



# **Agriculture industry working through COVID-19**

### ROB PAUL

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER Confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Canada continue to grow as more and more precautions are being taken. Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, New

Branswick, and Nova Scotia have all declared provincial states of emergency to combat the spread of the virus. Businesses throughout Canada have either had to make major adjustments to promote social distancing or they've

had to close all together. One industry that cannot shut down during the CO-

VID-19 pandemic is the agriculture industry. The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatche

wan (APAS) recently put out a statement saying Saskatch-ewan farmers will continue to work through this time. "Saskatchewan farmers are not shutting down," said APAS President Todd Lewis. "Farm families are hard at

work every day to ensure stable supply of quality food for

APAS also said they will need government support during the COVID-19 crisis to continue to produce at their highest level.

"People around the world will continue to rely on our products, and we will continue to operate while other sec-tors slow down," said Lewis. "However, as an industry that supports one in every eight Canadian jobs, farmers need assistance from governments and industry partners

to make sure we can continue to do our jobs. "Our members are about to invest billions of dollars

into this year's crop, and recent weather, trade, and trans-portation disruptions have stretched our financial capac-ity to the limit. We need the government and financial industry to assist us to make that investment possible," said Lewis.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced last week that there will be \$5 billion credit program to support farmers that will go to Farm Credit Canada (FCC) to boost its lending capacity. "While much of the Canadian economy has shut down,

"While much of the Canadian economy has shut down, Saskatchewan farmers are getting ready to put in this year's crop, and they need to know that credit is available to allow them to seed," said Lewis. "This announcement is a good first step to help spring

APAS is pleased with the government supporting agri-culture, but wants more to be done.

cent in the last two years, and many farm operations have been impacted by low commodity prices, poor weather, and trade and transportation disruptions," said Lewis. "With COVID-19 we are now facing unprecedented

business instability going into the 2020 production year and our Business Risk Management programs do not provide us with an adequate financial backstop needed to

manage these risks. "We need further measures to ensure that we have the cash flow and financial means needed to produce food for Canadians and for export customers," said Lewis.

With the border closures, APAS has voiced their concerns about a lack of workers because of the non-Canadi-

"Many producers have relied on international seasonal labour to do essential work on Canadian farms, but it appears that workers may not be available this season due to border closures. People that have lost their jobs during the COVID-19 crisis need to be connected to agricultural work that urgently needs to be done," said Lewis.

"APAS and other agricultural groups need to engage with everyone that can help connect potential workers with employment opportunities." APAS is also worried about potentials supply chain is-sues due to COVID-19 and believe it's something that will

"Whether it is transport of products to export markets,

or availability of farm inputs or processing capacity, Ca-nadian farmers depend on a fully functional transporta-tion and supply chain. For the sake of maintaining a sta-ble food supply globally, we all have to ensure there are no further disruptions to Canadian agriculture."

Continued on page B22



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# FCC receives \$5 billion enhancement to lending program

#### ROB PAUL

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER Last week Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced \$5

billion in credit for the agriculture industry in Canada to help during the COVID-19 pandemic. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Marie-Claude Bibeau announced that Farm Credit Canada (FCC) re-received the \$5 billion enhancement to their lending pro-

gram. FCC is a Crown corporation with a loan portfolio of over \$38 billion to help producers with their operations and they own around 30 per cent of the agriculture and food lending market in Canada. "Farmers and producers work hard to put food on tables across our country, and they should not have to worry about being able to afford their loan payments or buring enough memory to support their own formilies".

having enough money to support their own families,' said Trudeau.

"We are taking action now to give them more flexibility

with COVID-19 impacting all of Canada, Minister Bi-beau said the agriculture industry is more important than ever

ever. "Like many Canadians, I am truly grateful for our farmers and food business owners and employees, who continue working hard so we all have quality food on our grocery store shelves and kitchen tables," said Bibeau. "Their continued work is essential to our plan to man-age COVID-19." "The measures announced today will provide farmers and food producers excess the country with important fi

and food producers across the country with important fi-

nancial flexibility they will need during these challenging times," said Bibeau. FCC said they are here to help farmers get through an unprecedented time while dealing with COVID-19. "If you are a producer concerned about having the cash flow required to plan your crop, or you are a food proces-sor feeling the impact of a lost sale due to the financial downtum, FCC is here to support you in these uncertain economic times," said FCC President and CEO Michael Hoffort. Hoffort.

"It's in times like these that we are reminded how im-

"It's in times like these that we are reminded how im-portant Canadian producers and food processors are to our nation and to feeding the world." FCC says they have the support and will work with all financial situations to help farmers get the loans they need during the COVID-19 crisis. "Supporting the industry will also take strong collabo-ration between banks, credit unions, FCC, and other fi-nancial institutions," said Hoffort.

"FCC has served as a strong and stable industry pres-ence for more than 60 years, and this current situation is no different," said Hoffort. "We will be working in part-nership with other financial providers to offer the solutions needed by the agriculture and food industry to take on challenges ahead."

"Each business' financial situation is unique, so there may be a combination of options considered," said Hof-fort. "The bottom line is that FCC is being supported by our shareholder to play a bigger role in supporting the success of the Canadian agriculture and food industry across Canada." across Canada.

"The sooner we can discuss potential challenges, the more options we have.

FCC says they will use its resources to find solutions that offer the best chance for recovery going forward so the industry emerges stronger. Program details from FCC:

- A deferral of principal and interest payments up to
- A deferral of principal and interest payments up to six months for existing loans. A deferral of principal payments up to 12 months Access to an additional credit line up to \$500,000, secured by general security agreements or univer-sal movable hypothetic (Quebec only)
- FCC is asking customers who are experiencing fi-nancial pressures to contact them sooner rather than later because a combination of options will need to be considered.
- Business applying for FCC lending products will be subject to normal lending due diligence, which considers business viability, credit history, and management integrity and experience

With the uncertainty around COVID-19 for the agri-culture industry, FCC says they want to be there to help those who need it through this situation. "FCC is committed to the long-term success of the Ca-

nadian agriculture industry," said FCC Senior Consul-tant, Media Relations Trevor Sutter. "FCC helps customers succeed through every business cycle and responds to unexpected circumstances such as the ones currently being faced.'

Continued on Page C8 🖙



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# Thiessen recognized for his achievements as an AET

Lester Thiessen is busy. He's a skilled Red Seal Agricultural Equipment Technician (AET), a handy man at home, a husband and a father of three young children. He is a leader in his church and also loves watching and playing sports. sports.

Recently, Thiessen re-ceived two scholarships for his achievements in the skilled trades: the inaugural Saskatchewan Ap-prenticeship Scholarship for Journeypersons with Disabilities at the 2019 Ap-Disabilities at the 2019 Ap-prenticeship Awards and the Young's Equipment Inc. / Western Equipment Dealers Association Schol-arship at the 2018 Appren-ticeship Awards. Thiessen and his iden-tical twin brother were raised on a mixed farm in Maryfield, Saskatchewan. Both were born hard of hearing, and appreciated

hearing, and appreciated the support they received

growing up. "I am grateful to our parents, teachers and education assistants who sup-ported us throughout our education," he said. "We were the first deaf students to graduate from our school. We kept the teach-ers on their toes."

Thiessen didn't pursue a career as an AET right after graduation. While he enjoyed help-

ing his dad and grandpa fix machinery as a young boy, he chose to attend Bible School, followed by a year at the University of



Above and above right: Lester Thiessen at work at Mazergroup in Moosomin where he started his apprenticeship and got his Red Seal AET Journeyperson with them in 2019.

Winnipeg. However, nei-ther of those options felt like the right fit for him. It wasn't until he recalled

It wasn't until he recalled the pleasure he felt work-ing on machinery with his family, and all the problem solving that was involved, that he decided to find a ich and register as an AET job and register as an AET apprentice. Right away,

he knew he had found his calling. "I started my apprentice-

ship with Mazergroup, a New Holland dealership in Moosomin, and I got my Red Seal AET Journeyper-son with them in 2019," Thiessen said.

Continued on Page B6





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# Stolen farm trucks and fishing stories

#### BY DONNA BEUTLER

You would have to know my husband to understand how pumped he was (last September) to find a used half-ton, 10 years old with just 29K on it. Immaculate condi-tion. Power seats, black leather—perfect for a "farm" truck being that our old half-ton was essentially on its last

leg. I on the other hand was thinking a bit more along the lines of: "Do you really think we need a farm truck that's in such great condition?" Long story short, he won, I didn't. (Remember, though, I won the "new-to-us" camp-

er debate last spring). The one thing this "new" truck did not have was remote start. We hashed it over now and again and by the time mid-January came, we thought we were close enough to spring to do without for this winter. This did mean, however, that we would have to go out and start the truck to

warm it up. Itel we would have to go but and start the futck to And one bitterly cold morning in February (just before the break in temperatures), we started the truck, hoping that the frost would clear off the windshield by the time my husband headed out to the farm. Well, presumably it was cleared off enough for the thief that drove off with it!

And so began a series of misfortunes, shall we say, all started by the loss of a vehicle (though it was found but started by the loss of a vehicle (mough it was round out is likely totalled) that had little in it, but just enough to cause us some grief—namely blank cheques that were being fraudulently used (that's a story in and of itself). Beware of the fact that with just your account number, the unsavory souls of this world can access your bank funds without using the cheques. Who knew?

unsavory souls of this world can access your bank funds without using the cheques. Who knew? In the ensuing days that followed, there were multiple calls and visits to police, bank, cell phone providers and on and on, and let's just say, on some more. In light of what has happened though, we have been able to say, "It's just a truck," and have begun a preliminary search for a replacement as we await the insurance company's final verdict. We look at it as a lesson learned. Keen a counle of

We look at it as a lesson learned. Keep a couple of We look at it as a lesson learned. Keep a couple of cheques in your wallet and not your vehicle; don't leave your wallet in your vehicle, and mostly—ensure you have command starters on your vehicle, especially those you drive to work every single morning, seven days a week! Cell phones and tools and hitches and trucks are fairly easily replaced; peace of mind when your bank account is compromised? Not so much. The perfect break in a several-days-long stretch of deal-ing with the aftermath of this national series of the set of the se

ing with the aftermath of this particular incident was an



afternoon at the local 4-H speeches three of our grandchil-

dren were participating in. I hadn't heard their speeches ahead of time and oh, yes I was a proud, proud Grandma hearing about their re-spective topics—Christmas break, getting stepped on the foot by a 4-H steer, and a summer fishing trip.

foot by a 4-H steer, and a summer fishing trip. Our twin grandsons love fishing and I knew one of the speeches was about fishing. It could have been a speech about ice fishing with their dad, fishing in Manitoba with their parents during summer vacay, or fishing at the lake where the kids' other grandparents' have a cabin. Little did I know that part of this particular speech would in-clude the story about some of the best fishing moments these kids had with my husband and I this past summer at Fishing I ake. at Fishing Lake.

The story I haven't dared repeat in my summer 'lake column' or in any column since was it was laid bare before a microphone on stage before dozens of 4-H'ers and their families in late February.

their families in late February. The story is totally true and it went like this (para-phrased): "I went to Fishing Lake with my Grandpa and Grandma in the summer and we caught lots of fish. Some days were too windy to go fishing with the boat, but one day, when the lake was like glass, we went out and de-cided to use the trolling motor that no one had ever used before. Grandpa was using the trolling motor remote but the boat was going in circles and he was getting frustrat-ed. So Grandma Donna tried and she was going in circles and getting frustrated. Then Aunti (my sister in law) becu. So Granuita Donita Thea and she was going in circles and getting frustrated. Then Aunti (my sister in law) be-gan singing, "The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round." She was singing to make everyone happier."

And so that's kind of the story. Fortunately for us, dy-ing of laughter as we sat in the audience listening to this speech, he didn't tell the complete story. There was more

As it was, as I was trying to figure out the remote and trying to keep the boat from going in circles, I decided that maybe more speed was needed. I figured it might be like driving a zero-turn mower—so much easier with a bit more speed than if you are going too slow. And that might have been the case, except that a bit more speed caused my \$40 wicker visor (so loved) to blow off my head and into the water. My husband grabbed the net and told me to turn around (no problem, I had that cased). Then, no, no, go back the other way. Go slower. Go faster. Turn left. Turn right. And we watched as that visor slowly, e-v-e-r s-o s-l-o-w-l-y, sunk to the depths of the sea. I mean, it literally took five minutes to sink and we couldn't get the boat going in the right direction in order to retrieve the visor.

This is when my husband's sister began singing to dif-fuse tension. Finally my husband said to her, "Will you shut up, Lori!" No word of a lie. In front of the grandchildren no less! Plus we were 50 yards from shore. And people were on the shore. Now that's the whole truth. We lifted the trolling motor up, locked it into place, and started up the boat motor. Have we trolled since? I am not telling

As spring locks itself firmly (hopefully) into place, and as farmers and their families watch their new crop of calves coming and as they prepare for a new seeding sea-son, we are reminded that along with spring, hope eternal springs up—hope for a successful season, but more than springs up—hope for a successful season, but more than that—hope for a season of families working and growing together and laughing along the way, whether it's spend-ing time together in a tractor or in the barn or maybe, if time allows this summer—in a boat! Here's to spring on the farm—or wherever you may be!



Donna Beutler farms at Whitewood, and writes the occasional newspaper story.



### Scholarship support gives student global perspective on feeding world

BY CARLEE SNOW College of Agriculture and Bioresources student David MacTaggart is learning how to feed the future through internafuture through interna-tional conferences and research.

Growing up on a small beef cattle farm in La-combe, Alta., David Mac-Taggart knew he wanted to leverage lessons learned from life in rural Alberta to "It interested me in be-

coming an agricultural scientist and how I could contribute to feeding the world while being a steward of the environment in the future," said the fourth-year College of Ag-riculture and Bioresources student at the University of Saskatchewan (USask).

MacTaggart is now ma-joring in crop science and hopes to make an impact on the world in the area of food security. He said he chose his path because of his interest in plant sci-

or his interest in plant sci-ences and breeding. "The combination of cutting-edge science and collaboration between farmers and consumers— that is what interested me and why I wanted to become involved in the me and why I wanted to become involved in the process of plant breed-ing to deliver farmers the technology they need to be sustainable and profitable in the future."

Thanks to donor sup-port, he received the Education Enhancement Grant that allowed him to supplement his education with unique learning op-portunities.



David MacTaggart attended the 2019 One Day for Students kick-off event, with dozens of other community-minded students and donors. This year's fundraiser to support students is on March 17.

"With the support of do-nors, I was able to attend the Scale Up conference at Purdue University, which brought together agricul-tural leaders from around the world," explained MacTaggart. "Through informative sessions and networking with del-egates, I gained a better understanding of the role of innovation in feeding the world. This experience helped to strengthen the direction of my develop-ing career by providing a global perspective of agri-culture that I can apply to my studies todar." my studies today." MacTaggart plans to use

his education to impact the world in three ways.

First, MacTaggart hopes to develop a collaborative environment to help bring different groups together through policy. "I have always been in-

terested in government and politics and would like to act as a mediator between groups that are at odds with each other, whether it is farmers and consumers," said MacTag-gart, who hopes that work-ing with all groups will help deliver food security in Canada and around the world. like to act as a mediator world.

world. Secondly, MacTaggart hopes to deliver broad-based solutions to the greater population. He

plans to work alongside scientists to develop more effective practices in the plant breeding process and improve agriculture for the future. Finally, MacTaggart hopes to in-spire people through edu-cation cation.

cation. MacTaggart credits do-nors for their support dur-ing his academic journey. "Donors have given me the emotional support to know that people believed in me," he said. "The sup-port has boosted my mo-livation during university. born has boosted my mo-tivation during university because I know that the education I am receiving will help me accomplish the goals I have for the fu-ture."

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His scholarship was supported by alumni and donors to the university's Campaign for Students, an annual appeal that raises over \$1.19-million each year to give students ad-ditional support to pursue

their educational goals. With scholarships eas-ing his financial concerns,

ing his financial concerns, MacTaggart has had more time to get involved on campus, as an undergrad-uate research assistant as well as through the USask Horticulture Club. "We help teach students skills like growing their own food, but also pre-paring it as well," he said. "Right now, we have our field project that is under-way and we are growing lots of fresh produce out in lots of fresh produce out in the field and that goes to-wards members—but we also use it to support the (local community) food bank."

MacTaggart said he felt very fortunate to have re-ceived assistance in his education, as he gets ready to graduate in the spring of 2020.

"The support I received from donors encouraged me to step out of my com-fort zone," he said. "I am a person that likes to focus on one specific thing. Be-ing supported by scholar-ships has helped me take off those blinders and be able to see what the entire university experience has to offer

If you would like to support students and the great work they are doing in the community, save the date for One Day for Students on March 17, a day to celebrate philanthropy across the uni-versity. Please visit give. usask.ca/oneday for more information or to make a gift.



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#### Monday, March 30, 2020

### Thiessen recognized for his achievements as an AET

\*\* Continued from Page B3 "What I really like about the trade is that every day is so different. There are many different types of equipment I can work on such as sprayers, com-bines, tractors, skid steers, balers, and swathers. I really enjoy problem solv-ing why something is not working. I get satisfaction from fixing it."

**B6** 

Thiessen understands how important it is to have access to inclusive, welcoming work environ-ments that support and encourage people from

15

22 27

underrepresented groups, including people with disabilities

"Having a disability is such a small part of who I am," said Thiessen. "I don't think of myself that don't think of myself that way. What surprises me is that the biggest challenge isn't my hearing. It is en-countering people who don't understand my abili-tics and make accumptions ties and make assumptions about me.

"In a job interview one time the person realized I was hard of hearing and he got upset, made conde-scending comments, and

left the interview." Thiessen notes that once people notice how hard he works and what he achieves, they warm up to him. He is grateful for the supportive environmer he has with Mazergroup. environment

Thiessen's wife, Melissa, is proud of his achieve-ments. "Lester's jourments. "Lester's jour-neyperson certification is something that will speak for him, it's not just him saying 1'm good at fix-ing combines' and hoping the person he is speak-ing to the back the person he is speak-ing to takes his word for it. The certification says:

'I've earned the highest level of achievement for my knowledge of agricul-tural machinery.' It carries a weight of proof. It also shows our kids that if they put in the effort, they can follow through with things that are important to them as well." While Thiessen's chal-

lenges may be different than what others have experienced, he shared some advice for other people with disabilities interested in pursuing a skilled trades career. "Don't be afraid to ask



Lester with his wife Melissa and their two children.

for help. Don't get frus-trated too easily if stigma is placed on you. Work hard and show society "I want to keep learning "I want to keep learning and getting better at what I do. My employer is very good with keeping us up to date with training, espe-cially on new equipment. I enjoy learning new things in this field and being blo to anyly thom in my Livestock Services BOX 340 • VIRDEN, MANITOBA TEL: 204-748-2809 • FAX: 204-748-3478 that you can do anything. Don't give up. You must expect there will be resis-tance and problems that you will need to overcome. TOLL FREE: 1-888-784-9882 EMAIL ADDRESS: VIRDEN.LMC@HLS.CA able to apply them in my MARCH 2020 30 MONDAY Follow your passion and talents and don't wait for a later stage of life. Time is Excavation work. BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M New journeypersons who are eligible to apply for the Scholarship for Journeypersons with Dis-APRIL 2020 Land clearing REGULAR FEEDER SALE WEDNESDAY 9 A.M Sand & gravel hauling going to pass anyway, so 9 A.M. 11:30 A.M. 9 A.M. 10 A.M. 12 NOON FRIDAY BRED COW & PAIR SALE - POSTPONED BUTCHER SALE enjoy what you are going to spend your life doing." Thiessen continues to follow his own advice. MONDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY Concrete breaking PRE-SORT FEEDER SALE SHEEP/GOAT SALE abilities will be notified by the SATCC in the summer of 2020. Compaction • CLOSED FOR GOOD FRIDAY & EASTER MONDAY Site preparation & earthworks REGULAR FEEDER SALE & PEN OF 5 HEIFERS BUTCHER SALE REGULAR FEEDER SALE WEDNESDAY MONDAY WEDNESDAY 9 A.M 9 A.M 9 A.M **Trenching for electrical**  steel shakes & mechanical facilities MONDAY BUTCHER SALE REGULAR FEEDER SALE 29 WEDNESDAY 9 A.M **Tank foundations**  standing seam MAY 2020 Road construction BRED COW & PAIR SALE 11:30 A.M FRIDAY MONDAY WEDNESDAY FRIDAY BRED COW & PAIR SALE BUTCHER SALE REGULAR CATTLE SALE FEEDER & BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M 9 A.M 9 A.M Lowbed Services snap lock **Culvert sales & installation** HEBERT steel tile THURSDAY HORSE/SHEEP SALE 12 NOON Flatdeck hauling metal roofing CANADIAN LIVESTOCK AUCTIONEER COMPETITION steel slate Family owned & operated for over 70 years And Exteriors **POSTPONED TO SEPTEMBER 2020** ISE 171306 MB DEALERS LICENSE 1317. SALE DATES AND TIMES ALL CATTLE MUST HAVE THE CCIA CATTLE IDENTIFICATION TAK ial & residential \mid serving saskatchewan and m ä-84 For any marketing information or questions regarding our feeder finance program or online auction, please call: Robin Hill, Manager 204-851-5465 Rick Gabrielle 204-851-0613 • Ken Day 204-748-7713 Elkhorn, MB Drillon Beaton 204-851-7495 • Kolton McIntosh 204-280-0359 PLEASE PHONE IN ALL CONSIGNMENTS tuttcons@mymts.net Check www.hls.ca for current market information 306-435-7472 tutthillconstruction.com DLMS INTERNET CATTLE SALES EVERY THURSDAY AT 11 A.M. AT WWW.DLMS.CA - CALL US TO LIST YOUR CATTLE hebertmetalroofing@sasktel.net Tire Sales & Repairs Agriculture & Industrial Tires All Makes & Models ompany Batteries Quad Tires PARCEL 1: V OFFIC SE¼-11-12-29-W1 Pasture Automotive Diagnostics PARCEL 2: 306-745-3952E1/2 of NW1/4-15-11-28-W1 Cultivated & Repair Tenders will be considered separately for Lynnette Bock Wheel each parcel. Alignments B.A., J.D. There are no buildings on either property SGI Safety ROCANVILLE · Persons tendering are advised to conduct Inspections BRANCH their own due diligence and verify all information and title status FRIDAYS 24-HOUR MOBILE Highest or any tender may not necessarily 306-645-4552 SERVICE ANDREW AGENCIES be accepted **FIRF** BUILDING **TENDERS CLOSE** Proud to serve the **FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2020** Closing to be on or before May 15, 2020 local agricultural community! Mail tenders to: (306) 435-2220 Box 98, Elkhorn, MB R0M 0N0 505 MOOSE ST. • MOOSOMIN, SK

# COVID-19 impacts economy, agri-food markets

BY J.P. GERVAIS Governments around the world are taking steps to control the speed at which CO-VID-19 spreads, but the economic impacts are only starting to materialize. Proper risk management strategies start with understanding these economic trends:

#### Weaker economic growth

Necessary restrictions on the movement of people and workplace policies are disrupt-ing supply chains. An economic slowdown is inevitable, but questions remain around its magnitude and length.

The U.S. Federal Reserve brought its policy rate close to zero. The Bank of Canada has taken steps to mitigate the risk of a major slowdown. It lowered its overnight rate and took steps to ensure financial markets have liquidity. The government of Canada also announced a series of measures to support business financing and is working towards other stimulus measures

**Weaker Canadian dollar** Tumbling oil prices and overall economic uncertainty are weakening the loonie. Oil is pressured on two fronts: travel bans cutting the demand outlook for fuel, and oil-

Is pressured on two froms: travel bars cuting the demand outdok for fuel, and of-producing countries fighting a price war. Investors are also turning toward the greenback as a safe haven currency given the uncertainty. The Canadian dollar was at C\$0.76 per U.S. dollar at the end of February and closed slightly over C\$0.71 on March 16.

#### Downward pressures on commodity prices

The weaker loonie partially offsets the generalized decline in commodity prices since the beginning of the year. Cattle and hog prices are down 20 per cent and are below the

the beginning of the year. Cattle and hog prices are down 20 per cent and are below the levels observed when China stopped importing beef and pork in September. Canola, soybeans and wheat are down around 8 per cent. Corn prices are down 2 per cent. We project tighter profit margins in 2020, given the signals sent by futures markets. Returns for some crops are now projected under break-even levels. Livestock profitability is also pressured even if the gap between the supply and demand of animal proteins due to ASF supports margins. However, there's a real risk that margins will decline if demand weakens, considering the large meat supplies expected to be available in North America.

**Takeaways** Agriculture and food are resilient economic sectors. After all, people still need to eat. But food purchasing patterns at home and abroad will be influenced by economic fluc-tuations. Demand in emerging markets may weaken, given foreign consumers' food de-mand is sensitive to income. Domestic spending can shift from indulgence-type food to more basic food staples, from food away-from-home to at-home prepared foods, for example. While an economic slowdown is inevitable, the economy will rebound. Sound cash flow management and HR planning are useful strategies to be ready for the coming economic disruptions. economic disruptions.

J.P. is the Vice-President and Chief Agricultural Economist at Farm Credit Canada.



# FCC receives \$5 billion enhancement to lending program

Continued from Page C2 "FCC's support for customers is a regular part of our business and we're monitoring situations in various parts of the country and within certain sectors to ensure customers are able to manage through circumstances beyond

their control," said Sutter. As for how COVID-19 could impact FCC, they have

As for now COVID-19 could impact FCC, they have plans in place to continue operating during the pandemic. "FCC is taking steps to protect our customers and em-ployees while attempting to help prevent the spread of the virus," said Sutter. "The health and safety of our em-ployees and customers is our top priority. We are asking employees who feel ill to stay home and not meet in per-son with customers." FCC details on operating during COVID-19:
 We have reduced the number of FCC staff at our of-

- - fices, both in the field and at Corporate Office. The

- number of employees working remotely could in-crease as we continue to assess the situation. If a customer is feeling unwell or prefers not to meet in person, we will assist over the phone, through our customer service centre or we have self-serve options through Online Services. Should customers experience challenges as a result
- Should customers experience challenges as a result
  of the current economic impact of the COVID-19
  situation, please contact your local Relationship
  Manager to discuss.
  "FCC exists for the success of the Canadian agriculture
  and food sector and we are here to work with our customers
  during these challenging times," said Sutter.
  For those looking for information on how to access the
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### Keeping kids safe on the farm during COVID-19

BY RICHARD KAMCHEN

The closure of schools and daycares to curb the spread of COVID-19 means there are thousands of children home across the country, including those on farms.

Although working with children around isn't new for most agricul-tural operations, spring—a busy time of year for farms—is just around the corner. Heightened safety measures might be needed to protect the young nes nearby. Robin Anderson, the communica-

Robin Anderson, the communica-tions co-ordinator with the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, says self-isolating farm families could con-sider having a healthy relative come live with the family to assist with childcare. Or share chores with neigh-bours, so one parent is available for childcare childcare.

childcare. "Every farm has unique childcare needs and hazards," Anderson says. Safe play areas and supervision are essential to preventing child farm-related injuries, Anderson says. If you plan to have school-age children help at the farm, but are uncertain if a job is age-appropriate, CASA provides a decision-making framework for 10 of the tasks most frequently associated with injuries to children.

children

For children old enough to help, CASA urges families to follow its Ag Youth Work Guidelines. COVID-19's anticipated stress on healthcare may limit usually available medical resources. CASA rec-

"Preventing injuries and staying healthy and safe is something that we can do not just for ourselves, but for our families, our farms and our communities," Ander-

Helping children and youth manage their mental health during this time of high uncertainty is also im-

Anderson encourages that parents talk to their kids about COVID-19 and refers them to the U.S. Center for Disease Control's "for parents" section. The CDC points out that while everyone is different, reactions such as reverting to younger behaviours, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits and avoiding previously enjoyed activi-



ties can be signs of stress

The CDC also recommends that talking with kids and sharing facts from reliable sources like Health Canada,

snaring facts from reliable sources like Health Canada, may help them deal with worries. Farm family transition coach and farmer, Elaine Fro-ese, says the COVID-19 pandemic creates the need for a sense of hope and community among farm families and Canadians. She recommends staying connected through phone calls or video calls.

"Plant seeds of hope and listen to the concerns of oth-rs," Froese says.

Children are unexpectedly back on the farm as schools and daycares across the country close to keep the COVID-19 virus from spreading. The influx means heightened safety measures as spring yard work gears up, or looking for alternative childcare options, such as chore-sharing with neighbours and taking turns watch-ing the kids. Experts say it's important to be mindful of children's mental health as well, speaking to them about the pandemic to ease distress.

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## Ease worry with a mental health check-in

BY TARYN MILTON COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Watching the situ-ation unfold around the world and in our backyards can induce anxiety, including on the farm. Balancing life, farm work and sickness worries can make for a stressful time for farmers. And combined with the poten-

tial financial impacts of an uncertain economy, can add even more

Lesly Kelly, the co-founder of Do More Ag, who farms with her family in Watrous, Sask, says dur-

in highly stressful times, in the past, she worked to find allies. "It helped us feel like we weren't alone, and you could talk to your neighbour down the road or someone across Canada, Kelly says.

Now, at a time where social distancing is the new normal and large gatherings of people discouraged, connecting with loved ones and family may mean the use of technology for video chat or phone colle. or phone calls. Kelly says she and her family

focus on open communication. Being open helps when some-one is having a rough day. It means everyone is comfortable checking on each other and open to conversation during the rough patches, whether it's concerns about the farm or anxiety about

COVID-19. During a rough day, they also keep an ongoing conversation about mental health. They check on how everyone's feeling, and if anyone is weighed down. And to

help keep their spirits high dur-ing the long hours, Kelly says they like to text to keep the lines of communication open. "My mom would text a picture of my dad having a really good day, and that would boost our spirits," Kelly says. Adelle Stewart, executive direc-tor of Do More Ag, recommends

tor of Do More Ag, recommends beating worries and stress by per-sonally figuring out what works best.

"Self-care is an extremely in-dividualized coping strategy," Stewart says. "So, have some openness with yourself to explore

What that may mean." For some, that may mean curl-ing up with a good book, while for others, it may involve physi-cal activity. Try various activities, Stewart says, to find what works beet

With current COVID-19 worries, Psychology Today suggests these strategies to help stay mentally healthy during this time of uncertainty. Pay attention to your physical health and your emo-tions, embrace health practices, share reliable information and share renative information and step away from breaking news when feeling overwhelmed. Stewart says producers at busy times of the year like during calv-

ing, need to pay attention to their mental health.

"Anybody out calving prob-ably doesn't have good sleep hy-giene, so it's being forgiving with yourself," Stewart says.

Sleep hygiene refers to healthy habits that help us sleep better at night and stay asleep. How-ever, when producers are waking up every few hours to check on their animals, their sleep is inter-

"Sleep hygiene is different for everyone, and some people need more sleep than others," Stewart says. "Getting the appropriate amount of rest is important be-

BDO

cause going prolonged periods without sleep or quality rest di-minishes our mental and physi-cal functions and coordination, which can lead to irritability, ac-

cidents and poor decisions."' It's difficult for farmers to maintain good sleep habits during calving, seeding and harvest. But being aware of how it can affect them can help identify how they feel or act during prolonged

they feel or act during prolonged periods of fatigue. As for spring planting, both Kelly and Stewart recommend farmers sit down with family now and make contingency plans. Having backup plans helps ease stress, they say. "Even the best-laid plan and backup and they fail

stress, they say. "Even the best-laid plan and back-ups may not come to frui-tion, so self-care strategies and asking or reaching out for sup-port can help our mental well-ness," Stewart says. Kelly and her family have al-ready started making their seed-ing, rotation and marketing plans. "We try to do as much as we can ahead of time and feel confident and know that things change, but at least we have a Plan A and B for right now," Kelly says. And during seeding and har-vest, they meet every morning to discuss what's going on around them and plan for that day. "It helps alleviate elevated stress and know, even though things are out of your control -the weather is out of your control, you can't manage the weather - but you can manage that you've tried your best," Kelly says.

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# **USask researchers develop fast, accurate** test to identify toxins in cereal crops

Researchers at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) Crop Develop-ment Centre (CDC) have developed a fast and accurate method for identifying and quantifying toxins in fusarium-infected cereal grain, an innovation that could reduce toxins that are harmful to both ani-mals and humans.

**B12** 

Fusarium head blight (FHB), a fungal disease affecting kernel develop-ment, causes millions of dollars in annual losses in Canadian cereal crops such as barley, wheat and

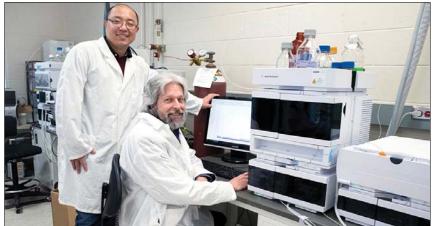
oats. With warming weather patterns and more inten-sive farming practices, fusarium has been spread-ing across the Prairie provinces. The infected grain is often both lower in qual-ity and kernel weight, and may be unsuitable for human and animal consump

tion. That's because the fusarium infection process produces mycotoxins such as deoxynivalenol (DON), which in severe cases can reduce the market value of a crop to zero. Animals consuming feed contain-ing high levels of DON may have reduced growth, as well as reduced fertility and reduced immune response. In worst cases, the toxins can lead to death of the animal. There can also be long-term impacts on human health from

Dawn Nagy, CAIB

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Researchers Lipu Wang and Randy Kutcher use the Core Mass Spectrometry Facility Lab in the USask College of Pharmacy and Nutrition to test for toxins in cereal grains. Praveen Sapkota photo

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consuming mycotoxins in food.

As mycotoxins such as As mycotoxins such as DON are not destroyed during processing such as milling, baking or malt-ing, testing infected feed grain for the concentration of DON is becoming criti-cally important. To limit mycotoxins in food and feed, regulations specify maximum allowable con-centrations, and if these limits are exceeded, prodlimits are exceeded, prod-ucts cannot be sold.

Breeding for low DON concentration in cereal

crops is an important con-trol measure for the dis-ease, said CDC research

officer Lipu Wang. "The problem has been that crop breeders and re-searchers have lacked a way to measure DON that is both quick and accu-rate," said Wang. Wang and USask re-searcher Randy Kutcher of

the CDC's cereal and flax pathology program have come up with a new way to test for DON that involves a one-step extraction of the mycotoxins using the

of samples," Wang said. "This new method offers chemical solvent acetonitrile, followed by direct in-jection of the toxins into a breeders a much more efnass spectrometer to iden-This method eliminates the lengthy process of separating the compounds and lowers the cost, while or barley lines that accu-

providing high sensitivity and accuracy compared to other methods.

"Analysis that previ-ously took 20 minutes per sample can now be done in less than two minutes, which is very important when testing thousands method by grain compa-nies has the potential to enhance quality assurance for the grain industry in domestic and export mar-kets, said Kutcher. "Our customers want po contaminant—po tox-

no contaminants—no tox-ins—in our grain," said Kutcher. "It may also help in deciding whether grain should be processed as food or animal feed."

The research team is now The research team is now using the new mycotoxin test in their plant pathol-ogy program at the CDC, using the mass spectrom-eter in the College of Phar-macy and Nutrition. They are seeking to expand the diagnostic testing with re-search collaborators, inter-ested breeders, and clients. ested breeders, and clients. The team has also devel-

oped a way to identify and quantify other toxins, pro-viding a powerful tool to detect new types of myco-toxins in newly developed correl except working.

cereal grain varieties. The project is supported by the Saskatchewan Agri-culture Development Fund the Saskatchewan and Wheat Development Commission.



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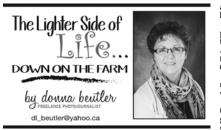
# Spring on the farm

Spring has brought with it the usual excitement and anticipation of warmer weather, a new crop of calves and the ultimate joy—getting that crop into the ground. Well, in theory at least!

While my husband and I don't technically raise cattle, we have a handful out at the farm and the farm-grand-kids know exactly which calf belongs to who—their dad, their mom, themselves, Grandpa. Well, and Grandma's I

kids know exactly which calf belongs to who—their dad, their mom, themselves, Grandpa. Well, and Grandma's I tell them. Their eyes shift towards Grandpa. You have to wonder sometimes if there's a conspiracy going on, I tell you. The look says it all—Grandma has no cows. The kids were over a few days ago and one of the twins (eight years old) happened to notice Grandpa's little dia-betic-record book and he tells me he didn't know Grand-pa had a calf-record book ('cause his dad always records the births). I told him Grandpa doesn't have a calf-record book. "Your dad always records the births," I say to him. A puzzled look comes across his face as his eyes shift toward the diabetic book. "Oh, that's not a calf-record book," I say and he looks closer at the book and says, "Oh I guess not, there's no column for sex." Well, I certainly hope not because that's not information you want to take to your diabetic nurse or nutritionist! Near the end of February, the excitement of a trip to the city and away from all things 'farm' was counter balanced with the fact that this trip meant going under the knife and spending a few days in a Regina hospital. A visit with my five-year-old grandson the night be-fore the big event was filled with his questions. "How do you get a new hip," "Will you throw away your can eatter your operation?" How much about the "knife" can you tell a little fellow? The following day, I submitted myself to the inevitable —the knife—under what could only be described as the

The following day, I submitted myself to the inevitable -the knife-under what could only be described as the



best care in the world. I cannot say enough for the doc-tors, nurses and staff who find this to be an interesting My biggest fear that day was that I would freak out

My biggest lear that day was that a would reak out when they wheeled me into the OR and that I would hop off that gurney and take off running down the hall—in a hospital gown no less. But no, I was calm, cool and col-lected and joking with everyone right until they shut me up so to speak. By the time I hit recovery it was apparent that I would never make a good junkie, so badly do I react to morphine to morphine.

A couple of weeks later, I was back in the city to have A couple of weeks later, I was back in the city to have my staples removed, chatting once again with my grand-son. His first question was, "Can you bend now you have a new hip?" "Can you throw your cane away now?" Well, no, not yet. And then we moved on to discussing something he and his dad enjoy doing—drumming! This five-year-old has a little beat in his soul, let me tell you! I told him all about Alvin Law, who even though he has no

arms, can play piano and trombone and the drums-with his feet!

When I pulled up a video so we could watch Alvin playing the drums and driving a car, my grandson was totally fascinated as he watched, especially with how Alvin could drive a car with his feet. As he watched, he turned to me and said, "It's a good thing you have arms, Grandmal"

turned to me and said, "It's a good thing you have arms, Grandmal". I could just see his little mind trying to envision Grand-ma, with a bad hip, trying to get her feet up to the steering wheel of her car. Yeah, not happening—at least not yet! That could well be the last trip to Regina for us for now (as for many people) amid COVID-19 concerns. When the grandkids, who are no longer attending school, came to spend a day with me, I was the dutiful Grandma—games, comprehension and math lessons, lots of screen time (without guilt on my part). We each had our own hand towel and washed our hands often. And then we cut up a pineapple and told them each to get a bowl and fork and take a few pieces each. Next thing I knew they were basi-cally using their forks and all eating out of the same bowl. How's that for listening to instruction? Isn't it interesting how suddenly everything can change? Everyone has become that much more precious to us. The woes of life in comparison to the threat of se-vere illness due to COVID-19 seem a little less trouble-some. Our appreciation for those in the medical field and those who provide essential services and transport goods has expanded exponentially. I don't know where I read it or who wrote it and I can only paraphrase it, but here's something I think of every time I wash my hands and ev-ery time I wash down the front of my appliances with disinfectant: Every step we take now (against COVID-19) will seem alarmist, but in a week or two, every step we took will not have been enough. Take care and stay safe. took will not have been enough. Take care and stay safe.





### Jean Bogner inducted into Sask Horse Federation Hall of Fame

BY DONNA BEUTLER It was a very special moment for Wawo-ta's Jean Bogner when she was inducted into the Saskatchewan Horse Federation Hall of Fame on March 14. Not only was it special, it was very humbling for the 92-year-young Bogner who shared her story with the World-Spectator in a recent interview

'It was a tremendous honour to be

"It was a tremendous honour to be awarded for something that I've loved do-ing all my life," Bogner said. Bogner's love of horses and of riding and driving horses is something that has been with her for her entire life and is probably why she can honestly say that some of her best friends are horses.

There's a lifetime of history that has tak-en Bogner from working with horses from the time she was little to the Delta Hotel in Regina to not only receive this award, but to be the very first one ever to be in-ducted into the newly formed Sask Horse Federation Hall of Fame. There was one other person inducted that day, as well as three others who were recognized posthu-

Three outers who were recommended mously. Bogner was nominated by members of The Wheels and Saddles Horse Club of Wawota. According to Bogner, some of them wrote letters about what she has done in the world of horses and the nomi-nation was accepted.

done in the world of horses and the nomi-nation was accepted. "I grew up during the years of working with horses," Bogner said, having driven a four-horse hitch in the field when she was young. "In fact," she continued, "my fam-ily was known as the riding Dennises and were known for their work with horses and their imming demonstration." and their jumping demonstrations." The love Bogner had for horses was

passed on to her three daughters who did lot of riding and attended numerous horse shows

horse shows. "When the girls were young," Bogner said, "a friend and I started a 4-H Horse Club known as The Prairie Riders. We ran this club for 15 years until we ran out of kids and folded." But only a few years passed before Bogner was involved, along with oth-ers, in forming a driving club for those who wanted to learn more about driving

ers, in forming a driving club for those who wanted to learn more about driving horses. That was 1982 and there were four interested people. In order to attract more people, the group decided to make the club a driving and riding club and they called it the Wheels and Saddles Driving and Riding Club Inc. Today, that club is still going. Bogner herself, still a member though not physi-cally riding or driving, was president of the club for 27 years, having stepped back



Above: Jean Bogner with her Welsh ponies, Cloud and Cricket

Below: Jean with Cricket, a Welsh pony



from the position eight years ago

from the position eight years ago. Not only is the driving and riding club still going, but it boasts 70 members which Bogner feels is "pretty darn good!" "Quite a few members have joined to learn to drive," Bogner said, explaining that it is quite a step to go from riding a horse to driving a horse. Several years

ago, Bogner put on some driving classes for people and was pleased to see about 20 people learning to drive, but it began to fade and so more driving classes were put on.

"I am happy to say," Bogner added, "that some of my students are fully ca-pable of instructing classes. In the winter

nesses and learning about harnesses and then in the summer, there's lots of actual driving, and today there are several who

are now taking part in parades, horse shows and various other driving events." As to her honorary membership in the club, Bogner believes there is always more to learn about horses, no matter how old a person is. She says she may not be physically able to do what she once did, but mentally, it's obvious she's right there with the best of them. The club has clini-cians come every summer to give instruc-tion to club members.

tion to club members. "Or a notice "It's an adult club," Bogner explained. "We have done our share with kids and that was good, but this is an adult only club where nothing circles around kids. Plus we are not in competition with each other, that was something we decided upon early on."

upon early on." As for breeds of horses that she prefers to ride or drive, she says "any breed— Thoroughbreds, Clydes, Minis, Quarter-horses, Arabians." Her personal favorites for driving are Welsh ponies. And so today, Bogner, as a gracious re-cipient of the Hall of Fame recognition, proudly displays the framed award in her home. Along with a Sask Horse Federa-tion logo on this award is her name and photo and a summary of her story. Along tion logo on this award is her name and photo and a summary of her story. Along with a life time of working and being with horses, it is apparent that this horse-lady has no intention of ever losing interest in learning more about horses or being in-volved with the horse club that she has invested so much time into.

### These are the words from the framed

These are the words from the framed award that Jean Bogner received: Jean has always had a passion for hors-es. She was leader of a 4-H Light Horse Club for 15 years and has been a driving force for the Wheels and Saddles Driving Club since its inception in 1982. She was president of the Club for 27 years. Jean is accomplished in English and Western, is a seasoned driver, having driv-en a four-horse hitch for field work. She

Western, is a seasoned driver, having driv-en a four-horse hitch for field work. She has been teaching driving for many years and has some willing students to carry on her work. For 21 years she and Clarence hosted trail rides at their farm. Jean willingly shares her time and knowledge. Her compassion for horses and people is obvious. Reaching 90 years has slowed her down but she still manages to help and inspire others. Jean maintains

to help and inspire others. Jean maintains there is always more to learn about horses! She has been heard to say, "Some of my best friends are horses.



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### Computer-based simulator tests insects for effects of new pesticide

USask biology professor Jack Gray's research on locusts, published in the Pro-ceedings of the National Academy of Sci-ences (PNAS), may have implications for understanding the link between these pesticides and mortality in other species such as the "colony collapse disorder" re-sponsible for the deaths of millions of bees worldwide.

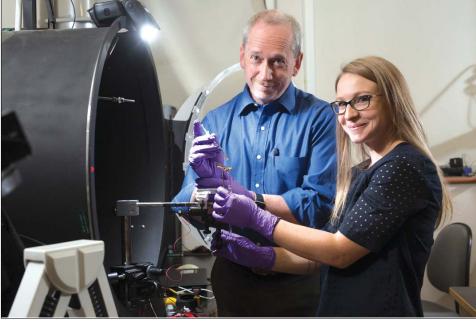
"There is controversy over neonicoti-noid pesticides," said Gray. "Their devel-opment suggested they were safer than other pesticides, but it is more complicated because their effects at non-lethal doses on insects and other species needed to be investigated further."

investigated further." From his previous studies with locusts, Gray designed a virtual flight simulator in which he tested how non-lethal doses of pesticides can affect the insects' abil-ity to visually detect moving objects such as trees and predators. He and his team found that the newer sulfoxamine pesti-cide, sulfoxaflor (SFX), does not impair the impact motion dated in ability unbil to the insects' motion detection ability, while the current neonicotinoid imidacloprid (IMD)

does. "Even though this suggests that SFX "Even though this suggests that SFX isn't as toxic as the other pesticide at low dosages, more testing is needed to estab-lish whether it a safer, preferable option for agriculture use," said Gray. Gray and his team used an approach that looks at behaviour and neurophysiol-ogy, which have seldom been applied to-cether for studying posticida effects. The

gether for studying pesticide effects. The results confirmed that IMD had negative effects on the locusts' ability to jump and escape dangers, while SFX did not. A potential explanation may be that SFX does not bind as strongly to the same receptor that determines the insects' sensitivity to the pesticides.

The USask team chose locusts because their nervous system is well-studied, and the neurons that regulate their motion detection are common to a variety of other species including birds, and likely even humans.



Jack Gray (left) and Rachel Parkinson study pesticide effects on locusts' behavior.

"These findings may be applicable to other species to understand how these pesticides affect how fast the nervous sys-tem can send information," said Gray. By using small electrodes in the insect's thoray former USask PhD student Bached

thorax, former USask PhD student Rachel Parkinson-first author of the paper-measured the electrical signals directly from a neuron in the insect's nervous sys-

tem that detects visual motion and con-trols flight.

"The reaction time of locusts treated with the IMD pesticide slows down, im-pairing their ability to avoid objects," said Parkinson, now post-doctoral fellow at the

University of Oxford. The USask team also includes PhD stu-dent Sinan Zhang. The research is funded by Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and USask



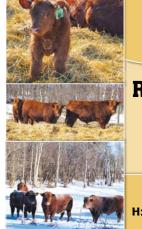


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# Brexit could boost Canada's ag industry by billions

Britain has officially left the European Union and f the challenge of negotiating a new trading relationship with the bloc before the end of the transition period on Dec. 31, 2020.

As a net importer of most food products, the United Kingdom faces a choice of making concessions to the European Union to maintain access to its agri-food market or forging new trading relationships with Com-monwealth countries like Canada that offer high-quality products with fewer regulatory barriers.

Any new agreement would come in the wake of an ineffectual rollout of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), a deal between the EU and Canada.

Any new agreement would also be dependent on Ca-nadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau abandoning his wait-and-see policy and becoming more proactive in trade talks with the U.K.

CETA's failure is evident in the example of True North Foods, a Canadian beef processing plant that spent \$100,000 obtaining certification to export its products to Europe, only to see vastly insufficient return. The Finan-cial Times reported that True North sent a single ship-ment of beef to the EU in 2019. The owner of the plant, Calvin Vaags, said the com-

Ine owner of the plant, Calvin vaags, said the com-pany wasn't motivated to export to Europe and had no immediate plans to increase shipments. Despite the promises of improved trade following the implementation of CETA, agricultural exports from Can-ada to the EU fell by 15 per cent in 2018 and those num-bers are not improving in any meaningful way. Canada is unable to export much of its agricultural goods because of Europe's strict standards relating to the use of antibiotics and erowth enhancement. But Britain's

use of antibiotics and growth enhancement. But Britain's departure from the European Union could result in freer co-operation with Canada. The United Kingdom is no

longer bound by Europe's strict regulations. In recent weeks, EU negotiators have suggested any fu-ture U.K.-EU trade deal might have even more stringent ture U.K.-EU trade deal might have even more stringent terms than currently required of Canada. The European Commission suggested it would be a mistake to allow U.K. industry bodies to certify products as compliant with the EU's regulatory standards, signaling a potential end to a U.K.-EU Mutual Recognition Agreement that removes some of the red tape when transporting goods onto the continent onto the continent.

onto the continent. Bad faith tactics like this were expected by Brexit sup-porters. And while it will likely be overcome in time, it means there has never been a better time for trade dis-cussion between the U.K. and Canada—particularly with regards to agri-food products. Figures from the Department for Environment, Food



Jack Buckby

and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) show that the U.K. is less than 60 per cent self-sufficient in terms of fruit and vegetable production. Similarly, the U.K. still imports small quanti-

ties of wheat, more than 20 per cent of its beef and poul-try, and almost 50 per cent of its pork. This signals that the U.K. is very much open for busi-ness and ready to take new deals on agri-food imports if a deal with the European Union sours. Currently, 73 per cent of the United Kingdom's agri-food imports come from the EU. That figure that should be enticing for Ca-nadian businesses struggling to overcome the EU's demanding regulatory barriers

manning regulatory barners. Co-operation between the U.K. and Canada has tenta-tively begun, albeit in a different form than early trade talks. U.K. Research and Innovation has offered a £2-mil-lion fund for small and medium-sized farming operations in Canada. As part of the U.K. government's Transform-ing Food Production Challenge, Canadian businesses can

access funding to change the way food is produced with a view to reducing emissions and improving efficiency. The European Union's inflexibility around the impor-tation of modified foods could mean that such an endeav-our would only benefit the U.K. and Canada, assuming an improved agri-food trade deal is agreed as part of the Brexit transition.

The U.K. imports around £3 billion worth (C\$5.19 bil-lion) of agricultural products every year. In 2015, it im-

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ported 968,000 tonnes of pork, primarily from the Euro-pean Union. A new U.K.-Canada trade agreement could vastly increase pork imported from Canada.

The temporary suspension of beef and pork exports from Canada to China in 2019 cost the industry almost

C\$100 million, signalling both the size and strength of this industry in Canada. The European Union's tough quality assurance rules mean CETA hasn't delivered for Canadian farmers. Brex-it could be a light at the end of the tunnel.

Both Canadian and U.K. governments would be wise to begin trade talks and agree to a streamlined quality as-

surance process that encourages farmers to export meat and agricultural products. Combined with new technology that increases yield and efficiency—something the European Union appears averse to—any new deal could see an injection of billions of dollars a year into the Canadian farming industry.

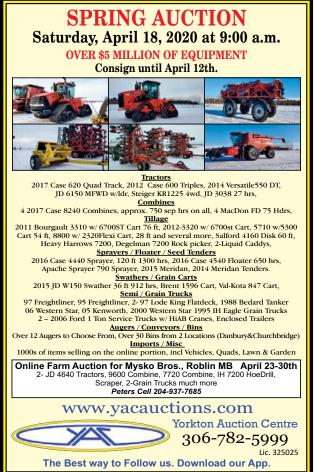
Jack Buckby is a research associate with Frontier Centre for Public Policy.



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# **Update your HR** plan for Covid-19

BY RICHARD KAMCHEN As COVID-19 spreads around the world, so does concern about its impact on pub-lic health. And while we learn more about ac realth. And while we learn more about how to prevent ourselves from contract-ing it, businesses, including farms, should have an updated HR plan in case of an em-ployee outbreak.

UPDATE SICK LEAVE POLICIES Caused by the coronavirus, COVID-19 symptoms may take up to 14 days to ap-pear, and even then, can be difficult to deect. Some may think they have a cold or influenza.

"Farmers and farm employers must support workers to stay home if they're sick, particularly with COVID-19 symp-tome" environment to be a start to be a start to be a start of the start to be a start says Jennifer Wright, a senior hutoms, man resources advisor with the Canadian

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Agricultural Human Resource Council. "Employers should ensure they're follow-ing recommendations put out by Public Health Agency of Canada."

Some preventative measures include: -Encourage employees to self-isolate when ill

-Suspend requests for medical notes -Prepare for increased absenteeism due to employee and family illness and possi-

bly school closures -Increase distance between office work-

stations to two metres

#### STAY INFORMED

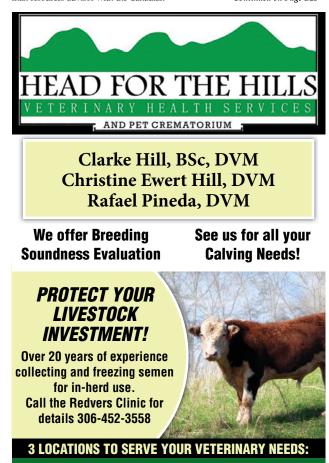
The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) says it's monitoring COVID-19 as it relates to Canadian agriculture and will provide weekly updates.

Continued on Page B23

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### Carbon costing review confirms huge loss to farm income

APAS analysis shows Saskatchewan farmers will lose 12% of net income to carbon tax by 2022

Contributed by the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan The Agricultural Producers Asso-

ciation of Saskatchewan (APAS) has released updated estimates on the financial impacts of the federal carbon tax on Saskatchewan producers.

"Federal Minister of Agriculture Marie-Claude Bibeau has asked the agriculture industry for evidence of what the carbon tax is costing Canadian farmers," says APAS President Todd Lewis, who farms near Gray, SK. "We've responded with estimates that are backed up by producer bills in 2019."

APAS's costing review takes into consideration all major farm expenses not currently exempt from the carbon tax. These include grain drying, rail transportation, heating and electricity, and truck hauling of crops off the farm.

Truck hauling of crops off the farm. The evidence is stark: on average, Saskatchewan farmers can expect to lose 8% of their total net income in 2020 to the carbon tax. For a household managing a 5,000-acre grain farm in Saskatchewan, this will take the form of a \$8,000-10,000 bill.

In less than two years, when the carbon tax increases to \$50/tonne in 2022, this bill will go up to \$13,000-17,000 for the same household – the equivalent of a 12% decrease in net income. "It's comparable to having 12% of

"It's comparable to having 12% of your pay cheque disappear," says Lewis. "Farmers don't set our prices, so those increased costs are coming directly off our bottom line." "APAS's numbers reflect my personal experience down to the penny," says APAS Vice-President Bill Prybylski,

APAS Vice-President Bill Prybylski, who operates a grain, oilseed, pulse and cattle farm with his son, brother, and nephews near Willowbrook, SK. "This past year was unprecedented in terms of the role grain drying played for farmers in our province. Without using propane to dry our grain, the wet fall would have meant losing a huge portion of our crop."

crop." Rail transportation is another huge and unavoidable taxable expense incurred by farmers. "Trucking my crop to the grain elevator, and then shipping it by rail to the coast is one of my biggest annual expenses," says APAS Vice-President Ian Boxall, who farms at his century farm near Tisdale, SK. "Transporting crops is a necessary farm expense, but for some reason it's not exempt from the carbon tax."

APAS is advocating, on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers, for a carbon tax exemption on all farm expenses, including those from 2019. "Our hope is that this is the evidence the Minister is looking for," says Lewis, "and that the Federal Government will step in to help farmers."



# Making digital farm data work for you

Y CRAIG LESTER

With the days of financial bookkeeping, live-stock record keeping and writing crop input data on paper quickly disappear-ing, it's essential to keep

ing, it's essential to keep up with the digital times. Evan Shout, CEO and cofounder of Maverick Ag, a risk management and consulting business based in Saskatchewan, says there are usually three factors that keep farmers from adopting technology and data: technology and data: thinking it's too hard, not believing in the cost-effec-tiveness and not seeing

any tangible value. The switch to digital can be daunting after de-cades of working by hand. However, as Shout points out, farmers don't have to move every element of the farm to digital all at the same time.

Shout recommends farmers look at one or two elements of their business to move to digital, such as using a software program for doing bookkeeping

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and accounting. He adds that keeping it

simple is as easy as ask-ing for help from someone who understands that platform, a thought echoed by Emmett Sawyer, a young farmer, who is also a technology and data enthusiast.

"Just keep to platforms are comfortable vou with," Sawyer says, point-ing out the need to recog-

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nize abilities and comfort levels. Shout says a common

misconception is the be-lief that technology and data require a major capi-tal investment like farm machinery, when in fact, readily available data can be used to make better de-

cisions. Shout says finances prepared for a tax return, for example, can be used to

Sale

improve efficiencies on the farm once carefully reviewed

He adds many don't put the same value on that information as they would on data collected from equipment, but the effi-ciency potential is large.

Shout says there's likely already equipment data on the farm - it just isn't being pulled and ana-lyzed. Amount of time on re-

pairs, for instance, is valu-able data, Shout points out. He adds some farmers may miss out by not using recorded data if they don't think they know how to access it, but help is available

"They don't have to be the ones analyzing," Shout says. "Every day there are more platforms, there are more advisors

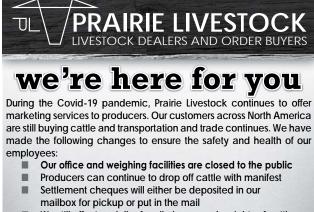
and more people out there to analyze."

Moving a farm to digital platforms and harnessing the power of digital needs a measured approach. a measured approach. Start small—maybe with accounting-and move

through various areas of the farm individually. Be data for cost saving pos-sibilities, experts say. They also advise asking for help with moving, gathering and analyzing the data.

**B19** 





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Let's talk

### COVID-19 impacts on Canadians working in agriculture and agri-food

MARTHA ROBERTS FCC Ag Economics is working to help you understand the rapidly evolving busi-ness environment due to COVID-19. With the costs to families continuing to climb and potentially unprecedented associated economic costs, central banks around the world are now working together to find ways to halt the damage.

In this article, I'll explain several tools —both conventional and unconventional— the Bank of Canada (BoC) has available to mitigate the biggest economic risks facing Canadians today. Keep an eye on these in the weeks ahead. The government of Cana-da, which works independently of the Bank, is also helping with its own measures.

#### How interest rates can moderate a pandemic's economic impacts

The economic damage from COVID-19 will include layoffs and supply chain dis-ruptions, leading to expected declines in spending, business investment and exports. To slow this, banks use conventional tools to make it easier for households and busi-nesses to access money and spend it. And an easy way to do that is lower interest rates. It brings immediate relief although it often takes over a year to feel the full effect. Get comfortable with the following terms, so you can anticipate and respond to a quickly evolving interest rate environ-

**Overnight rate:** The rate banks charge each other on daily loans.

each other on daily loans. **Policy rate:** The BoC sets a target for the overnight rate used by financial institutions (FIs). This target is the policy rate. The BoC cut the policy interest rate from 1.25% to 0.75% on Friday, March 13, to help weaken the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak and plummeting oil prices. Un-derscoring the threat posed by the disease outbreak, the cut was the second in just over a week.

over a week. **Prime rate:** The rate of interest commercial banks use to set the rate on variable loans and lines of credit. Each major finan-cial institution (FI) has its own prime rate.

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When the policy rate changes, an FI can change its prime rate by a similar amount —although they don't always do so.

#### Interest rates and you

Borrowers' interest rates can also vary for other reasons. The rates you pay on vari-able rate loans will differ from your fixed-rate loans because an FI faces different risks with each fund source. When changes oc-cur in financial markets – as is happening now—the rates charged to borrowers fluctuate

There's no correct answer as to which rate is better. Interest rates on variable-rate loans are stated as a percentage above or below the prime rate. How much above or below prime depends on your own borrowing situation, but that adjustment will be fixed for the loan term. The prime rate may subsequently vary.

Long-term fixed rates are usually higher than variable rates. But these borrowing costs won't climb as variable rates might over the term of the loan. Fixed rates are based on long-term bond yields, which tend to be less volatile than short-term rates. But as major shocks erode current estimates of inflation and interest rate adjustments over time, the value of investments in bonds also erodes. That's why yields have declined from 1.53 on January 2 to .78 on March 16 for the 10-year government bonds

### Extra measures needed to boost Canadian households

and businesses Interest rates are among the tools central banks most often use to mitigate unforeseen changes to their economies. In extraordinary times, they also have several uncon-ventional tools to jumpstart the economy. Here are a few happening in Canada, the U.S. and elsewhere.

Buying Treasuries and mortgage-backed securities: Used broadly in the 2008 crisis and otherwise known as quantitative eas-ing, these purchases by central banks inject liquidity (increase the supply of money) into the financial system and the broader

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t purchases (demand) push bond yields lower, encouraging greater lending and investment. Bond yields may also be pushed higher in response to an expected increase in the supply of Treasuries as government stimulus packages are rolled-out. Remember—it's always about demand and supply. Buying commercial paper: The purchas-

es (typically by banks, wealthy investors or large institutions) of debt for the financing of short-term liabilities (wages, operational expenses, etc.). Issuing commercial paper can help businesses such as huge retailers or manufacturers finance activities when revenues that are expected to grow eventu-ally may not yet be available to pay current expenses

### Government coordinating

with BoC to ease pressure Canada's Office of the Superintendent

of Financial Institutions (OFSI): Under normal economic conditions, an FI is re-quired to keep a specified percentage of as-sets out of circulation to safeguard against the risks they take. OSFI is loosening these requirements by lowering the buffer from 2.25% to 1%, to increase the money available for lending. Also, the BoC is coordinating action with

other central banks to provide some of the world's largest banks with cheaper access to funds in U.S. dollars. The USD is a "safeto funds in U.S. dollars. The USD is a "safe-havem" currency – a safe, reliable invest-ment relative to other currencies in periods of high uncertainty. Giving banks around the world cheaper access to funds in USD helps to calm fears of currency instability and deepens liquidity everywhere.

Martha is a Research Specialist with a focus on economic performance and success factors for agricultural producers and agri-businesses.



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#### **B22**

# Agriculture industry working through COVID-19

Continued from page 1
Continued from page 1
President Todd APAS President Todd Lewis told the World-Spectator that the most important thing for the agriculture industry is to

agriculture industry is to keep the transportation corridors open. "Doesn't matter if it's going to be crops or live-stock to export position across the U.S. border or to tidewater, that's impor-tant" said Lewis. "Also that the cargo corridor tant" said Lewis. "Also that the same corridors remain open for inputs like fertilizer, machinery parts, or anything else producers have."

"We're in a busy time of year with spring seeding and it's going to be impor-tant we have a good supply of what we need to get the crop in," said Lewis. "On the livestock side the processing side is going to be important to ensure our processors are able to run efficiently."

Lewis says the federal government is already stepping up to help an-swer some of the biggest questions around the agriculture industry during the COVID-19 situation.

"There are lots of ques-tion around credit," said Lewis. "The federal government put \$5 billion towards capital needs with-in agriculture and that's

"It's important that we see that credit's avail-able, the federal govern-ment has done a number of moves there to make more money available to the financial system and we want to make sure that money is available for ag-riculture."

"The governments, both provincial and fed-erally, have shown they recognize the importance of agriculture and it's go-ing to be one of the few industries in the country that won't see a drop in

demand," said Lewis. With many other industries stopping or slowing down due to COVID-19, Lewis says there will be more opportunities for

more opportunities for work in agriculture. "There's going to be lots of opportunity in ag-riculture," said Lewis. "It seems like there are lots of unemployed and underemployed people that agriculture can offer job opportunities to going forward into the upcoming growing season." Even with the unknown

that is coming going for-ward during COVID-19, Lewis remains positive and says the agriculture industry will get through this

this. "It's going to get worse before it gets better, but with good planning pro-ducers will get through this as best we can," said Lewis. "We're a pretty re-silient bunch in the prov-ince and we've seen some good leadershin at the good leadership at the provincial level."

Grain farmer Craig Roy says the biggest impact COVID-19 could have on

him is if he gets sick. "If I can't work during seeding than that's a problem," said Roy. Roy says that's prob-ably the main worry for

most farmers.

"Not being out there when we need to be out there would be a major disruption," said Roy.

Moosomin grain farmer fark McCorriston says Mark COVID-19 hasn't affected him yet, but he's con-cerned what will happen if he gets sick.

If ne gets sick. "It hasn't impacted me yet, but the procedures for selling grain are a little bit different now," said McCorriston. "Everything is done via text or on the phone." "It pute a little bit more."

"It puts a little bit more

stress on your plate, but the impact hasn't hap-pened yet," said McCor-riston. "I would think it would be more in the coming weeks that we have to deal with the impact of it.'

"In the beginning of the COVID-19 scare, grain COVID-19 scare, grain prices tanked, but they seam to be coming back up," said McCorriston. "The scariness around COVID-19 is more as we get into conding." get into seeding." "My biggest concern is

if I got it myself, I'm the business owner, I run the air seeder, and if I wasn't able to run the air seeder, that's my biggest fear," said McCorriston. "You don't really know

when you do get it what to expect for symptoms, sometimes it's a runny nose and a headache and then on the news you see it's respiratory problems and weakness," said Mc-Corriston. "It's a little bit of a scary situation." McCorriston says with the amount of traffic that

comes through Moosomin from all over the country, COVID-19 will spread

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here at some point. "Being in Moosomin, we're going to get it I feel like," said McCorriston. "I farm right beside num-ber one highway and you think about the transport traffic coming from Brit-ish Columbia and south-ern Ontario, those people are passing through Moo-somin, eventually a truck driver will bring it to our town. It's only a matter of when.

As COVID-19 continues to spread in Canada, Mc-Corriston worries that it will have a negative impact on farmers ability to acquire the supplies they

"Once the farmers go to the field we need a lot of diesel fuel, liquid fertildiesel fuel, liquid fertil-izer, and granular fertil-izer," said McCorriston. "So if COVID-19 spreads to the refinery and you're halfway through seeding and Co-op says they can't deliver diesel, then what do you do?" "Some farmers are talk-ing about buving more

ing about buying more fuel tanks and trying to store more fuel on the farm," said McCorriston

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"The other side is, the longer you hold on right now to buy your diesel, the cheaper it's going to be because oil is plum-mating "

"There's hysteria that if they don't fill their tanks they don't hill their tanks now then they might not get it filled so they're forc-ing themselves to pay more money for their spring diesel then they have to."

have to." "My biggest concern would be if I got sick my-self and couldn't oper-ate my air seeder or if we couldn't get the supplies we need to put the crop in," said McCorriston. McCorriston doesn't

McCorriston doesn't think the government will give the agriculture in-dustry enough extra sup-port during this crisis.

"In all honesty I don't think the Liberal govern-ment really cares about the farmers in western Canada or the oil patch

workers," said McCor-riston. "The oil patch workers are off and lots of riston. workers are off and lots of those guys won't have a job to go back to when the industry starts up in June or July again." "I don't anticipate any help from the Liberal government for our grain farmare or for our grain

farmers or for our local oil patch workers." For now, McCorriston says the overall impact is

unknown with a situation they've never seen before, but there's no shortage of concern

"Optimism in agriculoptimism in agricul-ture has definitely dwin-dled over the last eight or nine months," said McCorriston. "There are concerned farmers that are nervous about getting their fertilizer and diesel when they need it and we're all in the same boat because we don't know what to expect with CO-VID-19."

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### **B23**

# **Update your HR plan for** Covid-19

☞ Continued from Page B17 They've also compiled a list of resources for farmers to learn more information about the virus and its spread.

Laurie Karson of CFA also recommends reading Harvard Business Re-view's 8 Questions Em-ployers Should Ask About Coronavirus. The article offers common-sense tips and advice that would resonate with farmers or any business owner. Tips include: how to

best protect employees, when to exclude public or employees from the work-place and to review benefit policies if the workplace closes due to COVID-19.

REVIEW YOUR RISE

MANAGEMENT PLAN It's crucial farmers have a risk management plan for their operations that factor in HR, communications and contingency plans for sickness outbreaks, says Wright. "Having a risk manage

ment plan in place will en-sure that if or when a crisis happens, there's a struc-tured, controlled response to it," Wright explains.

The plan should also identify what to do if illness causes staffing short-falls that prevent conducting time-sensitive work. "This may include having agreements with surrounding farmers for back-up support," Wright says.

HAVE ON-SITE

QUARANTINE PROCEDURES Farm operations that provide housing for their workers must ensure their risk management plans consider large numbers of employees being quaran-tined or requiring health care, Wright says.

That includes identify-ing decision-makers, roles and responsibilities, access to medical care and plans for both quarantine and transportation to medical facilities.

They should also include communications planning, such as who's the point of contact, medical contacts, internal and external communication plans, contact informa-tion for all staff, suppliers and community services,' Wright says.

**В**оттом LINE Farmers should adapt



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