



Spring seeding photo  
submitted by Colin  
Jaenen in 2021.



## Spring Seeding just around the corner

It's been a chilly March, but farmers are gearing up for spring seeding just the same. Shown here are some spring seeding photos submitted by World-Spectator readers in years past!



Spring seeding photo submitted by Samantha Sikora in 2021.



Spring seeding photo submitted by Tianna and Dustin Toms in 2021.

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## USask project to improve soil health through knowledge sharing network receives \$1.4 million from Weston Family Foundation

A new project at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) has been awarded \$1.4 million through the Weston Family Soil Health Initiative to develop land-based training workshops for First Nations communities, land managers, and producers who farm First Nations lands.

The \$10 million Weston Family Soil Health Initiative seeks to expand the adoption of ecologically based beneficial management practices (BMPs) including cover cropping, nutrient management (4R principles) and crop diversification/rotation that increase soil organic matter to improve biodiversity and resiliency on agricultural lands across Canada.

The project, Indigenous Soil Health Learning Circles for Resilient Prairie Agroecosystems, aims to establish a network to share evidence-based, culturally significant outreach and education to improve prairie soil health, biodiversity, and soil organic matter for First Nations agroecosystems.

USask soil scientist Dr. Melissa Arcand (PhD) will be working in partnership with Mistawasis Nêhiyawak, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Lands Technicians, and the International Buffalo Relations Institute.

The Soil Health Learning Circles will share soil health knowledge from both an Indigenous and Western science-based perspective with First Nations and farmers who farm First Nations lands across the Prairies, focusing on the prairie-parkland region of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba.

"Our project will expand soil science training beyond the walls of the university—alongside teachings of Indigenous ecological knowledge—onto lands that are of significance to the First Nations we are in partnership with," said Arcand, an associate professor in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

Conventional agricultural production is the main eco-



USask soil scientist Dr. Melissa Arcand (PhD) will be working in partnership with Mistawasis Nêhiyawak, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Lands Technicians, and the International Buffalo Relations Institute.

nomical land use on First Nations in the Canadian Prairies, most of which is farmed by non-Indigenous producers. Many First Nations are now actively engaging in agricultural land management for improved economic outcomes and to establish stronger connections to Indigenous values around ecological stewardship and biodiversity.

The Soil Health Learning Circles will also share outcomes from the Agricultural Climate Solutions Living Lab Project "Bridge to Land Water Sky" led by Mistawasis Nêhiyawak in partnership with Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and other organizations. The Indigenous-led living lab, funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, aims to see farmers and First Nations working together to improve agricultural practices while honouring Indigenous values, communities, treaties, lands, and resources.

"I'm excited to exchange soil knowledge with First Nations land managers, producers, and community members on their own lands within their communities,

and to continued building of respectful and reciprocal relationships for the benefit of the land and soil health," said Arcand.



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# Did you know that the largest farmland owner in the country is not even a farmer?

We all know what's happening to real estate these days. Everything got more expensive in a hurry, fueled by rock-bottom interest rates. But farming has also been impacted by lower interest rates and investors looking for safety and better yields.

The increase in farmland value in Canada has been nothing short of spectacular. The value per acre of farmland in Canada has skyrocketed by 334 per cent since 2001, but most of the increases have occurred within the last few years. Since 2016, the increase has been 213 per cent. According to Statistics Canada, the average acre in Canada is now worth almost \$3,800, compared to \$862 back in 2001.

The value of an acre of farmland in Saskatchewan has increased by 391 per cent since 2001, the highest in the country. The highest increase since 2016 is in Manitoba, by 266 per cent. Depending on what is produced, some farmland valuations have increased more than others due to various factors such as location, soil quality, and potential revenues.

The Atlantic region, though, is not seeing much change compared with other regions. Increases in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island have been more modest. Farming in the Atlantic region remains affordable compared to other provinces, not due to protectionist policies but more because farming is not as profitable and options to market are limited for many farmers. With lower value increases, building capacity when land is barely worth more year after year is more challenging.

In contrast, since 2016, the average farm real estate value in the United States has increased by 27 per cent, according to the latest report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But an acre of farmland on average in the U.S. is now worth about US\$3,800, so Canada has somewhat caught up to the U.S. in recent years.

Farmland values are being pushed higher in Canada by a series of economic forces. The includes high prices for commodity crops, a robust housing market, an ex-



Sylvain Charlebois

tended period where interest rates were extremely low until recently, and a profusion of government subsidies supporting certain sectors. Compensation, which exceeded \$5 billion, linked to trade agreements and given to supply-managed sectors like dairy, poultry, and eggs, has overcapitalized many farm operations out there, compelling many to buy land. That's a problem few are talking about.

In Canada, barely seven per cent of all our land is devoted to agriculture. It's not a lot, and that amount of land where farming occurs is shrinking. In 2011, 166 million acres of land were devoted to farming to support over 245,000 farms. Today, this amount is about 150 million acres for about 188,000 farms. Farms are bigger, more resourceful, and more efficient.

Yes, farmland in Canada is getting more expensive, but farmers in Canada are also making more money. In 2021, cash receipts exceeded \$83 billion, a record, and 2022 is likely to be another record year. Last year was also a record year for agri-food exports; if you're a hedge fund or an investor, these numbers will catch your attention, and they have. Fewer barriers, including the end of the Wheat Board's single desk on wheat and barley, have brought a slew of new possibilities for the farming community.

As a result, we have seen more farmers renting land instead of owning. Close to 50 per cent of farmers in Canada now rent land instead of owning. Some may see this as a threat to normal ways of producing food and supporting agriculture, but it's not necessarily a terrible

strategy.

In fact, the largest farmland owner in the country is not even a farmer. Alberta's own Robert Andjelic has bought over 225,500 acres of land, a portfolio worth somewhere between \$500 and \$700 million. At the root of this investor's move into agriculture is the will to produce more food and address our global food security crunch. Along with his capital, his team brought knowledge of sound soil management practices, helping over 250 farmer-tenants to benefit from such expertise. Andjelic's job is to make sure his tenants make money. Otherwise, he's not getting paid—simple as that. This new way of thinking can make Canadian agriculture more profitable.

Canada's agri-food potential is immense, and farmland has always been a good investment. A growing number of groups and investors who understand how to make capital work are making a difference. The intent of investors from outside the agriculture sector is to make our agriculture stronger.

Farmers who have been in the system for decades still have a lot to offer. But producing and investing simultaneously is getting harder, which is slowly getting agricultural pundits to specialize. Capital markets and the investment community worldwide have changed dramatically over the last five years. This is why more than half of younger farmers in Canada are leasing land now in order to operate.

The correlation between land prices, rental rates, and farm revenues is quite strong. All three tend to move synchronously higher over time, according to a report from Farm Credit Canada last year. With more specialization, everyone wins. Younger farmers also see value in renting and partnering with investors. It's just a different way of seeing farming.

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois is senior director of the agri-food analytics lab and a professor in food distribution and policy at Dalhousie University.

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# Millet a sustainable, nutritious alternative grain

BY MIRANDA LEYBOURNE, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
Millet, a sustainably grown, nutritiously dense grain with the potential to curb hunger around the world, is stepping into the agricultural spotlight.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recently named 2023 as the International Year of the Millets. The declaration means to promote the global challenges millet can solve through increased production, such as climate issues, affordability and nutrition.

Raju Soolanayakanahally, a senior researcher with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Saskatchewan, has partnered with researchers from his native India to study how the benefits of millet can be maximized.

Millet is commonly prepared in Indian cuisine, and Soolanayakanahally was surprised it wasn't nearly as popular in Canada, where it would not only make for a nutritious part of a balanced diet, but would be an ideal crop for Prairie producers.

"I thought, why not millets in the Prairie regions?" he said.

Widely produced and consumed for more than 7,000 years in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa to Asia, the cereal crop grows best in arid and semiarid climates where other grains may

not do well without irrigation water.

To produce one gram of wheat requires 500 grams of water, whereas millet only requires half of that. Millet also requires less fertilizer input and is very climate resilient. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the United Nations in December that millet can help the world recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which has impacted grain production.

"At such a time, a global movement related to millets is an important step, since they are easy to grow, climate resilient and drought resistant," he said.

The reason millet is so nutritious is thanks to its micronutrients, such as iron and zinc, as well as dietary fibre and antioxidants. The magnesium and potassium found in millet can reduce blood pressure, therefore minimizing the risk of a heart attack and stroke, while its low glycemic index makes it an ideal food for diabetics. The high levels of fibre found in the cereal also makes it ideal for lowering cholesterol, according to a review by Frontiers in Plant Science.

"When we look at rice or wheat ... they don't have a similar nutritional quality," Soolanayakanahally said. Millet can be especially helpful for infants and



Dr. Raju Soolanayakanahally

babies that suffer from anemia.

Low levels of iron, zinc and other nutrients contribute to "hidden hunger," something that Soolanayakanahally is currently researching alongside his partners at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore. Together, they have created a roadmap for future study of millet using genetic resources, resulting in a genetic atlas of the different stages in the plant's life cycle to identify its super-food

properties.

India has one of the world's highest rates of children suffering from various types of malnutrition, a study Soolanayakanahally shared with the Sun, says. A total of 44 per cent of children under the age of five are underweight, while 72 per cent of infants have anemia. The rate of undernutrition from lack of micronutrients, especially iron, is also quite high in India, where more than half the women have iron deficiency.

To combat these nutritional deficiencies, Indian schools started providing midday meals to students where millet played a starring role, replacing rice and wheat-based meals. As a result, health rates are beginning to improve, Soolanayakanahally said.

The atlas is also an important step toward uncovering the genetic networks that give millet its unique nutritional and stress tolerance features. The data Soolanayakanahally and the scientists in Bangalore are uncovering could be used to breed new, improved varieties of millet with enhanced uptake of iron and zinc, which will support the fight of hidden hunger around the world.

"These micronutrient-rich crops or cereals [like millet] can be used around the world for solving malnutrition problem or hidden hunger," Soolanayakanahally said.

hally said.

Farmers should also take a keen interest in millet, since it's an environmentally friendly crop to grow. With Ottawa's 2023 Emissions Reduction Plan aiming for Canada to reach its emissions target of 40 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050, turning to crops like millet just makes sense, he added.

"Since millet requires low input of fertilizers, low input of water, and they sequester more carbon in the root, that also increases soil carbon as well."

Millet also has the potential to teach researchers and scientists more about climate resiliency in other crops, too, including canola, wheat and barley, all of which grow in the Prairies.

"[Millet] has already figured out how to grow on marginal soils, how to grow with less water, less fertilizer inputs ... and pest and disease resistance are very high," Soolanayakanahally said. "This will be a great way for us to learn how to build climate resilient crops."

Soolanayakanahally is planning to submit a proposal in April for more funding to Saskatchewan government's Agriculture Development Fund to continue his research on growing millet in the Prairies.

## Author sheds light on mental health journey

Continued from Page B17

"If you're struggling, often in small towns people are going to reach out, and they're going to try to help. And that is such a blessing. I think that's what really makes our small towns strong," Melnyk's advice for anyone struggling with anxiety, depression or other mental health issues, regardless of the type of community they call home, includes eating healthy and being consistent with sleep and exercise. Connection is also something that everyone should prioritize, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic made it a struggle for people to get together for so long.

"Make sure that [you] have some people you can talk to and be vulnerable with."

It's also imperative that people understand that struggling simply means one is human, she added.

"There's nothing wrong with you, and there's no guilt or shame with that."

Another one of Melnyk's hopes is that her book, which was published in February and is available on Amazon, will help to reduce the stigma that many people still face regarding mental illness and mood disorders.

"Maybe it will normalize mental illnesses for other people, because we all struggle with mental health. And there shouldn't be guilt or shame if you do. It can be a lonely journey to find help, but I want people to know there is help out there."

So far, the feedback that Melnyk has received about her

book has been very positive. She's hopeful that in the future, the book will be available in other major book retailers around Canada. And while she's not totally sure if she'll one day pen another book, Melnyk is open to the idea.

"It was a huge undertaking ... and I've sacrificed some time from other areas of my life," she said. "I'll probably still write, but I don't know if there's another book in my future. But I'll never say never."

Dawn Nagy, CAIB

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# Province Proclaims March as Agriculture Literacy Month

The month of March has once again been proclaimed as Agriculture Literacy Month in Saskatchewan. Agriculture Literacy Month connects students of all ages to agriculture through presentations led by industry volunteers.

"Connecting our youth to agriculture is an important piece of strengthening Saskatchewan's agriculture sector," Agri-

culture Minister David Marit said. "Presentations from industry experts can help educate children on the work that goes into producing the high-quality food that our province is known for."

Throughout the month of March, industry volunteers, from all levels of food production will join classrooms to share presentations and personal experiences

to help students learn more about agriculture.

"Thank you to the many volunteers who will be visiting schools across the province to assist students in learning about such an important industry," Education Minister Dustin Duncan said. "Agriculture literacy is about teaching our youth that agriculture is about much more than just growing food, it is also about land management, natural resources such as our water and soil systems, sustainable practices and technological innovations."

Agriculture in the Classroom has been an important organization in Saskatchewan for many years. This year's theme

is agricultural stewardship, which will teach students about the important relationship between producers and the environment.

"Volunteers are vital to the success of Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month," Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan Executive Director Sara Shymko said. "Having a guest visit the classroom to share their personal agriculture and food story is a real draw for teachers and rewarding for the volunteers. They have fun of course, but most importantly, they are helping to inspire the next generation of agriculture leaders and change-makers with their passion and story."



Industry volunteers, from all levels of food production will join classrooms to share presentations and personal experiences to help students learn more about agriculture.



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Figure 1. Average cultivated farmland value increases for 2022

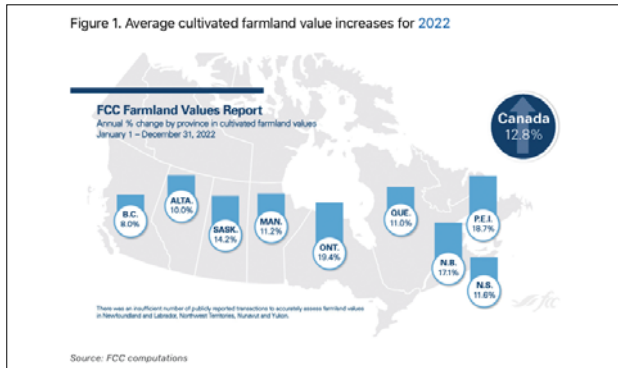
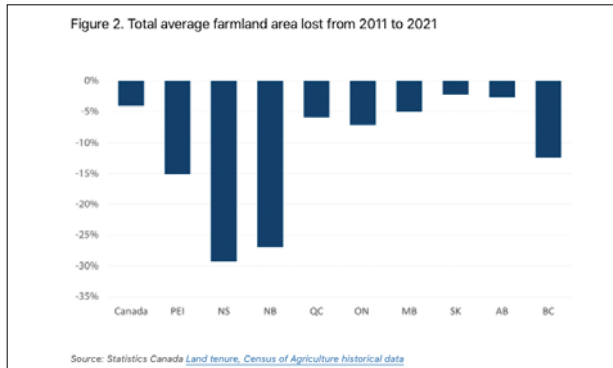


Figure 2. Total average farmland area lost from 2011 to 2021



## 2022 farmland values trended higher amid higher interest rates, elevated input prices and strong cash receipts

BY LYNE MICHAUD, É.A., SENIOR ANALYST, VALUATIONS  
Inflation was the defining economic issue of 2022. The war in Ukraine, supply chain challenges, labour shortages and higher interest rates have been major disrupters in the agri-food supply chain. The agriculture industry hasn't been shielded from inflation as farm input prices climbed along with commodity prices. The resulting increase in farm cash receipts and limited supply of farmland available for sale led to increases in farmland values. FCC reports an average increase of 12.8 per cent in cultivated land values for 2022. This post summarizes trends observed in cultivated land, and the full FCC Farmland Values Report also presents trends in irrigated land and pastureland values.

### Provincial trends

Our analysis covers the period of January 1 to December 31, 2022. The highest increase in average farmland values was observed in Ontario at 19.4 per cent (Figure 1), followed by two Atlantic provinces, with an 18.7 per cent growth in Prince Edward Island and a 17.1 per cent increase in New Brunswick.

The Saskatchewan average farmland value increase was

also above the national average at 14.2 per cent. Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Quebec recorded similar increases, with 11.6 per cent, 11.2 per cent and 11.0 per cent, respectively.

Finally, Alberta and British Columbia recorded the lowest relative average increases, with 10.0 per cent and 8.0 per cent, respectively.

### Farmland values are always tied to supply and demand

#### Farmland availability

The tight supply of farmland for sale is a major driver of the farmland market. The outlook for agriculture is positive, and thus farmland owners have few incentives to put farmland for sale. Any neighbouring farmland parcel coming up for sale can generate significant buyers' interest considering that this may happen only once in a lifetime. Farm size and the resulting economies of scale remain a driver of profitability, which can make this neighbouring parcel fit well within the strategic plan of a potential buyer.

As documented in Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture, a decline in farm areas over time is an additional supply factor. For example, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia recorded declines of 15 per cent, 27 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively, in farmland areas over the last 10 years (Figure 2). The decline in total farm area is smaller in other provinces but still noticeable everywhere. This leads to more limited availability of farmland which can contribute to higher prices.

#### Farm cash receipts

Crop receipts climbed 14.1 per cent in 2022, driven by improved weather conditions over 2021 and strong commodity prices. Demand for farmland that is well situated can help agricultural producers develop and expand their operations at a time when demand for ag commodities is robust. Farm input prices recorded major increases along with commodity prices, but profit margins have been fa-

vourable. Higher borrowing costs slowed the demand for farmland but were offset by higher revenues.

#### Non-traditional buyers

The presence of "non-traditional" buyers in the market can drive the overall demand for farmland. These buyers may be individuals, groups or other entities looking to buy farmland without the intent of farming.

It is next to impossible to determine the extent of the presence of non-traditional buyers in the farmland market as there's no single database across the country that contains all the relevant information. Leveraging the large dataset of cultivated land sales that we assembled for 2022, we could establish that between 9 per cent and 15 per cent of cultivated farmland sold was purchased by non-traditional buyers. Agricultural producers and farm operations make the large majority of purchases.

Note that transactions do not need to occur for the presence of these buyers to influence land values. The mere presence of non-traditional buyers in a market might lead to more competition in buying farmland.

#### Bottom line

FCC has been reporting consecutive increases in average farmland values for 30 years. Farmland prices are near historical highs when compared to farm income. Recent increases in interest rates raise the financing cost of purchasing farmland. We'll investigate these factors in next week's blog post. Producers must build and maintain a risk management plan considering possible economic changes to ensure budget flexibility if commodity prices, yields or interest rates shift. Market conditions can change rapidly, which can impact farmland values.

Watch for the FCC 2022 rental rate analysis releasing on April 11, 2023. The 2022 FCC Fruit land analysis will be released in May 2023.

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# Program helps Manitoba farmers, families with mental health challenges

BY DAVE BAXTER,  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A program working to help farmers and their families who are dealing with mental health issues celebrated a significant milestone this month, and those who run the Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program say one year after starting up, it is proving to be a success.

"What we learned in our first year is that the program works, is valued by those who use it, and it should be continued," MFWP vice chair Roberta Galbraith said in a media release celebrating the one year anniversary of the program, and announcing plans to continue offering it in Manitoba.

On March 1 of last year, MFWP was launched as a not-for-profit to offer free one-on-one mental health counselling sessions to farmers and their families.

Statistics released in 2016 showed a high rate of mental health issues among farmers and those in the agriculture industry in Canada, as according to a study from the University of Guelph, 35% of Canadian farmers met the classification for depression, while 58% of farmers met the classification for anxiety, and 45% of farmers reported high levels of stress.

Stress and anxiety levels have also been high among farmers in Manitoba in recent years, after the province saw record drought in 2021, followed by record precipitation levels in 2022.

MFWP chair Marcel Hacault said because of the stress farmers are often under, and because they are often dependent on things they have no control over like the weather, it is important to make sure producers are looking after not only their farms and crops, but also their mental health, and the mental health of their families.

"We saw a need and with overwhelming support from the industry, we are excited to announce we are

continuing this service in Manitoba," Hacault said.

"We are thankful for the growing community of sponsors and supporters that see value in the program, and we are in a great position for the future."

According to Hacault, MFWP is hoping to raise funds this year to be able to support 160 Manitoba farmers and their families, while he said they will also look to increase awareness about the program among farmers and those who work in the agricultural industry, as well as with health care professionals.

Through MFWP, farmers and their immediate family members can access six free, confidential one on one hour long counselling

sessions with a registered counsellor with a background in agriculture.

Anyone looking for more information on MFWP can visit [manitobafarmerwellness.ca](http://manitobafarmerwellness.ca).

Extremely dry and cracked soil can be seen in a canola field near Ile des Chenes, south of Winnipeg in July of 2021, when much of the province was dealing with severe drought conditions.

Dave Baxter, Local Journalism Initiative



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# Global Institute for Food Security at USask partnership leads to inauguration of ag-tech centre in Bangladesh

The Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) is pleased to announce the inauguration of an agricultural technology centre at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) in Gazipur, Bangladesh, as part of its ongoing partnership with the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) of the Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture.

GIFS and BARC signed a memorandum of understanding in 2020 to advance knowledge and technologies for agricultural research and development in Bangladesh. The partnership includes collaborations with a variety of partners in Canada and Bangladesh.

The inauguration of the ag-tech centre marks another milestone in the partnership's goal of delivering sustainable food security through programs in Bangladesh focused on enhancing farmer incomes, addressing the effects of climate change, and strengthening the country's delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including reducing hunger and empowering women.

Based in Gazipur, the ag-tech centre will offer programs to enhance crop breeding and plant improvement, advance soil health and quality, improve soil water retention, increase data management and analytics, and deliver innovations for post-harvest food handling and processing—a specific area of concern for the country.

Bangladesh has chronic food security challenges that are increasing due to a rapidly growing population, climate-induced stress like salinity intrusion, drought and heat, loss of agricultural land because of rapid urbanization, and post-harvest loss, which in some cases is nearly 50 per cent.

Saskatchewan's agriculture and agri-food innovation ecosystem has knowledge and expertise that are being used to help find solutions to these problems.

The technical expertise of partners within Saskatchewan and Canada's research, development and agri-food ecosystem—including the Global Institute for Water Security, the Saskatchewan Food Indus-



The inauguration of the Bangabandhu-Pierre Elliott Trudeau Agriculture Technology Centre was announced by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Gazipur on February 23.

try Development Centre, USask colleges, the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute and the National Research Council of Canada (NRC)—are being combined to deliver initiatives designed to create an efficient, effective and sustainable system of agricultural research, while promoting an increased standard of living and quality of life for the people of Bangladesh.

The inauguration of the Bangabandhu-Pierre Elliott Trudeau Agriculture Technology Centre was announced by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Gazipur on February 23. The inauguration coincides with the 50th anniversary of BRRI and the launch of its 2041 strategy to achieve a food surplus in the country.

Canada—led by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the time—was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh's independence in 1971. The name of the ag-tech centre reflects this legacy.

world. This new ag-tech centre in Bangladesh is a showcase of Saskatchewan innovation and how the world can learn from our success in producing socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable agricultural products," says David Marit, Minister of Agriculture, Province of Saskatchewan.

"Canada and Bangladesh share over 50 years of strong bilateral relations," says H.E. Dr. Lilly Nicholls, High Commissioner for Canada in Bangladesh. "Bilateral trade between our countries exceeds CAD\$2.8 billion annually, including almost CAD \$1 billion in agricultural exports from Canada. The potential to expand trade between our countries is significant. Both Canadians and Bangladeshis are natural innovators and connectors. The Bangabandhu-Pierre Trudeau Agriculture Technology Centre is an excellent example of Canadian and Bangladeshi institutions working to foster collaboration and innovation."

"Collaboration is a key strength of GIFS. We bring diverse partners together to discover, develop and deliver innovative agriculture solutions that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. The inauguration of the agriculture technology centre in Bangladesh is an exciting example of how we are realizing our vision of a world where everyone has access to safe and nutritious food," says Dr. Steven Webb, Chief Executive Officer at the Global Institute for Food Security.

"Saskatchewan is an important partner for Bangladesh, and, since agriculture is critical to both of our economies, we can learn a lot from each other and build more bilateral trade," says Dr. Shaikh Mohammad Bokhtiar, Director for the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council. "The inauguration of the Bangabandhu-Pierre Elliott Trudeau Agriculture Technology Centre is a significant step forward in our continued and growing relationship and will play an essential role in our ability to increase our agriculture research capacity and increase our food production while reducing waste."

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# SARM aims to attract the next generation to rural government

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS

The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) is aiming to attract the next generation to get involved through the rural municipal government.

As more young families are calling rural Saskatchewan home, recruitment of the next generation is vital to maintaining a healthy rural municipal government, SARM stated.

"This is something our SARM board has been talking about for a while," said Ray Orb, President of SARM.

"Also, we can see what's happening in rural Saskatchewan. We can see the demographics of our councils.

"We have a lot of older councillors, I'm one of them. I've been involved with council for quite a few years, also with SARM too. I think we would like to see more young people or new people being attracted to council, and to getting elected into council.

"We put this out for people to start thinking about, and to be able to help us come up with some solutions on how to attract people.

"We have some ideas of our own, but we would really like to talk to our members too."

During SARM's 118th Convention on March 15th, members will hear from current RM council members about bridging the aging demographic with SARM members and recruiting future diverse young leaders in rural Saskatchewan.

Orb spoke about a few of the ideas he has in mind for attracting young people to council.

"I have ideas and our board does too," he said.

"Perhaps career fairs and things like that would help. Even going to local high schools, getting people that are in the later grades especially who are interested in maybe getting elected into a council.

"I know there's some RMs that had some junior members sitting at their council meetings as advisory members.

"They're not elected, but they're sitting as an advisor. It could be as a youth councillor, things like that. I think all of those ideas will help. We're hoping we can get some feedback at our convention about this as well."

Orb spoke about the advantages and differences he has seen from being a part of a rural municipal government.

"I think it's really important for everyone out in rural Saskatchewan to see what the role is for the council and reeves, and the administration as well," he said.

"Obviously working through SARM there's a



The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) is calling out for ideas on how to bring younger and new people into being a part of rural municipal governments at their next SARM convention on March 15.

Elected Officials Gender Breakdown, 2016



The above graph shows the percentage of women compared to the percentage of men that are involved in urban/city governments, rural governments and provincial government.

Graph credited to the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM).

chance to advance Ag policy. We have a lot of policy people that work within SARM, but helping attract economic development into your rural areas too. Even right now, attracting rural doctors and nurses, there's a role for the municipal council to be able to do that.

"Also the RCMP and policing, sub-committees provide housing for some of these people. Veterinarians are another one. For a number of years there have been quite a few RMs that have jointly owned veterinary clinics.

"It all helps in the speed of things to work together. I think that's the role that I see, good governance is the other thing. Getting that message out of what the RM is doing, what they plan to do, like infrastructure and improvements. Communicating to the members to really make sure that they understand

what's going on, and also to get feedback from them.

"That's one of the reasons why we put out this press release. We wanted to draw attention to that."

Aside from aiming to involve more young people in rural municipal government, Orb said they hope to get more women involved as well.

"We don't have a lot of women on council, but we'll be pushing for that at our convention," he said.

"We have about seven per cent of women on council. I've noticed over the years we have more women now than we did five or 10 years ago, but it's not increasing as much as I would've thought.

"For the administration side it has changed a lot. Now we have a lot of women that are administrators whereas 20 years ago we had mostly men."

Orb was asked if he thinks bringing in younger

and new people on council will improve governance.

"It's diversity that we're saying we need more of, and a part of that is young people being involved as well, women being involved as well," he said.

"They bring in a different point of view in a lot of cases.

"People like my own age, you know, I'm getting to the stage where I'm getting to the end of my own municipal career. Obviously that all helps in the decision making because different points of view, lead to different outcomes."

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# There's no controlling when spring will arrive

Spring must be here! There was this feeling inside me the other day when the sun was shining and the great outdoors was calling my name, so much so that I pulled my car out of the garage—nothing speaks spring more than getting that car out after a long winter season. Of course, once I actually got outside, I realized I needed my heavy winter coat, my scarf and my mittens. Perhaps even a toque for good measure.

And so, this is our spring, at least right now. Perhaps by the time you read this, a few days from when I actually wrote it, temps will rise into the high teens and the snow will have disappeared. Now there's a dream that's not likely to materialize quite that quickly.

The twins (nearly 12) and their friend were over one day after school and when I offered to feed them a snack if they came inside, they all collectively said no. It's not very often you offer kids a snack where they say no. Instead it was more about horsing around in the snow and pulling out the sleds for the hill out on the town parking lot. There is nothing about winter that those boys don't like—especially snowmobiling. Yes, there's hockey and there's curling but nothing beats snowmobiling. This is when I know the apple hasn't fallen far from the tree. They are their dad.

Once these young fellows finally came inside, they didn't turn down melted Toblerone and chocolate and we had a chance to talk about the Brier. "Did you see that shot Matt Dunstone made?" I asked as I pulled up the video. The minute it started playing, all three, as they looked closely at my phone, were, "Oh yeah, where he went between those two guards and took that rock out?" Oh yes, they were well aware of that shot!

And so, with the Brier behind us, calving still ongoing, and the snow still before us, we have no choice but to wait patiently, or impatiently as it may be, for warmer days. At least the days are getting longer and when the sun shines, you just know the time is getting closer to getting that seed in the ground. I asked the twins the other day how many calves I had on the ground now and they gave me one of those "oh boy Grandma, you have lost it" looks. They weren't sure what to say. I think they were hesitant to break the news to me that we are now cattle-less. They both looked a little relieved though when I told them I knew I didn't have any cows anymore.

The twins of course are in no hurry for the snow to melt because they aren't quite ready to park those snowmachines. I am confident though that they will have a change of heart once they know I can get into the camper and stock the fridge with chocolate bars, freezies and Toblerone!

The Lighter Side of  
Life...  
DOWN ON THE FARM  
by donna beutler  
FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST  
dl\_beutler@yahoo.ca



As time marches on (another way of saying we are getting older), I really see parts of my husband that are so much like our parents. When we were traveling south this winter, we hit some snow and slush in South Dakota and Nebraska and though it was only for about a hundred miles, our truck looked like it had traveled through some serious bad weather. My husband who can spot a spec of dust or the tiniest of scratches on his vehicle, was seriously itching to find a car wash. I wasn't too worried—after all it would get taken care of sometime along the way, I figured. In fact, I thought, maybe I could hand wash it once we checked into our rental once we arrived in Phoenix.

When I mentioned that out loud, I thought of driving into "our" resort where we had rented a park unit for a month was not an option for my husband and so it was that a car wash along the way became more than a desire—there was no other option. And that got me thinking...

Back when I lived on the farm with my parents and my brother, we raised cattle and crops and if nothing else, we worked hard. But the amount of dirt on the side of our half ton didn't necessarily, in those days, prompt quick action to clean it off.

When I got married, one of the first jobs I did on the farm that summer, along with my husband, was to bale hay—square bales. Yes, I am that old. Though round bales were becoming more and more popular, in those early years of our marriage, we baled square hay bales. And so off I went on a windy, dusty day to join my husband in getting the bales on the south quarter baled up but when I returned to the yard, there was my father in law ready and waiting with rags, pails and the hose to wash the tractor. I had just entered another world.

Now don't get me wrong. My father-in-law was the best and always had a smile and the best heart of anyone I knew. But there was dust on his tractor and that, apparently, could not remain. Even though that very tractor would be going out the next day to the next hay field.

Over the years, I got quite used to the Beutler men and their OCD ways over certain things, particularly vehicles, so one day I decided to see how my husband would react to an intentional faux pas on my part.

Our half ton had gotten pretty dusty—it was, after all, harvest time. So I pulled the truck up in front of the house and washed one half of it while supper was cooking. Then I took supper out to the field.

Before you laugh at what you quite likely are imagining his reaction might be (and oh there was a reaction!) you need to know that we lived, at that time, along a main highway so no matter where you went when you left our yard, it was onto the highway. You know, where others also drive.

"You drove this like this in public?" he said. "Well, yeah, but after supper I will finish washing the other side, it's not a big deal," I replied. "Oh, no, no, no," he responded. "It is a big deal. You can't wash one half and not the other!" "Why ever not?" I asked, ever so innocently. And so it went, I not the least worried, he having a panic attack. The way I look at it, I did a good thing. He was tired after many days of harvesting at that point and the adrenaline rush he got that day when he saw his truck likely meant he was able to work later than usual that night.

And now, many, many years later, I know exactly how he will react and how much like his dad he is in this respect. There is some consolation though: as worked up as my husband gets over dirty vehicles and minute scratches (oh right, there is no such thing as a minute scratch), his brother is way worse. As for the trusty old combine interior, he doesn't overreact over the dust and a hundred empty water bottles in there—go figure. He just keeps on rolling along.

We are a long way off from combining though and all eyes are set on seeding—if we can actually ever get into a field. It seems to me last year was wet and late as well, though this year may be even later. And that's okay. We have farmed long enough to know we have zero control over a hundred different things and we have learned to roll with the punches. For now, we may as well enjoy these longer, sunnier March days as best we can. As for all the farmers out there—here's to a great seeding season and/or calving season or whatever it is that makes your life down on the farm the best it can be!

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## Triplet calves born on the Reid farm

By DONNA BEUTLER

Kelsey Reid and his wife have been busy with calving for the past month, along with Kelsey's dad and brother as they enter the second month of a two-and-a-half/three-month calving period on their farm east of Rocanville.

To add to the usual demands of calving, the Reids have an extra mouth or two to feed, so to speak, as they are supplementing triplet calves born on their farm March 4.

It was an exciting moment for the Reids and their two children, especially since the triplets were born on their son's 7th birthday.

Though the triplets were born unassisted, there was some running back and forth from the house to the barn to check on the cow and her babies, as well as get the newborns fed and tubed. And though the needs of the calves were foremost on their mind, the Reid family were able to make it in for birthday cake.

Kelsey says his family knows that, during calving, there are times it's necessary to focus on what's happening with the herd over and above even a birthday celebration.

Kelsey and his brother both work off-farm and Kelsey credits his wife for giving the triplets lots of extra time as needed since their birth.



Rod, Maude and Todd are triplet calves that were born on Reids' farm east of Rocanville.

The black/white face Simmental cow is not just the momma of two males and one female, affectionately called Rod, Maude and Todd, but she is a loving one as well and totally accepted all of them without issue.

"Momma loves all three," Kelsey told the World-Spectator in a recent interview.

"And all three calves love to drink from the mother cow but require some supplementation as well.

"Prior to 2015 I only had one cow, but then I got into

it more and now have 100 cow pairs."

Between his dad, brother and himself they run 150 breeding pairs.

Kelsey said he purchased the cow as a replacement heifer in 2016 and in 2022 she gave birth to twins. Having triplets, he went on to say, is a one in 100,000 chance.

All three calves, black with white faces like their mother, are doing well under the watchful eye of Kelsey and his family.

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# Canada's farmland values continued to climb in 2022, FCC reports

The average value of Canadian farmland increased by 12.8 per cent in 2022, amid strong farm income, elevated input prices and rising interest rates. The demand for farmland remained robust and the supply of farmland available for sale continues to be limited, according to the latest FCC Farmland Values Report.

Farmland values saw the highest increase since 2014 and follow gains of 8.3 per cent in 2021 and 5.4 per cent in 2020.

"Challenging economic conditions could have been expected to slow the demand for farmland and the resulting price buyers paid for land in 2022," said J.P. Gervais, FCC's chief economist. "But the underlying fundamental factors in the farmland market tell another story."

FCC estimates that receipts of grains, oilseeds and pulses in Canada have increased 18.3 per cent in 2022, and are projected to grow 9.4 per cent in 2023.

"Higher farm revenues are driving the demand for farmland, but higher borrowing costs and increased input prices are expected to lead to declines in the number of sales in 2023," according to Gervais.

The highest average provincial increases in farmland values were observed in Ontario, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, with increases of 19.4, 18.7 and 17.1 per cent, respectively. Saskatchewan followed with a 14.2 per cent increase. Five provinces had average increases below the national average at 11.6



per cent in Nova Scotia, 11.2 per cent in Manitoba, 11 per cent in Quebec and 10 per cent in Alberta.

British Columbia is the only province to have recorded a single-digit increase at eight per cent, but it is also a market where land values are the highest on average.

There was an insufficient number of publicly reported sales in Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon to fully assess farmland values in those regions.

"It's good practice to have and maintain a risk management plan that takes into account possible economic changes," said Gervais. "When producers ensure their budgets have room to flex if commodity prices, yields or interest rates shift, they're better off in the long run."

FCC also suggests producers to exercise caution, especially in regions where the growth rate of farmland values exceeded that of farm income in recent years, which was the case in most provinces.

Gervais acknowledges that higher farmland values pose a challenge for young producers, new entrants and other operations that are looking to expand.

"Land is more expensive now relative to income than it's ever been. The ability to service debt and overall equity in the operation are critical factors of success going forward," he said. "The good news is that farmland value increases reflect a positive outlook for the demand of agriculture commodities and the quality food we produce in Canada."

"Producers have a long track record of making strategic investments in land, even before agriculture and food was identified as one of six sectors with the highest potential for growth by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth in 2016," Gervais said. "These long-term investments in food production have spurred growth and create a bright future for Canada's agriculture and food industry."

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