we thank the provincial and the federal govern-

ments for providing this much-needed funding for our producers who have been impacted by this drought," Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association Chair Keith Day said. "We appreciate the provincial government's recognition of the urgency of the situation, as was demonstrated through their funding announcement in August. While today's announcement is later than we had hoped, it will be a help to many producers that have already and continue to incur extraordinary expenses to ensure the wellbeing of their herds."

"SARM appreciates this announcement," Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities President Ray Orb said. "These measures are needed as farmers and ranchers are

dealing with significant challenges in Saskatchewan, we are thankful for the contributions from both senior levels of government."

"We greatly appreciate this much-needed provincial and federal support, as many producers continue to deal with consecutive years of drought," Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association President Garner Deobald said. "Improved BRM programming will require highly-collaborative and forward-thinking industry-government teamwork, as ownership of risk is shared and response time is critical. Producers outside the eligibility areas are also hard-hit, so we are hoping there will be some flexibility for those operations in need too."

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# Oat cuisine: How AAFC science is powering up an ancient grain

Oats are an ancient and important cereal crop. Along with wheat, barley and rice, they make up a key group of staple foods that are essential to global food security. In recent years, oats have seen an increase in popularity and are poised to become even more important to the global effort to feed a growing world population with sustainable and healthy food.

At Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Ottawa, Brandon, and Saskatoon Research and Development Centres, research scientists Dr. Nicholas Tinker, Dr. Wubishet Bekele, Dr. Yong-Bi Fu, and their research partners are helping bring this climate-smart crop to the next level, and recently announced a breakthrough: the creation of the world's first reference genome for oats, and its implication for oat breeding.

### A unique crop

In addition to being delicious, oats have an outstanding nutritional profile. The star of the show is a unique compound in oats called beta-glucan, a type of soluble fibre that has been shown to manage cholesterol, improve heart health, and avoid causing a large spike in blood sugar levels when eaten. As if that weren't enough, oats are high in protein, gluten-free, and keep us feeling full for a long time.

But despite its superfood status, it took a while for oats to get the attention they deserve. For centuries, oats were grown mainly as fodder for animals, and only rarely as a human food.

Fast-forward to the present, and it's a completely different reality. Chefs can choose from a wide range of prepared oat products from rolled, to quick, to steel-cut and beyond. Fitness influencers share their favorite recipes for "overnight oats" on social media, and baristas in coffee shops prepare vegan lattes topped with foamy oat milk.

There's no doubt that oats are on a roll—and it's Canadian research and farming savvy that have helped make it happen.

### Superfood sequencing

Working with an international team of researchers, AAFC scientists Dr. Tinker, Dr. Bekele, and Dr. Fu published a landmark study in the journal *Nature* announcing that they had successfully sequenced and characterized the entire oat genome. In a companion paper, Dr. Tinker and Dr. Bekele led an AAFC team in demonstrating some of the implications of this new reference genome in oat improvement. This is of tremendous value to plant breeders who can use this genomic map to improve their breeding programs. But how does this work?

The practice of plant breeding is as old as farming itself. In its simplest form, it means saving seeds from the best-performing plants in the hopes of increasing the quality of the next harvest. Today, plant breeders rely on complex genetics work that allows them to speed this process up drastically. For example, researchers can take a tissue sample from a plant and test its DNA, to measure with a kind of "point system" that shows how likely the offspring from that plant can meet the high standards required for a new plant variety: useful traits including better yields, higher protein content, or the ability to withstand drought and disease. In addition to its speed, this method of genomic selection is also more reliable than using only the physical appearance of the plant to judge its quality. When it comes to how a plant will ultimately perform, looks can be deceiving. But to achieve marker-assisted selection, researchers must first be able to create genetic profiles using genome-wide snippets of DNA.

That's where Dr. Tinker and Dr. Bekele come in. Working together with their AAFC counterparts across the country, as well as with oat researchers around the world, the team worked for years testing and evaluating thousands of oat varieties and cataloguing their genetic profiles. Using powerful sequence analysis software, they developed a consensus linkage map for oats: a crude blueprint of the 21 oat linkage groups (chromosomes). This map was then instrumental in assembling and ordering the sequences into 21 oat chromosomes of the cultivar "Sang" for the *Nature* publication.

This discovery puts a powerful new tool into the hands of plant breeders, who can use it to speed up the development of new and improved oat varieties. The average breeding cycle for cereal crops lasts up to 12 years and involves a painstaking process of evaluation that slowly refines each generation of plants until only the best-performing variety is left standing. For example, a researcher or breeder interested in one particular disease-resistance gene controlled by a few genes can develop diagnostic molecular markers for that gene in the chromosomal region. Researchers will now be able to test the DNA for these markers in each variety at the outset of the process, returning the best candidates to the top of the breeding pipeline while the variety continues in the process of be-



Drs. Nicholas Tinker and Wubishet Bekele



Oat seedlings

ing developed for use by farmers. This can shorten the breeding process by a year or more, but more importantly, it can allow breeders to reliably select for specific or future agro-climatic environments at a stage in the breeding program when it is not possible to grow all seeds in those environments.

"As we have shown in the *Nature* and the companion paper, I am excited by the opportunity opened up by the availability of the reference genome sequence to understand the level of large-scale chromosomal variations in oat germplasm. Such information will guide our future genomics-assisted optimum parental selection procedures," says Dr. Wubishet Bekele, Research Scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

The achievement at the AAFC Ottawa Research and Development Centre is even more significant because the oat genome is extremely complicated, and nearly four times as large as the human genome. It is also a rare example of a "triple genome" that evolved from multiple wild relatives combining to form a massive genetic string. This means the sequencing process is like doing three large, complicated jigsaw puzzles at the same time with the pieces from all three boxes mixed together! The oat genome also has an unusually high degree of genetic variability, meaning that it easily tolerates rearrangements of genetic material among its chromosomes, again a result of oats crossing naturally in the wild for millennia.

"I have spent most of my career studying genetic variation in oats, but the level of genome diversity that we can now see in cultivated and wild oat is beyond what we expected. Together with an International team of scientists, we are now knee-deep in analyzing 30 wild and cultivated oat genomes from around the globe as a follow up to the *Nature* publication," says Dr. Nicholas Tinker, Research Scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

### A boost for global food security

This discovery is a step forward in the race to feed a growing world population with nutritious and sustainable food. In addition to being very healthy, oats have been proven to be very filling (this is called having a high "satiety" in food science terms). A big part of the challenge of feeding an estimated global population of 9.7 billion people by 2050 is the ability to produce more food from the same amount of farmland, so a crop like oats that help feed us as efficiently as possible is a real benefit.

It also represents an opportunity for Canadian agriculture to become an even bigger driver of our economy. Canada is the world's leading exporter of oats, with most of that production coming from the Prairie powerhouse of Saskatchewan. Demand is rising for healthy food that is produced using sustainable farming practices, and Canada is ready to deliver. Put Canadian oat growers together with the cutting-edge research being done at AAFC, and you have the makings of a cereal dream team that can help boost the economy for years to come.

Thanks to the hard work of dedicated AAFC researchers like Dr. Tinker and Dr. Bekele, Canadian farmers can

benefit from new oat varieties that are better suited to a changing climate, require fewer inputs like water and fertilizer, and boast improved nutritional profiles. And in the best tradition of AAFC research, this discovery was immediately made available to researchers around the world free of charge, who can now use this genetic reference map in their own breeding programs. The end result of all this complex science is simple—more and better oats. That's an achievement worth toasting with a glass of milk and an oatmeal cookie!

### Key benefits

The research team at the ORDC worked closely with their counterparts at the Brandon Research and Development Centre and partners around the world to create the world's first genetic reference map for oats. This has further cemented Canada's status as an innovator and global leader in sustainable agriculture.

The genetic reference map will enable oat breeders to speed up the process of their research projects and produce results much faster. This has the potential to increase investment in the crop by increasing the number of projects which can follow a standard 3- to 5-year research cycle.

In Canada, oats are an \$8 billion industry with a product that is recognized around the world for its superior quality. Canada is the world's largest exporter of oats and is ready to benefit from increased investment in this key crop.





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# GIFS laboratory at USask brings latest sequencing technology to Western Canada

World-class talent and sequencing technology at the Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) is enabling researchers in agriculture and other disciplines to more quickly—and cost effectively—explore the genomes of plants, animals, and microbes.

GIFS' Omics and Precision Agriculture Laboratory (OPAL) is the first lab in Western Canada to offer genomics analyses services using PacBio's new Revio DNA sequencer, the highest-capacity instrument the manufacturer has produced.

The addition of Revio and other investments in high-throughput infrastructure and automation have significantly expanded OPAL's scale and efficiency, increasing its ability to provide high-quality, lower-cost services. These at-scale analytics will help accelerate research in the agriculture, food, and health fields.

"At GIFS, we are committed to accelerating research, development, and commercialization within agri-food and providing impactful services that enhance the entire innovation ecosystem. Our investments in PacBio's Revio system and other advanced sequencing instruments are bringing leading-edge technologies to Saskatchewan and Western Canada and supporting our research community's position at the forefront of discovery," said Steve Webb, chief executive officer of GIFS.

"OPAL's capacity and complete suite of long- and short-read DNA sequencing technology is unique in Canada and comparable to large national laboratories in the United States. With these tools, our team of experts are providing high-quality data to help advance the discovery, development, and delivery of new innovations within agri-food and other industries."

Since its launch in 2021, OPAL has established itself as a premier platform for omics technology with a reputation for scientific excellence and innovation.

OPAL was previously the first laboratory in Western Canada to offer long, highly accurate HiFi reads from PacBio's Sequel IIe DNA sequencing system. The new Revio system features several enhancements over the earlier generation of single-molecule real-time sequencing (SMRT) technology, including shorter run times and the ability to sequence up to 15 times more genomic data per day.

"The Global Institute for Food Security is a state-of-the-art facility providing genomics, phenomics, and bioinformatics services to researchers around the world in a variety of applications. We are honoured that this trusted service provider has chosen to add the Revio sequencing system to their world-class core lab," said Lara Toerien, vice-president and general manager for the Americas at PacBio.

"The game-changing Revio system is a giant leap forward that enables customers to dramatically scale their use of PacBio's celebrated HiFi sequencing technology at an extremely competitive price. This will allow more customers access to the most complete and accurate sequencing data on the market today and benefit the scientific community as a whole. I'm excited to see what researchers can discover using the power of HiFi sequencing on Revio."

With a unique specialty in agri-food research, the OPAL team has become a trusted partner to researchers in Western Canada and around the world, contributing to hundreds of projects examining microbial, plant and animal genes and traits.

The laboratory has contributed sequencing work to many large initiatives, including the international, USask-led effort that sequenced the genomes for 15 wheat varieties—a significant accomplishment that is supporting the development of new higher-yielding, more resilient wheat varieties.



The Omics and Precision Agriculture Laboratory at the Global Institute for Food Security at the University of Saskatchewan is a premier platform for omics technology, providing genomics, phenomics and informatics services to a broad range of clients.

gent wheat varieties.

The technology and expertise at OPAL, however, provide the laboratory with the capacity to analyze samples from other sources—everything from bacteria to humans.

Today, the laboratory is now serving a growing number of researchers outside of agriculture who are benefiting from OPAL's services, including genomics to analyze DNA, transcriptomics to analyze gene expression and bioinformatics to analyze these and other biological data. These services also include PacBio's Iso-Seq technique for sequencing RNA molecules with long reads to achieve greater resolution than was possible using older methods.

"We're incredibly proud of the partnerships we've made within the agri-food sector and the exciting research that we are supporting—and we're just getting started," said Carla Protsko, OPAL business lead at GIFS.

"Today, we are equipped to support more partners across the value chain than ever before. Whether you're in agriculture or health, natural or environmental sciences, you don't have to send samples across the country for analysis. We have the leading-edge omics technology and talented team in Saskatoon's thriving biotechnology industry. From here in Western Canada, we have a national and global reach and can assist your research at scale."



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# FCC supports cattle producers across Canada

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is announcing a new FCC Replacement Heifer Program to help Canadian cattle producers in maintaining or expanding their herds.

The Canadian beef cattle inventory was pegged by Statistics Canada at 10.3 million head earlier this year which is a decline by four per cent since 2017. The cattle sector is an important part of the agriculture industry, that contributes over \$24 billion annually to the economy and plays a critical role in maintaining the health of grasslands. FCC wants to ensure Canada's cattle ranchers have access to the financial levers they need to plan for the future.

"The drought conditions this summer affected a large cattle producing area in Western Canada and right now ranchers are making decisions about how to best manage their herds," said Sophie Perreault, FCC's chief operations officer. "The Heifer Replacement Program will help re-

duce cash flow pressures for those who want to maintain or grow their herd."

The program consists of a loan with a maximum two-year period of interest only and a maximum life of seven years. For this loan, variable interest rates will be capped at prime plus 1.5%, and loan processing fees will be waived.

"FCC is here to partner with customers in coming up with financial solutions that will continue to support the well-being and longevity of Canadian cattle herds," Perreault said. "If ranchers have other needs beyond heifer financing, I invite them to contact the FCC team."

"The Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association appreciates FCC's response to the current needs of livestock producers," said Garner Deobald, SSGA president. "This FCC program will help producers rebuild or maintain their herds after consecutive years of drought."

Beef producers are encouraged to contact their FCC relationship manager or their FCC livestock Alliance partner for details. Producers can do this by contacting their local office or the FCC customer service centre at 1-888-332-3301.

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# Limited availability pushing farmland prices higher

Limited availability of farmland for sale is continuing to push land values higher, according to the mid-year farmland values review by Farm Credit Canada (FCC). In the first six months of 2023, the national average growth rate of farmland was 7.7 per cent.

The highest farmland value increases over the last six months were reported in Saskatchewan (11.4 per cent) and Quebec (10.6 per cent). Ontario and Manitoba saw nearly identical increases, with farmland values in Ontario increasing by 6.9 per cent, and Manitoba by 6.4 per cent. Alberta had a more modest increase of 3 per cent, while the average price of farmland stayed unchanged in British Columbia. Fewer sales were available in Canada's Atlantic provinces to fully assess mid-year farmland values.

"Limited land for sale has been driving farmland values higher over the last

six months," said J.P. Gervais, FCC's chief economist. "With higher interest rates, elevated farm input costs and uncertainty regarding future commodity prices, producers are being cautious with their investments and capital expenditures."

Farm cash receipts are anticipated to increase 6.6 per cent in 2023. But as farm operations exercise caution in spending, farmland value appreciation is anticipated to slow until the uncertainty over the current economic environment vanishes.

"Purchasing farmland is a very strategic decision for producers," said Gervais. "They need to assess whether they can earn enough from the larger land base they've acquired and if not, whether other areas of the operation generate enough income to pay for the land. Monitoring farmland price trends can assist in making the best decisions for individual operations."



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**Above and left:** Betty-Lou Twolan from Ottawa, Ontario, submitted these photos of the Pipestone Valley near Moosomin. She was out visiting her son, Philip Doucet, and thought that she would share some early morning fall photographs from October 4.



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Melissa Ruhland submitted this photo, as part of The World-Spectator's 2023 Harvest photo contest, of when her sister Monica Lessard brought supper out to the field to feed the harvest crew at Ruhland Farms, located west of Rocanville.

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These photos were taken by Paige Hutchinson on Hutch Farms in the Rocanville and Moosomin area.

"Our Dad, Cameron Hutchinson, now an angel looking down on us, ordered up sunshine for the last day of harvest . . . and to no surprise we finished harvest on what would have been his 54th birthday on September 30," says Paige.

"This was Hutch Farms' first season running the farm without Cam. A small but mighty crew—Pam, Rylar, Paige and Jeffrey."



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# Racing the weather to get our crop in the bin

It was exactly two months less three days from the day we had started harvest 2023 that we finally had it wrapped up and there was no sweeter picture than that of those combines that night, dumping the last of their canola into the semis. We would have loved to run more than a few consecutive days at a time but that was not how this harvest worked out. As I sat from the warm interior of my half ton and watched the augers unloading that final night in the field, it very nearly made me feel a tad sad to think harvest was over. That lasted only six seconds though and I was good!

For whatever reason (there are theories but I am not so into them), some of the canola just did not want to ripen this fall. So the guys did some desiccating. And when that, after a couple of weeks of waiting, didn't quite seem to do the trick, they swathed it. And even then it seemed like we waited and waited until we could finally bring it in. It was certainly the year of switching from straight cut headers to pickups and back again, and then yet again.

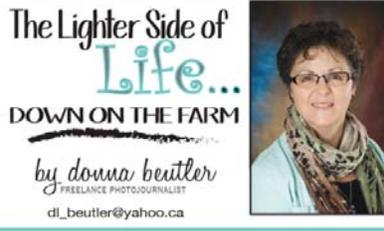
After several days of sitting, right at the end of September, we finally got a day we were able to go and when those three machines started up on some standing canola, they just kept marching along all day long and our truck driver I swear never got a minute's rest, running from one truck to the next and getting it into the bin. Even supper in the field that night was served not from the tailgate but in to-go plates with cutlery taped to the top, handed up to the combine operators. How's that for a subtle hint to just eat on the go.

Hours later, after dark, as the men moved from one field to the next, the women and kids moved vehicles and transported truck drivers and combines to wherever it was they needed to be transported to. And wonder of wonders, after weeks of too-wet-to-combine-in-the-evening type weather, it stayed dry late into the night, or shall we say into the early hours of the next morning.

For me though, I was settled back into my camper on the farm by 9:30 p.m. that night, doing dishes and melting Toberlone for the farm kids to eat with their strawberries. One of the twins (12) was lounging on the couch with his cell phone in his hand. Yup, I thought to myself, kids and phones, imagining the snapchatting or whatever-ing that kids do these days.

I no sooner had the snapchat thought when Reid set his phone down, ran outside and right back in, grabbed another strawberry to dip into his bowl of chocolate and said, "Humidity's only 60%. Grass is dry. Should be able to get a few more hours in tonight." And so it was! The young man with his eyes on the weather app was excited that the combines could keep rolling. And roll on they did. I could hear trucks as they came and went and I knew Mr. Truck Driver had to be wearing thin. I should maybe have given him a bigger supper plate!

As the dutiful farm wife that I am (after walking the grands to the main house that night), I turned all the lights on in the camper so that when hubby eventually



came in from the field, it would be a welcoming sight from afar. Or at least from the bins that sit 150 feet from the camper. And then I sat in the comfy recliner determined to remain awake until Wayne climbed the steps of the RV later that night. By 10:30 I put my HGTV magazine down, cranked the furnace up a notch or two and popped a movie into the dvd player in the bedroom and laid down, clothes on in case I got a 'get to the field call.' And then I proceeded to wind down. By 11:30, I crawled under the covers. It was getting a tad chilly in there. And the furnace was no longer running. We were obviously out of propane. Die hard that I am though, I remained clothed and at the ready for a mad dash trip to a field to get somebody or something.

By 12:30 or perhaps 1:30, I was looking for an extra quilt and rolling over into a deep sleep when I heard the semi coming into the yard. Why oh why is the clock in the living room an hour behind time and the one in the bedroom an hour ahead, because when you are half asleep, you really don't remember which one is which. Even my Fitbit wasn't telling the truth—in fact it was deadlier than a doornail. Regardless, it was late, I was tired and cold and the guys had to be ready to call it a night.

Just then, the camper door opened and what did I hear: "Why are all the lights on? Why is it so cold in here?" Clatter, bang, clunk and hubby has the propane tank switched out. Soon the furnace warmed our tiny home back up and hubby crawled into bed. After a 12-second conversation that went something like this: "Did you finish that field?" I ask. "Yeah. Moved to the Funny Farm," he answers. "How many acres did you get done at the Funny Farm?" I ask. "Not many," he says and his next breath is a snore. As I ponder how someone can literally come off a combine after 12 or 14 hours, essentially turn the lights off in the house and crawl into bed and be sleeping in 12 seconds flat, I climb out of bed to change out of my clothes and I crawl back into bed. (By way of explanation, every field has a 'name'. Yes, they have numbers too but we use names and while most are called by the name of their previous owner, the Funny Farm's

name has stuck for years and years and not even I remember exactly why anymore.)

As hubby rapidly drifts off to sleep, the very tired me whose sleep has been interrupted now knows without a shadow of a doubt that if I had been combining for the previous 12 hours, I would be wound up like a rubber band and it would take me an hour to unravel. As I lay there, now frustrated that 'he' is sleeping and I am not, I plump the pillows, get them in just the right spot, curl up just so and then re-plump and re-arrange a few more times. Eventually I fall asleep, trying to remind myself to set the clocks in the camper to the correct time in the morning.

Earlier than usual the next morning, after the combines were greased and readied for another day in the field, the guys started up again only to be stopped for three hours because of a teeny-tiny rain shower. The afternoon turned into evening and eventually the combines and truckers had to call it a night. Our hope was for a third dry day in a row. Alas, not only did it rain, but the thunderstorm that began around supper time with a great show of lightning in the skies, also brought damaging golf-sized hail to the farm—vehicles and canola alike. Who would ever have thought we would have an Oct. 1st hail storm?

With the end of harvest came the final clearing out and closing up of our harvest-time home. We have spent the better part of four months in there this year and there's a teeny-tiny bit of nostalgia for me as I pull the slides in, knowing winter is on its way. But like every season, you just have to let it go and get ready for the next, some with more anticipation that others. But the moment I pull the last slide in, I finally remember—I never did change the time on those clocks.

With harvest all behind us now, all our guys (and the women and kids as well) can take a well-deserved break (no pun intended for the operator who only got four days in before he broke his leg—what a way to skip out on harvest!) We have the best crew, one that saw all sorts of family step in to help. Sometimes when I left the field knowing who was in each combine, by the time I returned there had been a change in operators. One day I fed my brother his lunch only to find, when I went to hand him his supper plate, it was my nephew. You never turn down a good hand though. Even the twins (12) put some time in driving combine. As for the truckers, they remained pretty constant, likely because no one else willingly relieves them.

And so to all you grain farmers out there—here's hoping you got your crop in the bin without too much stress and that you are now relaxing in your comfy chair, enjoying a good cup of coffee and doing next to nothing. Okay, I hear you, I know you are moving grain and cleaning combines and repairing machinery—all in a mad dash to beat the turn in the weather, which by most forecasts shows that by the time you are reading this, we will have had a taste of winter. Until next time . . .



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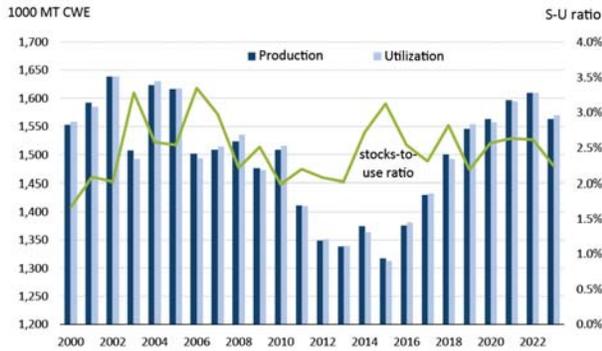
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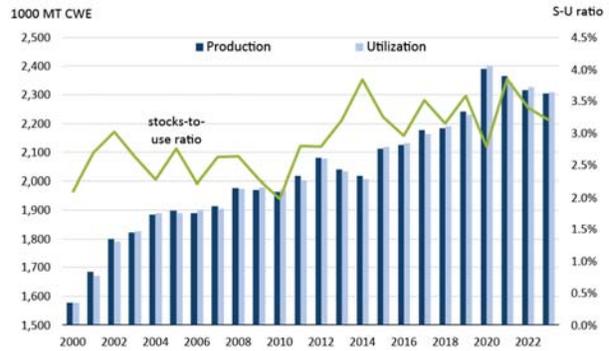
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Canadian beef in low supply



China's splurge-buying of Canadian pork may be over, but consumption shows resilience

## 2023 Cattle and hog outlook update:

# Markets show two different price trajectories

BY MARTHA ROBERTS  
FCC ECONOMICS EDITOR

The 2023 drought will ensure diminished margins for some western livestock producers, but the overall cattle outlook is positive as strong global and domestic demand bolsters consumption even in the face of high beef prices. Production, given the small beef herd, will struggle to keep up to that demand. For the hog sector, profitability will continue to be challenged by lower prices. Domestic consumption growth will provide a much-needed boost as pork's prices will lure more consumers than either beef or chicken, but with drought-induced feed costs rising, the next three months aren't likely to get any easier than they've been recently.

### Prices: Two trajectories for two sectors

Some good news: prices expected for the next three months (the outlook period) have either stabilized or risen since our August outlook for the cattle and hog sectors. Forecasted cattle prices are, on average, a whopping 33% higher year-over-year (YoY) and 50% higher than their five-year averages for each class as demand remains strong and supplies tighten. Our projected feeder hog prices (Ontario and Manitoba) haven't changed since August and are still well under last year's prices and the five-year averages. Isoween prices also continue to lag YoY and the five-year average.

### Cattle sector margins forecasted to be positive

Cow/calf sector profitability will continue to be robust throughout the outlook period, given the underlying strength of prices. There'll be more pressure on cattle sector profitability in areas where the drought impacted feed grains. That also holds true for finishing feedlots who may see pressure from U.S. feedlots for Canadian feeder cattle, pushing those prices higher. Given the strength in demand, however, feedlot margins should be positive throughout the outlook period.



### Isoween margins continue to see heavy pressure

Isoween profitability turned negative in 2022, but 2023 has been particularly challenging with falling prices and increased expenses. Producers who have weathered the storm can look ahead to 2024 when margins are expected to take a jump in the right direction.

This year, we're monitoring the North American drought's impact on U.S. and Canadian cattle herds, red meat demand and input costs as the most significant forces on livestock profitability.

### About those feed costs

The trend we pointed to in our August update of feedlots' early spike in corn imports has stabilized as a longer-term trend. Canadian imports of U.S. corn destined for western operations have continued, and as of September, are just below the record imports of the 2021-22 crop year.

There's a direct link to feedlots' bottom lines. In 2023, it costs more to use homegrown feed (barley) than imported corn. While these costs don't include the import costs of transportation, they also discount the savings that the use of corn enables. Feeding properly processed corn can use up to 10% fewer pounds per day relative to barley use. There's some relief in the extra supply of off-grade, non-feed crops made available from the drought but, overall, the use of Canadian crops as feed will suppress margins.

Ontario corn prices have

also risen from our August outlook update but remain at 2022 average prices. At that price, they'll be well in excess of the five-year average, applying more pressure to hog margins.

### North American beef herd continues to shrink

The 2023 drought has led the cattle sector to cull more, despite the strength

in markets. While the strong prices we're seeing now are normally associated with heifer retention and herd rebuilding efforts, the dryness across the U.S. Midwest and the Canadian prairies has prompted increased herd liquidation since 2021. Heifer and cow slaughter has trended generally higher each year as a percentage of total cattle slaughter.

### Lower beef production hampers supplies

As noted in August, the upward trend in slaughter produced an initial bump in beef production—and record U.S. production in 2022—that has since turned into lower numbers of slaughter-ready cattle. In 2023, Canadian and U.S. beef production is down YoY as a result.

As of September 30, the year-to-date Canadian beef production (fed and non-fed) was down 6% YoY and the U.S. was down 2%. It may very well not pick up in the next two years for either country as there will likely continue to be more reasons to cull than to not cull. Even when it's time to reverse the trend, it'll be neither quick nor simple to get more cattle on North American operations.

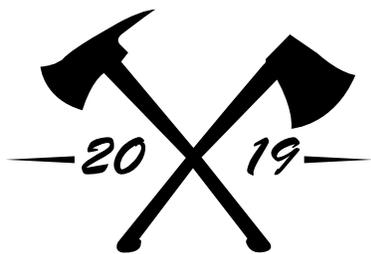
The drag on production will help to lower Canada's beef stocks-to-use ratio (ending stocks/ utilization) this year to

2.2%. That's lower YoY and compared to the five-year average (2018–2022) and one of the lowest five-year average levels since the early 2000s.

The ratio accounts for lower utilization as well, with both domestic consumption and exports trimmed. Already trending down, it could near the lows of 2000 in 2024, suggesting beef prices have not yet reached their peak. While high prices will undoubtedly deter some consumers, Canadian consumer preferences for beef remain strong, outpacing consumption.

In a similar response to North America's lack of moisture, Argentina's drought has sent the country's beef production into high gear. In fact, global beef production is forecasted up for 2023 based on higher slaughter in several regions due to widespread drought conditions. In the European Union, high input costs are forcing liquidations.

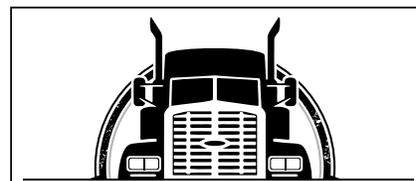
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As part of The World-Spectator's 2023 Harvest Photo Contest, Erin Jensen submitted this photo of Harper Jaenen, daughter of Tyler and Erin Jaenen, helping dad swath the wheat crop during harvest 2023.

## 2023 Cattle and hog outlook update: Markets show two different price trajectories

*Continued from Page C13*

There remains global demand for beef, with non-U.S. domestic consumption expected to rise 1.3% YoY. Notably, China, the world's second-largest beef consumer behind the U.S., is forecast to grow 3.0% YoY as the country's burgeoning middle class continues to develop a preference for what was once almost exclusively a western staple. There are downside risks though. According to the International Monetary Fund's latest World Economic Outlook, global GDP growth will slow from 3.5% last year to 3.0% this year and 2.9% in 2024, a development that will weigh on consumption in the months ahead.

### Pork production

Total global pork production is expected to stay flat this year, with U.S. (1.4%) and China (1.1%) expected to grow, offsetting losses in the European Union (2.9%) and the U.K. (14.4%).

Canada's pork stocks-to-use ratio shows the small YoY contraction in expected production—the latest year in a downward trend since the buying spree induced by the pandemic in 2020 and China's African Swine Fever outbreak. The pork ratio, at 3.2%, is higher relative to beef.

Production remains elevated compared to pre-2020 though, as does consumption, which will be fairly one-sided. Canada's exports are expected to shrink 8.0% YoY as non-U.S. pork consumption is forecast to be the same as last year's and U.S. pork

consumption is expected to drop 1.9%. One bright spot: China's pork consumption will likely expand 1.3% YoY.

Instead, this year's total utilization for Canada will be supported by domestic use. Canadian pork consumption is slated to grow 6.8% YoY, thanks to the large differential in pork prices compared to chicken and beef, pork's main competitors. Pork, in fact, was one of very few items in Canada's Consumer Price Index basket that's had negative price growth in the last two years.

There's good news mixed with some warning signs. Pork consumption has benefitted from that relatively favourable pricing, but it faces lacklustre demand. The FCC meat demand index (for beef, pork and chicken) shows that consumer preferences for beef and chicken exceed that for pork.

### Bottom line

Beef's elevated prices at retail and in food service will take a bite out of consumption this year, but not as much as you might think. The loss of production, a direct result of the small beef herd, will take another bite. It speaks to a coming year of solid returns for the sector. On the other hand, the hog and pork sector will benefit from a significant increase in domestic consumption, but that good news is tempered by expectations of a large dip in exports and the reality that Canadians are buying pork because it's relatively less expensive.

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Monica Lessard submitted this photo as part of The-World Spectator's 2023 Harvest Photo Contest of her two sons, Jeremy and Zachary, enjoying watching some farmers take their crops off the field across from their house.



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Hearing & Wellness by Porch Light is bringing hearing awareness to Moosomin and surrounding communities. We provide top quality service with the best technology and practices to assist those who have been affected by hearing loss and to help prevent hearing loss from happening. Bonnie Riffel has been providing hearing services to South East Saskatchewan for more than 17 years. She is excited to return to her hometown and provide these services in a safe and welcoming environment. When in need of assistance, look for the Porch Light to guide you.

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# Saskatchewan Potash Grows Communities

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in wages paid annually

SASKATCHEWAN ROYALTIES AND PRODUCTION TAX PAID IN 2022

**\$1.2 Billion**



PROVINCIAL SALES TAX



**\$50 Million**

PROPERTY TAX



**\$13 Million**

PROVINCIAL INCOME TAX

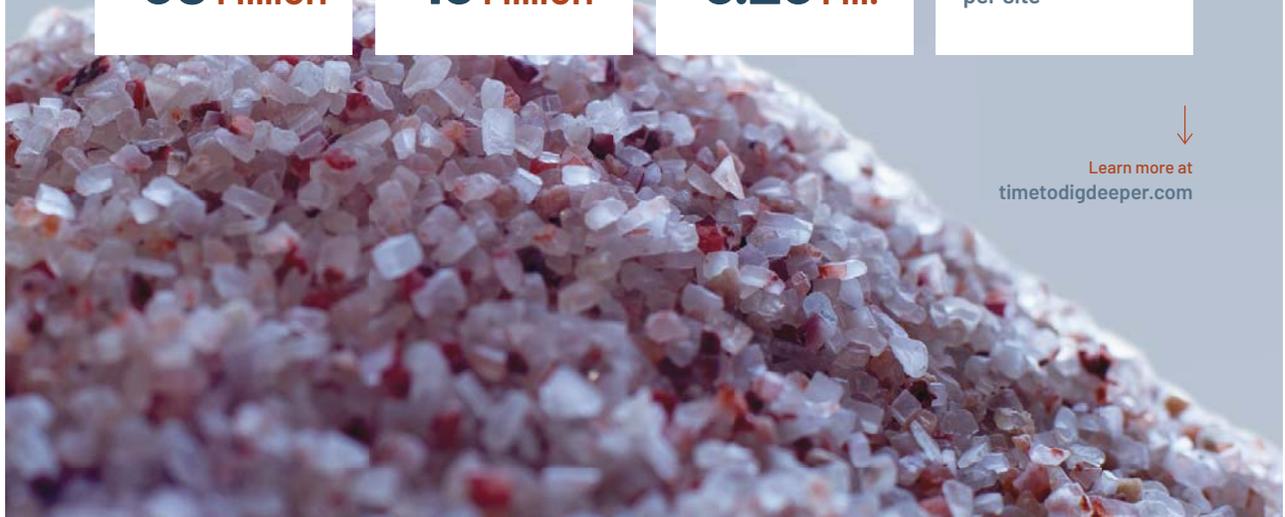


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