

# Better Farming

SEED OPTIONS  
for 2017



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James Herrle

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Photo: KYLE RODRIGUEZ



## BEHIND THE LINES

### Cash crop hurdles and options

This year, the Ontario ag community adjusts to the new reality of neonics regulations. There certainly have been some challenges and learning curves. In my family farm operation, for example, my sister spent a notable amount of time trying to track down the **Municipal Property Assessment Corporation** roll numbers for our rented acres, necessary for the pest assessment reports. And, across the province, farmers have seen the variable stands. Despite these challenges, the industry has announced some exciting biotech and seed

treatment developments. **Monsanto's** Roundup Ready 2 Xtend soybeans, for example, will be available for the 2017 growing season. These beans are tolerant to both dicamba and glyphosate herbicides.

Our family grew some of these seed beans last year, giving me a first-hand glimpse of this exciting new technology. The joint herbicide program enabled us to keep the field clean of weeds.

As an industry we'll have to learn the protocols to efficiently manage these new products. According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in Missouri, for example, some farmers reported crop damages, allegedly from dicamba herbicide that was improperly used and subsequently drifted.

In our main feature, writer **Lisa McLean** delves into a seed report for the province. She explores some of the challenges the industry has faced so far this cropping season and highlights lessons learned for moving into 2017. McLean also discusses new technologies and options as we begin to plan our inputs for next year. **BF**

ANDREA M. GAL

## FARM WEATHER REPORT

### 2016 CHUs in line with average

Rainfall has been sparse to none at all for the first part of August across most of Ontario. Corn Heat Units (CHU) have kept pace with the 30-year average. Since May 1, CHU in Mount Forest, for example, are in the mid 1,900s; they are in the high 2,100s in Ottawa and low 2,500s in Windsor.

Crop advancement is at expected growth stages. Corn and soybeans are now in the middle of their reproductive stages. Soil moisture is critical to keep up with the crops' nutrient demands and to keep plants photosynthesizing lots of sugar to fill the kernels and beans. The yield components for corn are the number of cobs multiplied by the number of kernels multiplied by the kernel weight.

The number of cobs and kernels have been set; the final yield will be a question of how heavy the kernels will become. If there is a saving grace to this season's weather, it is cooler night temperatures that reduce respiration rates resulting in more sugar to fill grain. However, rain makes grain and we won't refuse any. **BF**

*Dale Cowan is a senior agronomist with AGRIS Wanstead Cooperatives. Data from WIN and the Ag Grower Daily Dashboard Program.*



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Federation of  
Agriculture**

## 2016 Regional Meetings

OFA members: attend your local meeting and vote for OFA Convention Delegates and Policy Advisory Council members. For meeting time and location updates, visit [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca)

COUNTY	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
ALGOMA	TBA	TBA	TBA
ARNPRIOR	Oct. 21	6:00 PM	Fitzroy Harbour Community Centre, Fitzroy Harbour
BRANT	Sept. 22	7:30 PM	Emcrest Farms, 65 Old Greenfield Road, Brantford
BRUCE	Oct. 28	6:30 PM	TBA
COCHRANE	TBA	TBA	TBA
DUFFERIN	Oct. 25	7:30 PM	Township of Amaranth Recreational Hall, 374028 6th Line, Amaranth
DUNDAS	Oct. 5	TBA	TBA
DURHAM	Oct.19	7:30 PM	The Centre for Food, Durham College, 1604 Champlain Avenue, Whitby
EAST NIPISSING/PARRY SOUND	Oct. 14	6:30 PM	St. Joseph's Church, 120 Memorial Park Drive West, Powassan
ELGIN	Aug. 31	5:30 PM	Great Lakes Farms, 5111 Union Road, Port Stanley
ESSEX	Aug. 17	6:00 PM	Colasanti's Tropical Gardens, 1550 Road 3 E, Kingsville
FRONTENAC	Sept. 29	7:00 PM	Elginburg Church Hall, Elginburg
GLENGARRY	TBA	TBA	TBA
GRENVILLE	Oct. 12	8:00 PM	Town Hall, Spencerville
GREY	Oct. 14	6:30 PM	TBA
HALDIMAND	Oct. 19	TBA	Agricultural Community Centre, 1084 Kohler Road, Cayuga
HALTON	Oct. 20	7:00 PM	TBA
HAMILTON-WENTWORTH	Sept. 13	7:30 PM	Ancaster Fairgrounds, Marritt Hall
HASTINGS	Oct. 29	7:00 PM	Madoc Arts Centre
HURON	Oct. 21	7:00 PM	Holmesville Community Centre
KAWARTHA LAKES/HALIBURTON	TBA	TBA	TBA
KENT	Aug. 30	5:30 PM	Roesch Meats and More, 10910 Northwood Line, Kent Bridge
LAMBTON	Aug. 24	6:00 PM	The Ale House, 3225 River Street, Alvinston
LANARK	Oct. 20	6:00 PM	Beckwith Township Offices, Carleton Place
LEEDS	Oct. 21	TBA	Elgin Municipal Hall
LENNOX & ADDINGTON	Sept. 27	7:00 PM	TBA
MANITOULIN-NORTH SHORE	Sept. 30	6:30 PM	Providence Bay Community Hall
MIDDLESEX	Sept. 1	6:00 PM	Amy's Restaurant, 28537 Centre Road, Strathroy
MUSKOKA	Aug. 28	10:00 AM	The New Oxbow Ranch, 1378 Beatrice Townline, Muskoka Lakes
NIAGARA NORTH	Sept. 14	7:30 PM	Rittenhouse Hall, 4890 Victoria Ave, Vineland Station
NIAGARA SOUTH	Oct. 28	6:00 PM	Casa Dante Italian Lodge, 34 Lincoln Street, Welland
NORFOLK (WEST & EAST)	Sept. 28	8:00 PM	OMAFRA Building Auditorium, Simcoe
NORTHUMBERLAND	Oct. 14	7:00 PM	St. Paul's United Church Gathering Place, Warkworth
OTTAWA	Sept. 13	TBA	TBA
OXFORD	Aug. 11	5:30 PM	Leaping Deer Adventure Farm, 544212 Clarke Road, Ingersoll
PEEL	Oct. 5	7:30 PM	Brampton Fairgrounds
PERTH	Oct. 14	8:00 PM	Mitchell Golf Club, Mitchell
PETERBOROUGH	Sept. 14	TBA	TBA
PRESCOTT	Sept. 26	6:00 PM	Alfred Campus, Room Andre Demers, Alfred
PRINCE EDWARD	Sept. 15	7:30 PM	Bloomfield United Church, Sunday School Hall
RAINY RIVER	TBA	TBA	TBA
RENFREW	Nov. 5	7:00 PM	Cobden Agricultural Society Hall, 43 Astrolabe Rd, Cobden
RUSSELL	Sept. 30	8:00 PM	J.R. Brisson Complex (Areana), Community Hall, 758 Brebeuf Street, Casselman
SIMCOE	Oct. 6	7:30 PM	White Pine Board Room, Midhurst
STORMONT	Oct. 19	8:00 PM	North Stormont Place, Avonmore
TEMISKAMING	Oct.20	6:30 PM	Grande Boulevard Restaurant, 12 Tenth Street, Earleton
THUNDER BAY	Oct. 20	7:00 PM	Royal Canadian Legion, Kakabeka Falls, 4556 Trans-Canada Hwy., Kakabeka Falls
WATERLOO	Oct. 20	TBA	TBA
WELLINGTON	Oct. 21	7:00 PM	Fergus Legion, 500 Blair Street, Fergus
W. NIPISSING/SUDBURY E.	TBA	TBA	TBA
YORK	Oct. 11	8:00 PM	York Administrative Building, Seminar Room, 17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket

## Taking swift action on rural Internet needs

Three hundred communities and 3.5 million people in southwestern Ontario could benefit from a new high-speed internet project.

The SWIFT (Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology) initiative will expand fibre optic coverage throughout 14 counties including Essex, Perth, Dufferin and Simcoe. Construction on the network is scheduled to begin by the end of 2016 or early 2017.

SWIFT is a long-running project of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus and its partners. The organization serves 15 upper and single-tier municipalities that occupy the region between Lake Huron and Georgian Bay in the north and Lake Erie in the south.

"Farmers need broadband access to connect with their supply chain and marketplaces," the SWIFT website

announces as one of the many reasons why establishing reliable Internet connectivity is so important for the region. "(They need) to stay connected to embedded sensors for monitoring and control of soil conditions, livestock locations, equipment operation and maintenance."

Educators with a specialization in agriculture are also set to benefit from the high-speed coverage.

"Our work at (University of Guelph) in areas such as precision agriculture and knowledge mobilization for agri-food innovation are entirely linked to the underlying broadband infrastructure that makes the uptake of new digital technologies possible," Helen Hambly of the Ontario Agricultural College and member of the SWIFT advisory committee said in a university press release on July 26.



GETTY

The SWIFT project is estimated to cost between \$240 million and \$281 million. The governments of Canada and Ontario each invested \$90 million into the project. SWIFT's website says \$60 million will come from Internet Service Providers and an additional \$20 million will come from municipalities and other supporters. **BF**

## Dairy farm floats on water

Forty dairy cows in Holland will be in for the experience of a lifetime when they are transferred to a two-storey floating farm.

According to *The Guardian*, Beladon, a company that specializes in floating structures and is behind the idea, says the cows will live on a 1,200 square metre floating platform in Rotterdam harbour. The animals will produce up to 1,000 litres of milk daily that will be pasteurized and made into yogurt on the floor below.

A filtration facility on the ground floor of the farm will purify the water from the cows' urine to grow red clover, alfalfa and grass under artificial light.

Peter van Wingerden, Beladon's director, told *Fast Company's* Co.Exist section the larger picture is to create cities that are "completely self-sufficient on essential elements like clean water, energy, food and waste."

Robots will refill food stations, a machine will clean up manure, and the cows will have access to an on-land pasture.

Beladon anticipates the US\$2.7 million project will be completed in December 2016 and has scheduled the grand opening for January 2017. **BF**



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## GMO labelling becomes reality in the U.S.

Several U.S. media outlets report the state of Vermont recently joined Connecticut and Maine in passing a GMO labelling law. As of July 1, any processed foods sold within Vermont which contain genetically modified ingredients must say so on the packaging. Many other states have also either proposed or passed similar legislation, and the push to require such labelling could impact the continent's food industry.

The Vermont law contains provisions to fine non-compliant companies up to US\$1,000 per day for each item that isn't properly labelled.

According to *Capital Press*, Grocery Manufacturers Association representatives said if a similar GMO bill passed in California, it could cost farmers \$1.2 billion a year and increase a family's grocery bill by \$400 annually. In a 2013 white paper, the Washington State Academy of Sciences asserted seed producers, grain elevators, processors and others within the industry may need to charge more for their services to offset possible costs.

U.S. President Barack Obama has since signed a national law requiring GMO ingredients to be labelled. The law requires items containing GMOs to have a "text, symbol or electronic digital link" that lets customers know a product is made with genetically modified ingredients. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will have two years to finalize the law. **BF**



## The attractions of cover crops

July research from the United States that draws on a survey of over 2,000 farmers provides good insight into the use and perceived benefits of cover crops. On average, respondents grew almost 300 acres of cover crops in 2015. They anticipated growing almost 340 acres this year.

Those surveyed noted boosts in field crop yields after cover crops. For corn, the mean increase for 2015 (after one year of cover crop use) was two bushels per acre. For soybeans, it was 0.1 bu/ac.

Longer-term use (four years) brought stronger results: 8.3 bu/ac for corn and 2.4 bu/ac for soybeans.

Nevertheless, few of the survey's respondents listed economic advantages among cover crops' most attractive benefits. Economic advantages did appear as "leading entries in 'Not a benefit on my farm,'" the study said.

Unsurprisingly, increases in soil health and soil organic matter were growers' top reasons for using the practice in 2015. Soil erosion reduction, weed control and soil compaction reduction were other popular reasons.

Most commonly, respondents cultivated cereal rye. Other frequently planted cover crops included crimson clover and oilseed radish. Cover crop mixes were also popular. Those respondents opting for mixes typically made their own blends.

The study's authors cautioned that

the large proportion of longer term cover crop users in the survey sampling may have influenced the recorded perspectives on both cover crop benefits and the species or mixes used.

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program and the Conservation Technology Information Center conducted the report. The American Seed Trade Association and Purdue University also contributed. **BF**



FILE PHOTO

## Social (Ag)Media: Farming and Facebook

According to a 2015 Farm Credit Canada Market Insights report, 62 per cent of Canadian farmers use Facebook and about two thirds of them access their accounts daily. Female farmers are more likely to use Facebook than their male counterparts. While 61 per cent of producers use Facebook to keep up to date and communicate with family and friends, another 36 per cent use it for both business and personal purposes. This month's installment focuses on central accounts for industry news and upcoming ag events. This list does not indicate endorsement.

**Better Farming** Our Facebook page is a great source of detailed coverage of issues affecting Ontario farmers.

**Farms.com** This other member of the Farms.com group of companies provides timely updates on North American ag news.

**Canada's Outdoor Farm Show** This year, the show runs from September 13 to 15. Like the page to learn more about the activities of the event which bills itself as the "country's largest outdoor agricultural trade show."

**International Plowing Match Wellington County**

The International Plowing Match (IPM) takes place from September 20 to 24. This page provides information about the IPM's events and lead-up activities.

**My Job Depends on Ag**

South of the border, a very active group can be found on the My Job Depends on Ag page. Followers post interesting photos and updates related to American agriculture.

What are your go-to pages? Tweet us, post on our Facebook page or email us at [letters@betterfarming.com](mailto:letters@betterfarming.com). We always appreciate your thoughts! **BF**



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## 4-H scholarship frenzy



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Students eying a 4-H Canada scholarship to help support post-secondary studies in 2017 should prepare to encounter stiff competition.

The number of applications for these national scholarships jumped by more than 60 per cent in the 2016 intake period compared to 2015 numbers, says Elizabeth Jarvis, the organization's marketing and communications director. Application numbers for 2015 jumped 61 per cent.

Jarvis says increases in the number of scholarships isn't behind the growth in applications numbers.

"It's definitely based on interest," she says. More opportunities means a greater profile for the scholarship program. "People are starting to see just how much leadership they can show by taking advantage of these opportunities."

The organization offers several scholarships and bursaries that mostly, but not exclusively, focus on helping recipients obtain education and training in the fields of agriculture and agribusiness. **BF**

# Somebody should speak up.



Somebody should set the record straight.

**Somebody should do something.**

Well I'm somebody.

You're somebody.

**Everyone in ag is somebody.**

**So be somebody who does something.**

**Somebody who speaks** from a place of experience,  
**with passion and conviction.**

Somebody who proudly takes part in food  
conversations big or small, so our voice is heard.

**Somebody who tells our story**, before someone  
else does.

Somebody who **builds consumer trust** so our  
industry can meet the demands of a growing,  
and very hungry, world.

Somebody who **shapes people's relationship  
with agriculture.**

**It can be done.**

But it's a big job that takes **co-operation, patience  
and respect for every voice in the conversation.**

We need to **build lines of communication**, not draw  
lines in the sand.

Be somebody who helps everybody see Canadian  
agriculture as the **vital, modern industry** it is.

Somebody who helps everybody see people  
in ag for what they are - **neighbours, friends,  
and family** who share the same concern everyone  
does: **providing safe, healthy food to the  
people we love.**

**Our point of view is important.**

**Our story is important.**

**And people want to hear what we have to say.**

So be somebody who takes, and makes, every  
opportunity to share it.

**I'm somebody.**

**You're somebody.**

**Together, we can tell everybody.**

Be **somebody** who  
does **something.**

Be an **advocate.**



# Don't know where to start? Here are a few tips.



## Speak from the heart

You live and love ag. Share that love with the world.

**“Having a conversation with a consumer is actually not as hard as you think.** You’re basically telling them what you do.”

- Ravi Bathe, Poultry and Berry Producer

## Go where the conversations are

Be an active voice and help shape people’s relationship with ag.

“In order for **consumers** to support and understand us, they **need to know us better.** The best people to explain this are the people who live agriculture.”

- Natacha Lagarde, Maple Syrup Producer



## Be open and honest

Transparency creates trust, so tell your story.

**“What do we have to hide? Nothing.** I eat the food I produce. If we tell our story honestly, people will trust us.”

- Sam Bourgeois, Apple Producer

Being an advocate is easier than you think and we can help.

Visit [AgMoreThanEver.ca](https://www.agmorethanever.ca) for resources and tips, and join our community of advocates from across the country.



# Corn and Soybean

# SEED BUYING GUIDE



Stephen Denys, who farms near Chatham, says his crops are doing well this year.

Ontario's neonicotinoid regulations are now a fact of farming and many growers wonder how to approach buying seed for next year's crops. Ontario seed dealers offer a rundown of options and new technologies on hand for the 2017 growing season and share their insights about 2016's crops.

by LISA MCLEAN

For many Ontario corn and soybean growers, the new regulatory environment is challenge enough. Add a midsummer drought that put many crops in jeopardy, and it's anyone's guess how 2016's crop will fare. Now, with harvest 2016 looming in the not-so-distant future, seed companies are preparing to help their customers make informed seed purchase decisions for next year. *Better Farming* caught up with a few of them for a recap of 2016's season. Here's the scoop on 2016's lessons learned and what some seed companies are promoting for next season.

### Neonicotinoid headaches

Ontario growers are facing paperwork, paperwork and more paperwork if they want to continue planting seeds that are treated with neonicotinoid insecticides imidacloprid, thiamethoxam or clothianidin for 2017. The Ontario government has given neonics their own class of pesticide – Class 12.

Stephen Denys, past president of the Canadian Seed Trade Association (CSTA), is among the Ontario growers who question the validity of the information that contributed to the new legislation which was enacted in the name of pollinator health.

“We’ve come through a winter with very low overwintering losses for bees, and we still have a significant portion of the corn crop treated with neonic insecticide,” says Denys. “It’s time the government acknowledges there are other factors at play here and look at the environmental benefits of using neonicotinoid seed treatments.”

A July report from the Canadian Association of Professional Apicul-

turists indicated that winter losses in Ontario honey bee colonies dropped to 18 per cent. Nationally, average overwintering losses were 17 per cent.

Whether growers accept the validity of the science behind the decision doesn't matter much now, industry representatives say. The important thing is that growers fully understand what is required of them before they pick up their seed order next year.

According to the province's website, in preparation for the 2017 planting season, growers wanting to use neonic seed treatments need to complete the integrated pest management (IPM) training, complete a pest assessment report and sign a declaration called an IPM Written Declaration Form stating that they have considered IPM principles. “Nobody likes red tape, but right or wrong, this neonic thing is law and it's not going away,” says Martin Harry, eastern marketing manager with SeCan. “It changed the plans of a lot of growers who didn't think ahead (for the 2016 season), and some had to buy seeds without neonics on 50 per cent of their crops.”



Martin Harry

**Beyond neonic seed treatments**

Will Trudell, vice president, De Dell Seeds Inc., a London seed company offering non-GMO corn hybrids, says growers may discover limited use of neonics isn't all bad. He says De Dell never officially adopted neonics as the company's standard seed treatment, but it was available to customers as an option until this year. The decision to eliminate neonics altogether in 2016 was an easy one to make.

"When the legislation was being introduced, we did some number crunching and found that only 1.6 per cent of our business was leaving with neonic-based insecticide on it, so we decided it wasn't worth it," says Trudell. "There are other insecticide seed treatment options that aren't neonic-based."

Wayne Black, national brand manager, PROSeeds, says it's true growers have plenty of options available to them. He says his company will offer seed treatment options

to suit the regulatory environment. The key, Black says, is in having time to research options.

"I think this past year, a lot of growers didn't feel comfortable with going to a different seed treatment right away," says Black. "For 2017, growers will be able to make smarter decisions about what they need for their farm."

For corn growers, one option is DuPont Pioneer's new Lumivia insecticide seed treatment. Rachel Faust, technical marketing manager for DuPont Pioneer, says Lumivia will be available across Pioneer's entire lineup for Ontario and Quebec in 2017.

"DuPont Lumivia is a broad spectrum insecticide with similar protection on the key below ground secondary insects such as wireworm and seedcorn maggot," says Faust.

Lumivia, which was approved for use in Canada in 2016, contains the active ingredient DuPont Rynaxypyr, a novel Group 28, anthranilic di-

amide insecticide.

Denys, who is also director of business management with Maizex Seeds Inc., says non-Class 12 seed treatments look promising for corn, but soybeans still lack a viable alternative.

"We do see life after neonics in corn. But in soybeans neonics are still an important tool," says Denys.

Denys suggested reduced access to neonic-treated seeds can shoulder some of the blame for another common problem in fields across the province in 2016: variable stands.

"We've seen variable stands this year depending on when growers planted," Denys says. "Some of that is due to insect pressure and some of it is due to cold, wet soils. Those that went with a fungicide-only treated seed in many cases faced high insect pressure that reduced both stand count and stand uniformity, given wireworm in corn and seedcorn maggot in soybeans."

## HURRY IN TODAY – THESE OFFERS END SEPTEMBER 30, 2016

**Bob Mark New Holland Sales Ltd.**  
Campbellford • 705-653-3700

**Bob Mark New Holland Sales Ltd.**  
Lindsay • 705-324-2221

**Bob Mark New Holland Sales Ltd.**  
Sunderland • 705-357-3121

**Delta Power Equipment**  
Mitchell • 519-348-8467

**Delta Power Equipment**  
St. Marys • 519-349-2180

**Delta Power Equipment**  
St. Thomas • 519-631-5280

**Delta Power Equipment**  
Tavistock • 519-655-2441

**Delta Power Equipment**  
Tilbury • 519-682-9090

**Delta Power Equipment**  
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**Maxville Farm Machinery Ltd.**  
Maxville • 613-527-2834

**McCauley Equipment Sales**  
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**Richards Equipment Inc.**  
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**Robert's Farm Equipment Sales, Inc.**  
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**Robert's Farm Equipment Sales, Inc.**  
Lucknow • 519-529-7995

**Robert's Farm Equipment Sales, Inc.**  
Mount Forest • 519-323-2755

**Smiths Farm Equipment (Jasper) Ltd.**  
Jasper • 613-283-1758

**St. Catharines New Holland Ltd.**  
St. Catharines • 905-688-5160

**Stewart's Equipment**  
Erin • 519-833-9616

**Weagant Farm Supplies Ltd.**  
Winchester • 613-774-2887



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Every industry representative *Better Farming* spoke with acknowledged the problem of variable stands. Improper planter setup and dry conditions were also raised as possible contributing factors.

“Dry conditions have caused variable size and staging of corn crops and soybean crops out in the field,” says Faust. “At harvest there are going to be some challenges due to different stages of maturity.”

### Lessons learned from 2016

The headache around imposed reductions in neonic-treated seeds wasn't the only challenge Ontario growers faced in 2016. Drought was top of mind for most Ontario growers; according to data from Weather INnovations Consulting LP, rainfall since May 1 in most regions fell well below each region's 30-year average.

In mid-to-late July rain started to appear, and it may be enough to save this year's crop from the worst of the drought. But industry representatives and reports from OMAFRA's field crop staff suggest there's also been an

increase in yield-robbing pests including wireworm and seedcorn maggot.

Denys notes that seedcorn maggot is a major problem for soybean growers in some areas, and there's no neonic replacement yet that can control them.

“This year we saw once again that when there are insects such as seedcorn maggot present, and where we didn't use a seed treatment insecticide, growers in many cases had to replant,” says Denys. “The government needs to acknowledge we need seed treatment for these insects.”

Faust says there are still some kinks to work out for growers conducting pest assessments of their fields.

“We also learned that trapping wireworms isn't an exact science,” says Faust. “We're going to have to apply some of those lessons to the upcoming season if growers want to use a neonic-treated seed because they'll have to do pest assessments. We learned last year that under dry conditions, it's not easy to do the wireworm trapping. The pressure is there but it's difficult to trap them to

complete a pest assessment.”

In addition to wireworm, seedcorn maggot seems to be making a resurgence. In June, OMAFRA's Field Crop Report noted there had been “a few reports of replants as a result of seedcorn maggot feeding in some small pockets.” The report specifically identified pockets in Orangeville, Teviotdale and Strathroy.

Shawn Brenneman, Eastern Canada agronomic services manager for Syngenta Canada, suggests it may be in part due to growers' higher use of cover crops and manure.

“It's one of those pesky pests. You only find out after you've got it and it's started to devastate your stand,” says Brenneman. “It's a pest we haven't paid a lot of attention to in the past but we need to understand the risk factors going forward.”

OMAFRA's field crop team reported in July 2016 that the dry conditions have been favourable for soybean cyst nematode (SCN) infection. For Brenneman, the biggest challenge of 2016 has been educating growers about SCN.

## New chemistry for 2017 to address SCN and sudden death syndrome in soybeans

Growers have one more soybean seed treatment option to research over the coming months, with summer 2016's new registration of ILeVO / VOTiVO seed treatment.

“We are pleased to bring Canada's first and only seed treatment for Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS) to market,” says an email statement from David Kikkert, Bayer crop and campaign marketing manager, soybeans and pulses. “With activity against SDS and SCN (soybean cyst nematode), growers can combat two major problems, resulting in healthier, higher-yielding soybeans.”

ILeVO / VOTiVO provides activity on *Fusarium virguliforme*, the causal agent of the syndrome, and

it also has activity against soybean cyst nematode.

Kikkert says SDS damage results in average yield losses of about 20 per cent, but losses have climbed as high as 60 per cent. By the time syndrome damage is identified in fall, damage is irreversible. Most SDS-affected fields also contain high levels of soybean cyst nematode.

The syndrome is moving across Ontario, and its spread is closely related to SCN distribution, which is largely concentrated in southwestern Ontario, according to Bayer. This may be because root damage caused by soybean cyst nematodes can make plants more vulnerable to diseases such as SDS.

Canada has approximately five years of trials with ILeVO / VOTiVO, including research demonstrations on large-scale farms and in areas such as Rodney/West Lorne and Highgate.

Growers opting for this seed treatment in 2017 may want to pause to watch for an interesting visual effect reported at emergence. Word has it that the cotyledon margins of young soybean plants treated with ILeVO / VOTiVO show a slight browning (dubbed “the halo effect”) when sunlight conditions are right. Bayer reports the effect is superficial, only appearing on the outer layer of the cotyledons and soybeans consistently grow through it. **BF**

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Syngenta spent part of the 2016 season promoting Clariva pn, a biological nematicide seed treatment intended to help deter and limit the yield loss caused by SCN. Clariva pn was launched in Canada in June 2015, with the active ingredient of pasteuria nishizawae bacteria. The product is also registered in the United States.

The promotion included testing 250 soil samples from across southwestern Ontario. “Half those samples came back positive for SCN,” says Brenneman. “It was alarming. A lot of people just aren’t aware of whether or not they’ve got SCN.”

Brenneman says as SCN continues to spread farther north and east, Syngenta breeders are breeding earlier varieties. “This year we have a 2,600 heat unit soybean that has SCN protection in it,” he says. “It used to be 3,000 heat units and above. SCN is the number one yield-limiting factor for growers in Ontario.”

**Soybeans for glyphosate-resistant weeds**

In soybeans, the next big thing has been kicking around for a while, waiting on approvals. Effective July 22, the European Union has authorized food and feed import of soybean grain, oil and meal containing the Roundup Ready 2 Xtend trait stack. Roundup Ready 2 Xtend soybeans are



glyphosate and dicamba tolerant.

“Glyphosate-resistant weeds are at the front and centre (of attention) again, and so is the need for good solutions to control them,” says Derek Freitag, regional agronomy lead with Monsanto Canada for DEKALB brand seed. “We’re looking forward to demonstrating Xtend and getting some growers working with Xtend for next year.”

Martin Harry, who also sits on the board of directors of Soy Canada, says he has heard growers speak enthusiastically about the new technology.



Derek Freitag



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**Martin Harry, a board member of Soy Canada, says growers are speaking enthusiastically about new products to control glyphosate-resistant weeds in soybeans.**

“We’ve got resistant weeds, but Xtend fields are clean and they look wonderful,” Harry says. “There will be some good genetics and great yields coming to growers with these new traits.”

If there’s a silver lining to 2016’s

midsummer drought, it’s that research plots looking at drought tolerance traits will have some decent material to work with. Freitag says the Monsanto team is conducting multi-hybrid research in corn, among other programs.

“We’ve got a small research planter that is capable of planting multiple hybrids in a field in a single pass,” Freitag says. “It has been pretty exciting for us to see those plants come out of the ground and the different responses to products in the different zones in the field under the drought. It’s letting us combine a lot of the individual hybrid positioning and data we have, and actually apply it in the field. The data we get from this year’s research programs will give us a pretty neat story to tell on our research come fall and winter.”

Faust too, says drought data will be useful. She says dry conditions provide a good opportunity to characterize up-and-coming hybrids and obtain scores on drought tolerance.

“At Pioneer we have a set of hybrids that have improved performance in water-limited conditions. We’re seeing those products handle drought conditions better so we’ll be looking at data going into the fall,” Faust says.

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**DKB005-52** S C N  
00.5 RM 2425 CHU

- Medium height with very good standability
- Very good White Mould tolerance
- Soybean Cyst Nematode resistant with an excellent tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot
- Well suited to all soil types and row widths with an excellent agronomic package

E=3 S=2 PFT=2 WMT=2

**DKB008-81**  
00.8 RM 2500 CHU

- Excellent standability and White Mould tolerance
- Good field tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot and Iron Chlorosis
- A branchy plant, well suited to all row widths
- Excellent agronomic package
- Will excel in high fertility conditions where White Mould and excessive growth are a concern

E=2 S=1 PFT=3 WMT=2

**DKB01-11** S C N  
0.1 RM 2575 CHU

- Resistant to Soybean Cyst Nematode with a very good field tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot
- Medium plant height with and excellent agronomic package
- Well suited to all soil types and row widths
- Will be well suited to high fertility situations
- Excellent tolerance to White Mould

E=2 S=2 PFT=3 WMT=3

**DKB04-41**  
0.4 RM 2650 CHU

- Best in class standability and White Mould tolerance
- Good field tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot
- Medium height, branchy, well suited to all soil types and row widths

E=3 S=1 PFT=2 WMT=2

**DKB06-61** S C N  
0.6 RM 2700 CHU

- Soybean Cyst Nematode resistant
- Very good field tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot
- Good field tolerance to White Mould
- Well suited to all soil types and row widths

E=2 S=3 PFT=3 WMT=2

**DKB09-91** S C N  
0.9 RM 2775 CHU

- Soybean Cyst Nematode resistant
- Rps3a gene and very good Phytophthora Root Rot field tolerance
- Well suited to wide rows and tougher growing conditions
- Tall, branchy variety best suited to no-till situations

E=2 S=3 PFT=2 WMT=5

**DKB10-01** S C N  
1.0 RM 2800 CHU

- Soybean Cyst Nematode resistant
- Rps 3a gene and a strong field tolerance for Phytophthora Root Rot
- Tall plant, well suited to no-till situations and tougher growing conditions
- Very good emergence and seedling vigour
- Good White Mould tolerance

E=3 S=4 PFT=3 WMT=3

**DKB14-41** S C N  
0.9 RM 2925 CHU

- Medium height, very robust and branchy variety
- Soybean Cyst Nematode, Sudden Death Syndrome and Brown Stem Rot resistant
- Very good Phytophthora Root Rot field tolerance
- Will excel in no-till environments and wide rows

E=2 S=3 PFT=3 WMT=2

**DKB20-01** S C N  
2.0 RM 3075 CHU

- Resistance to Soybean Cyst Nematode
- Rps 1k resistance gene and excellent field tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot
- Well suited to heavier soils and no-till situations

E=3 S=3 PFT=3 WMT=4

**DKB21-11** S C N  
2.1 RM 3100 CHU

- Resistance to Soybean Cyst Nematode
- Medium plant height and very branchy
- Well suited to all soil types and row widths
- Very good emergence, seedling vigour and standability
- Good Sudden Death Syndrome and Phytophthora Root Rot disease package

E=3 S=3 PFT=3 WMT=3

**DKB22-21** S C N  
2.2 RM 3125 CHU

- Resistance to Soybean Cyst Nematode
- Rps 1c resistance gene and excellent field tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot
- Excellent standability on all soils
- Above average White Mould tolerance
- Well suited to highly fertile soils

E=2 S=1 PFT=3 WMT=2

**DKB24-41** S C N  
2.4 RM 3175 CHU

- A tall, slender variety that stands well with a very strong fit on clay
- Soybean Cyst Nematode resistant
- Rps 1c resistance gene and excellent field tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot
- Moderately resistant to Sudden Death Syndrome

E=2 S=2 PFT=2 WMT=3

**DKB26-61** S C N  
2.6 RM 3225 CHU

- Resistance to Soybean Cyst Nematode
- Tall plant, excellent no-till adaptability
- Well suited to all row widths and soil types
- Excellent disease package; peking resistance source for Soybean Cyst Nematode

E=2 S=4 PFT=4 WMT=3

**DKB28-81** S C N  
2.8 RM 3275 CHU

- Broad acre variety that will fit all soil types & agronomic situations
- Soybean Cyst Nematode resistant
- Rps 1c resistance gene and an excellent field tolerance to Phytophthora Root Rot
- Moderately resistant to Sudden Death Syndrome and Brown Stem Rot
- Excellent standability
- Above average White Mould tolerance

E=3 S=2 PFT=3 WMT=2

**DKB32-21** S C N  
3.2 RM 3375 CHU

- Soybean Cyst Nematode resistant
- Tall plant, well suited to all row widths and soil types
- Good disease package
- Full season product that will excel in no-till situations

E=3 S=4 PFT=3 WMT=3

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# What you can do now to prepare for Plant 2017

“2016 was the year where mistakes showed up,” says Martin Harry, eastern marketing manager with SeCan. “Rotation, organic matter, all those little things made a big difference, especially in areas where there’s been little rain. Good farming practices always shine.” With that in mind, here are some steps growers can take in the coming months to get their 2017 season off to the best start possible.

Get intimate with your soil: “Know your farms and know your fields,” says Shawn Brenneman, Eastern Canada agronomic services manager for Syngenta Canada. “Soil management is becoming increasingly important. We need to understand what is in our soil and help manage the risk in stand establishment to get the crop off to the best start possible.”

Use the resources available to you. “There’s a lot of complexity in selecting corn hybrids and soybean varieties,” says Rachel Faust, technical marketing manager for DuPont Pioneer. “There’s a lot of different traits and differences between those traits. It’s

really important growers work with their seed supplier and ensure they have that dialogue of what’s available and match the needs of their operation.”

**‘Soil management is becoming increasingly important.’**

– Shawn Brenneman

Patience pays, says Stephen Denys, director of business management with Maizex Seeds. “If you wait until the ground is fit, it will reward you.”

Planning to collect crop insurance? “If a field hasn’t come up or is so thin that it should be written off with crop insurance, start calling August 2, and begin the process of preparing for winter wheat,” says Harry.

Understand neonic regulations are here to stay. “Growers can start planning for next year, because the neonic regulations are now law,” says Harry. “You can’t dig holes in the middle of winter,

so start digging holes and setting bait traps after winter wheat. And fill out paperwork early so it’s not last minute.”

Brush up on insects and crop diseases. “Misidentification of some insects or diseases in crops will be a challenge,” says Wayne Black, national brand manager, PROSeeds. “Growers and industry need to know what they should be looking for to make their decisions for seed treatments.”

Assess fields as you go. “It’s important growers are out assessing their fields throughout the year to have a good handle on how they get to their results in the fall,” says Derek Freitag, regional agronomy lead with Monsanto Canada for DEKALB brand seed. “Just looking at yield numbers in the fall isn’t the entire story. A big part of the success of each product is having it positioned in the right spot.”

Communicate with government, says Denys. “We have to educate the decision-makers about why we do things the way we do, and what happens if we’re forced to go backwards.” **BF**



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Ontario growers are seeing variable stands this year, which can create challenges at harvest, says Rachel Faust, technical marketing manager for DuPont Pioneer.



### Meeting premium niche markets

Seed companies continue to address concerns that are top of mind for Ontario growers with a steady stream of new traits and solutions to meet changing regulations and markets. They've also done a lot of work to help growers meet premium or niche markets.

From PROSeeds, Black says the push is on to actively seek new markets for the soybeans they're continually developing for Ontario soybean growers. PROSeeds is a company under Sevita International, a supplier of identity-preserved (IP) soybeans and soybeans with various traits.

"The food-grade soybeans that are coming through the Sevita system are pretty exciting, with genetics that make IP soybeans more attractive to overseas buyers," says Black. He cites the example of new genetics with a unique protein percentage that will benefit overseas soy milk producers.

Black also notes PROSeeds is among the companies that will offer the new Xtend soybean lineup in all heat unit zones in Ontario and Quebec for the 2017 season.

Martin Harry notes that non-GMO soybean markets are cyclical, with premiums rising and falling every few years.

"Non-GMO is a good niche for Ontario, with approximately 25 per cent of acres," Harry says. "Ontario soybean growers are still big in identity-preserved soybeans. The industry is always looking for varieties with better protein and improved food grade traits."

Corn, too, has seen some premiums for non-GMO corn in pockets of the province, particularly in eastern Ontario where the new Ingredion plant has increased demand. Ingredion makes ingredients such as sweeteners for the food and beverage industry. According to a company release, Ingredion Canada Corporation has introduced a non-GMO corn program for eastern Ontario, offering a premium of \$25 per metric ton for 2016's crop to be delivered in calendar year 2017. And while it's possible to earn a premium on non-GMO corn, Trudell says it's not the main reason growers opt for non-GMO seed corn like the bags sold by De Dell.

"There's a misconception in the industry that conventional corn is somewhat behind or that it's old genetics," says Trudell. "But the conventional market is alive and well, and we're still developing new conventional products that the market has never seen."

Trudell notes that in 2017 alone, De Dell is introducing six new hybrids to its 35-hybrid lineup. That's the most the company has introduced in a single year, and he says it points to the innovation happening in conventional corn. He's also quick to point out that grain corn is grain corn, and growers can still sell conventional corn to any elevator, and they may still come out ahead.

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technology fee on each bag sold," says Trudell. "Because of that, our seed is significantly cheaper than most seed on the market."

For growers who haven't yet made their decisions on what to plant next year, Harry advises now is the time to do research. If rain comes and soybean growing conditions improve, "it could be a long year," says Harry. "Some growers may even find themselves harvesting in November or December." **BF**

## Overheard from farms: How's 2016's crop shaping up?

"Moisture is at a premium this year. In the Dresden area, we were lucky with adequate moisture all year. However, it was timely and never in over abundance. So far in 2016, it reminds me that crops do better with 'slightly dry' versus 'slightly wet' conditions. Record wheat yields were testament to that. Crops with 'wet feet' are never a good thing."

— **Philip Shaw, Dresden**

"We were very dry from May through the beginning of July. The last couple of weeks (in July) have been good though."

— **Mike Pasztor, Norfolk County**

"Every year, crop farmers in some part of North America are hurt by bad weather, and this year it is the turn for drought-stressed farmers in Ontario. Corn and soybean yields will be depressed because of lack of rain in the Guelph area, though other areas are much worse. By contrast, crops look really good in the heart of the U.S. Midwest, and that means lower prices at harvest."

— **Terry Daynard, Guelph BF**

# Landmark business represents more than 150 years of farming

Herrle's Country Farm Market is a popular destination for Waterloo residents.

by KYLE RODRIGUEZ

A flower-adorned marker stone commemorates Peter Herrle's 1858 purchase of a parcel of land at 1243 Erb's Road in St. Agatha. By 1964, Peter's fourth generation descendant, Howard, and Howard's wife, Elsie, began growing a few acres of sweet corn behind their house and selling it to passersby from the family garage.



▲ The Herrle's Country Farm Market building opened beside the house in 1988. It has since undergone three expansions – in 1995, 2005, and 2015 – to reach its present size of 11,000 square feet. The market's operating season runs from the time the first strawberries ripen in mid-June to the end of corn season on October 31.



Positioned on the outskirts of the growing city of Waterloo, family-owned Herrle's Country Farm Market is one of approximately 200 farmers markets in the province, according to advocacy group Farmers' Markets Ontario. Built adjacent to farmland that has been in the family for six generations, the retail space is the base for an operation that comprises 600 acres over five farms. The family grows fruits and vegeta-

bles for direct market sales. Crops include strawberries, sweet corn, peas, beans, spinach, Swiss chard, beets, cucumbers, zucchini, squash, and pumpkins.

Since Ontario's first farmers market opened in Kingston over 200 years ago, growers have used the venue to directly distribute the freshest of produce and maximize their crop profit margins. Where it can take days for produce to reach grocery store

shelves, farmers markets can skip the wholesale stage and sell fresh from the fields directly to customers, many of whom also feel ethically empowered by supporting local growers.

Sweet corn is a crucial product for the business model of many such markets. The sugars in sweet corn are particularly sensitive to degradation over time, and consumers have learned to actively seek out corn that was picked that day. **BF**

From left, sisters Julia Nedeljkovich, Stephanie Mrksic and Monica Nedeljkovich pick their last corn for the day around 8:30 a.m. in late July. The three started working at Herrle's when they turned 14. Stephanie, the oldest, has returned for her 10th year. Experienced help is crucial in managing 600 acres, 300 acres of which is vegetable and fruit crops and over 130 acres of which is sweet corn. ▶



◀ Michelle Herrle and her husband, James, discuss the morning's plans outside the shipping and receiving area. James grew up working on the farming operation with his father, Howard, and now is in charge of field production and harvests. Michelle started picking corn for the family in 1989, the year after the market opened, and soon befriended James. She says their friendship blossomed into love and they married in 1992. Michelle is in charge of the market's human resources and communications.



▲ Michelle points out the remnants of a biodegradable plastic row cover that James sourced from Samco Agricultural Manufacturing Ltd. of Ireland. Family members believe it degrades more quickly than other products they have tried. The row cover is laid down with the corn to promote early growth by trapping moisture and heat in the soil around the roots.

Joanne Herrle-Braun, sister of James, stocks a fridge with flavoured corn butter. The product was adapted from a recipe for their niece's wedding a week prior and went on sale at the market days after receiving rave reviews during the festivities. The butter reflects how innovative value-added products can be introduced on a trial basis for relatively low economic risk at a farmers market. ▼







James guides a freshly picked batch of cobs into a bin for sale at the market, a task that is done hourly on a typical weekend. Herrle's grows twelve varieties of sweet corn which take 70 to 80 days to mature. The crop is planted from mid-April to mid-July to ensure supplies last until Thanksgiving, and sometimes, weather permitting, until closing on October 31.

Lois Hall of Heidelberg picks out three dozen ears of corn a few hours before catching a flight to visit her son in Thunder Bay. She recalls her family regularly visiting the Herrle garage for corn when her children were young. Her son is hosting a family reunion and asked Lois to fly in with three dozen ears – which she knows from experience is the exact amount that will fit in her suitcase. ▼



Members of the Herrle family pose around a stagecoach built by family patriarch Howard (standing centre) as a woodworking project in 2001. From left: Karen Gingerich (company bookkeeper) and her brother, James (field production and harvests); his wife, Michelle (human resources and communications); Country Farm Market founder and fourth generation Herrle, Howard; Alison Herrle-Braun (14), her sister, Josephine (12); and the sisters' parents, Joanne (scheduling and bakery management and daughter to Howard) and Trevor Herrle-Braun (manager of social media and produce section).

# Nurturing precision in the field

Information collected by today's field equipment can help make your next season's crops an even bigger success. Explore the highlights and issues of data collection in this followup to *Better Farming's* January 2015 exploration of precision technology on the farm.

by JEFF CULP

“We figured it was the Holy Grail,” said Steve Redmond, Hensall District Co-op precision ag specialist. The occasion was the arrival of the first yield monitor he had seen. It was his first real exposure to the possibilities of precision agriculture.



Steve Redmond

Twenty-eight years later, Redmond's precision ag management team still sees unlimited potential for data collection and analysis to hone chemical application, automatic irrigation programs, hybrid selection and more. Yet, his team is still doing “mostly basic things, variable seeding and variable fertilizer applications,” Redmond says.

So much more is possible.

When it comes to how they approach and apply data collection, farmers occupy different camps, says Leo Bose, advanced farming systems marketing manager at Case IH in Milwaukee. “Some are 110 per cent on board and use data daily. Then there's a subset that uses some sort of harvest data, maybe looking at it year over year. Some aren't using the data to advantage at all.”

The data is being collected. A modern combine yield monitor



Leo Bose

collects information about grain mass and moisture content and uploads it to a global positioning system. The farmer in turn uses the system to create a yield map that identifies how areas in a field produced. This yield map is the basic tool of precision agriculture.

Using a GPS satellite, a local base station and sensors on the harvester to constantly calculate the harvester's position, a map can be generated that is accurate to a centimetre.

“In precision agriculture, we are just scratching the surface,” says Redmond. “The technology is going to keep getting better. I saw a quad copter (drone) recently with 11 cameras taking images at different wavelengths. When that information was processed, we could see the tire marks of the cultivator. Keep in mind, this is when the corn was chest high.”

Bose also speaks about the level of detail and accuracy that can be achieved with the new technological



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approaches. Because of this detail, “we can put a tractor on the same pattern every year. The tractor is driving over the same spot, year after year.” Sticking to the same patterns so precisely reduces soil compaction, boosts yield and promotes overall soil health, he says. “It allows you to apply bands of fertilizer in a given area for precise application.”

The potential for guiding and operating agricultural equipment in the future is immense.

“In the automotive industry, we’re already seeing automatic parking and vehicle-assisted braking. This technology will transfer to the agricultural space,” says Bose.

Bose envisions the day when driverless planters will do variable seeding. Farmers would control the planters remotely using a tablet and a pre-programmed pattern based on historic yield data.

### Data helps boost yields

Even right now, however, the technology is making a fundamental and beneficial impact to farmers’ bottom lines.

“At a recent presentation I made, a farmer came up to me after and said the variable rate seeded everything,” recalled Redmond. “The difference on corn – which is what everyone is talking about – was about \$9 an acre. Big deal. But on some specialty crops, like edible beans, the difference in yield was \$36 an acre. This guy had a thousand acres of edible beans.”

Don’t dismiss the impact on corn too quickly, though. DuPont Pioneer’s research and development people have done the tests and run the numbers. Comparisons of variable rate seeding versus constant seeding at 556 locations across North America have shown increased corn yields of between eight and 13 bushels an acre.

Yield information can also give direction on decisions like hybrid selection, chemical application, planting density and more.

“It used to be that we’d have one or two hybrids on a farm,” says Blaine Calkins, Encirca Services manager at

DuPont Pioneer in Johnston, Iowa. “Now, we are talking potentially multiple hybrids within one field.” Combining multiple hybrids with variable rate planting will boost plot productivity, he adds.



**Blaine Calkins**

### Information overload

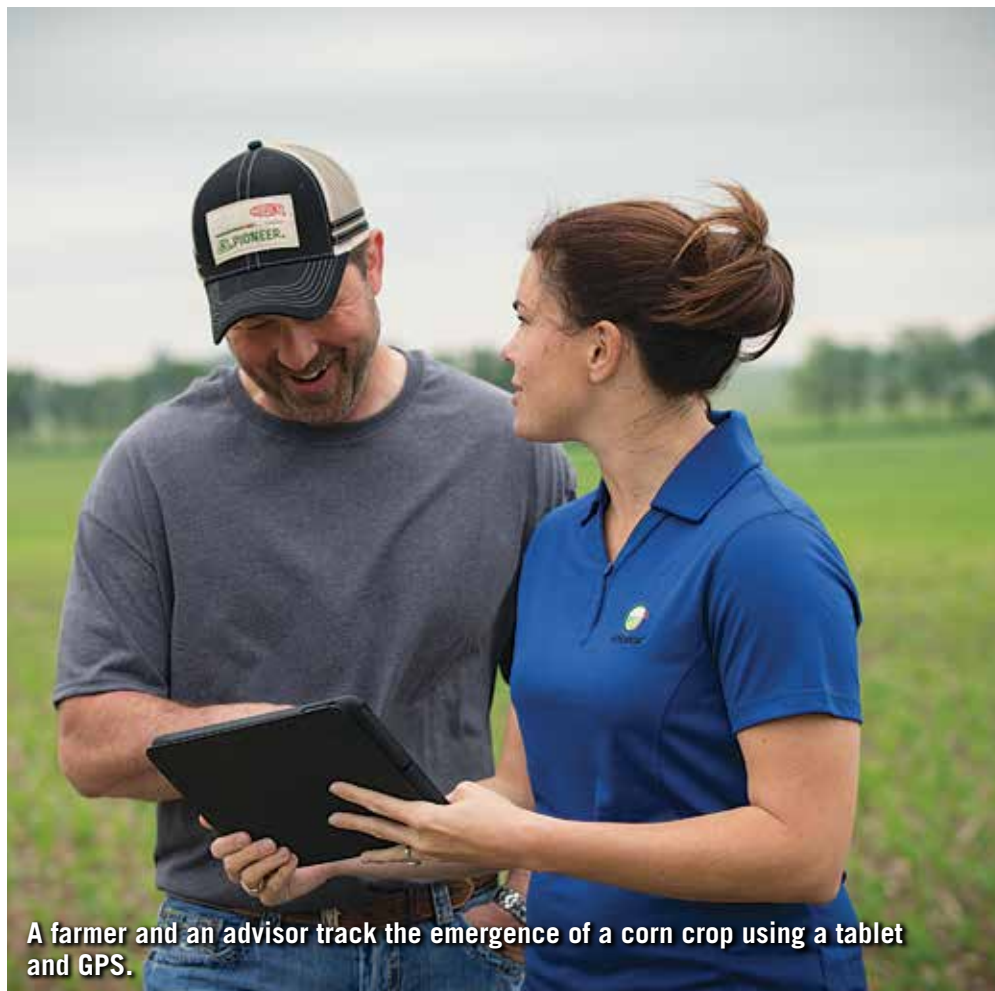
The downside to all that data collection, however, is its sheer volume, Calkins says. “There’s so much data (that) farmers out there probably

have two or three years or more of yield data. It’s valuable information. The more you understand about tracking yields, the better. Ten years from now, we may find a missing piece in that data if we can extract information from it.”

The volume and the different types of information that can be collected can be overwhelming to a typical farmer. For that reason, you need to surround yourself with trusted advisors, Redmond advises.

“You’re dead in the water if you don’t,” he says. “When we first started, we’d find farmers who didn’t know how to work their yield monitor properly. These were guys with Masters and PhD level education, and they wanted to do it all. But they have to build support relationships with the equipment dealer, software representative and agronomist.”

*continued on page 30*



**A farmer and an advisor track the emergence of a corn crop using a tablet and GPS.**

Photo: Courtesy DuPont Pioneer

## Sharing data and issues of ownership

The sharing of information is becoming a hot topic in precision agriculture. In June, the G-8 announced the formation of an International Conference on Open Data in Agriculture. This group quickly merged with six African nations to form the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition.

“We’re at a crossroads,” says Leo Bose, advanced farming systems marketing manager at Case IH. “How does a producer know who is seeing their data? The data has to be accessed by a third party specialist to optimize its use. We need a security structure. Up to now, it’s been, ‘here’s my USB stick,’ no terms of service agreement, no privacy protection.”

There is also the issue of proprietary platforms. Can data collected on a planter from one manufacturer be used in the system of a combine from another manufacturer? In order for the data to be useful, some kind of data management software has to be used, and right now there are dozens of farm management information system packages on the market, many developed by seed companies or farm implement companies.

“The companies may believe they are using their platform as a tie-in for future sales, but farmers have to be cautious about that. You want to continue to have the flexibility of having a mixed fleet of vehicles, for example,” says Steve Redmond, Hensall District Co-op precision ag specialist.

To try to overcome data sharing problems between different farm equipment’s software, over 200 companies set up a non-profit consortium called AgGateway.

Andres Ferreya, manager of special projects for Ag Connections LLC, a farm management software developer and member of the AgGateway consortium, has

worked on a number of AgGateway projects.

“There is a huge inter-operational problem in agriculture,” he says. “The rapid growth in technology hasn’t been matched by growth in our ability to get the data to do useful things. When growers have mixed fleets, usually the machines can’t talk to each other or, worse, they can’t talk to the farm management information system.”

AgGateway has introduced something called ADAPT (Agricultural Data Application Programming Toolkit), an add-on software package that allows data to be transferred among machines of different manufacture and between management software packages. “The intent is to get the manufacturers to create a plug-in. But because ADAPT is open source (programming), anyone can create that plug-in and make it available,” says Ferreya.

Steve Redmond, Hensall District Co-op precision ag specialist, believes time will pick two or three standardized software management platforms, but in the meantime, farmers should store their raw data.

“Use the cloud,” he says. “I know you think that makes your information vulnerable but, well, get over it. It’s secure there. But use a system that’s going to be around for a while, like Dropbox.”

The cloud refers to a computerized network that is accessed over the Internet from any computer device to store or process information. Dropbox is one such network that specializes in allowing its users to store large amounts of information.

The shared, on-demand nature of the cloud makes sharing information between an agronomist and a farmer easy, but it

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also opens the door for others to access that information. This danger is so widespread across economic sectors that a Cloud Security Alliance has been formed to promote best practices in cloud security. The fear in agriculture is that large corporations will have access to masses of information, which can potentially be very valuable.

Redmond downplays the need for concern. “They don’t care about the yield off some field in London Township,” he says, “they care about the aggregate data. They want to know if (one) hybrid did better than another hybrid. That’s where the big decisions will come from – aggregate data.”

Both Redmond and Bose believe the farmer owns the raw data, but does the data management software company have

partial ownership of it once the raw data has been massaged into useful information?

“If you sign an agreement with a software provider, whether it’s a manufacturer or someone else, make sure you read the fine print in the agreement,” advises Redmond. “Make sure you have control over your data.”

A number of industry alliances have been formed that set out protocols for information security. One of the largest is the Open Ag Data Alliance (OADA), of which Case IH is a founding member.

“A guiding principle of OADA is that a farmer owns his data, and must give permission to allow a third party to use it,” explains Bose.

But third-party access to years of accumulated data is what can have the greatest impact on input costs and yields. **BF**

*continued from page 27*

### The field management plan

All of this information can be used to develop a management plan for the field and the crop. Developing the plan begins “day one” at the end of harvest, says Bose.

“Look at what happened on a yield basis. Based on what happened and factoring in what you did in terms of planting, chemical application and fertilizer application, have a third party advisor help you aggregate that with data on soil types, and you may be able to make purchase decisions on seed, fertilizer and chemicals for next year’s crop. Early booking might give you reduced rates.”

Redmond has worked on data collection and management plans for dozens of farmers.

“The first question I ask is, ‘how comfortable are you with your yield monitor?’ If you’re not comfortable, get comfortable. Know it inside and out.”

Then use your network to build that necessary team of advisors. Bose suggests starting with the implement dealer.

“Our dealers know our customers, and we can optimize performance specific to that customer’s needs.”

It may be that you will need more than one expert. Encirca’s Calkins notes his company’s increasing business ties with unexpected partners. “The equipment guys, the software guys and the genetics guys like us, we all have something to contribute, and it’s starting to come together.”

Redmond finds that younger farmers are generally more comfortable with technology.

“We had a customer who had just graduated, and he was the son of a farmer. His mom wanted to build a wrap-around deck on the house, but he wanted to use that money to buy a planter capable of variable rate seeding. So he calls us during the winter. He points to his new planter and says, ‘that’s mom’s deck. You better make this work.’” **BF**

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“It’s a good model that avoids the scale requirements that it takes to get into retailers in Ontario” says Cory Van Groningen of Beef Farmers of Ontario’s Farm to City program.

## Delivering direct to customers' driveways

Beef Farmers of Ontario program helps farmers combine online sales with urban drop sites.

by MARY BAXTER

**B**eef Farmers of Ontario rolled out a program this year to help cattle producers gain an edge in the difficult task of selling direct to consumers, and early responses indicate a winning formula.

The Farm to City program involves providing farmers with the tools to combine online sales with delivery to local, pre-defined drop sites. The program includes access to online

sales and inventory tracking tools as well as a handbook that provides step-by-step advice to help producers get started.

“It’s a good model that avoids the scale requirements that it takes to get into retailers in Ontario,” says Cory Van Groningen, a member of the provincial marketing association’s board. He notes Virginia farmer Joel Salatin pioneered the concept of

niche market, consumer direct online/delivery drop combination for meat products.

LeaAnne Wuermli, Beef Farmers communications manager, says the idea to develop the program in Ontario grew out of a recommendation two years ago that the board explore local food marketing options for producers. The organization obtained \$35,000 under Growing

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Cory Van Groningen

Forward 2 government programs for preliminary market research and program implementation.

Van Groningen's Norfolk County business, VG Meats, piloted the concept, launching the service in 2014. VG Meats is a vertically integrated meat production business that includes cattle production, processing and retail sales. The company is the only producer involved, although Wuermli says she is building a list of interested producers, most of whom are already doing farm gate sales. So far, 10 producers have expressed interest, she says.

The organization will hold workshops on the approach in the fall. "We're hopeful that the more people who get exposure to the model, the more producers we can get up and running and using the model then there will be interest from other groups as well," Wuermli says.

Rob and Maryjo Tait's Celtic Ridge Farms near Dutton in Elgin County is one of the producer operations on Beef Farmers' list. Rob Tait says the idea dovetails well with the couple's plans to grow the business. Rob, 36, and Maryjo, 29, maintain a sheep and cow-calf operation on the 300-acre farmstead that has been in Rob's family since 1873. They finish their own animals. "We don't buy in any (cattle) to finish," Rob says. "Everything is all here so we have full traceability for all of our meat."

A local butcher supplies processing, and the couple sells both large orders and specialty boxes. Demand has been through the roof and they have also begun to supply the Talbotville Berry Farm Market store near St. Thomas. Their biggest challenge is ensuring enough product is available.

The Tait's already maintain a website that lists what's available and how buyers can place orders. The couple recognizes having an online store and adding a pickup location are the next steps to make ordering even more convenient for customers. Moreover, given that they both work off-farm and have two young children, jumping to the end goal of

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Maryjo and Rob Tait and their children, newborn Emily, and Alexander.

establishing a farmgate store would take more time than they have right now. Nor do they want to do something that would compromise their brand of everything bred, born and raised on the farm. “We are trying to grow realistically,” Rob says.

With those goals and challenges in mind, becoming involved in the Farm to City program makes sense.

“With us being a smaller farm, unless it’s pre-ordered, you’re going to be waiting three to four weeks for it – and sometimes even longer if (we) don’t have beef ready to go,” Rob explains. “We’re getting to the point where we’re having beef readily available all the time, and that’s the thing with the Farm to City online store that would make it that much easier. People can go on, they can order, they can plan ahead and then boom, there’s a pickup location or drop-off location so they’re all set for that.”

Wuermli says the organization’s market research shows drop-off points create greater convenience for customers than the more traditional freezer trade model where buyers seek out the producer and go to the farm. The approach also allows producers to plan production, which means they can achieve production and cost savings as well as establish relationships with customers, she adds.

Van Groningen says the model of combining an online store with drop-off points avoids the scale requirements behind establishing a retail space. For the business that he owns and operates with his three brothers, the model is proving to be more efficient than going to a farmers market. “You don’t have to be there, for start; you don’t have to load the truck at 3 a.m. or anything and get there and be there for most of the day, and depending on how far you drive it’s going to be maybe three hours or something,” he says.

Plus, all sales transactions have already been completed. “The problem with farmers markets for us is that it’s never a guaranteed sale,” he says. “There could be times when you

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- ✓ All farmers and landowners have a responsibility to control noxious weeds on their property
- ✓ We need access to the best herbicides and other methods to control these harmful weeds
- ✓ It's equally important for governments to control these weeds on public lands to prevent the spread and reduce harm

We are all responsible to put the needs of farm workers, animals, our environment and all Ontarians ahead of noxious weeds.

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take \$3,000 worth of meat but you bring \$2,000 home and only get \$1,000 worth of sales.”

Bio, a web content management service operated by Bridging Intelligence in Elora, has developed the specialized content management system that provides farmers with ready-made tools to conduct online sales and keep track of inventory. For a fee, Bio hosts and provides the Farm to City website template, sets up the virtual store and walks farmers through the process of how to manage inventory and sales.

Customizing the system to fit in with an individual business’ brand is easy for someone with some basic knowledge of website coding language, Van Groningen says.

A manual, which can be downloaded from Beef Farmers’ website, rounds out the program. The manual includes information such as an introduction to the online web content management system template, advice on how to secure drop sites, and contact information for meat processors and public health units. It also provides advice on items such as pricing, marketing, labelling, product cuts, merchandising and other factors to consider when setting up the business.

The program was designed to help farmers move ahead a little faster with a direct marketing venture and make essential information easily accessible, Van Groningen says. “There’s still work that needs to be done by farmers to understand the system, but it will be a lot less than if they are trying it on their own.”

Van Groningen says he and his brothers are still learning how to attract and coordinate drop sites in their own Farm to City venture. Currently, the company maintains four drop sites and obtains regular customer orders. The sites include home driveways and a food co-operative parking lot in Hamilton. Site hosts are offered a five per cent discount on their purchases for accommodating the drop-off and promoting products to others. “We’re finding that’s quite an incentive,” Van Groningen says.

The business grows mainly through word-of-mouth. “We did attract one site through social media,” he adds.

Coordinating drop-offs is another challenge. Everyone wants delivery at the same time – around 6 p.m. “It sort of limits the volumes that we can do. That’s something we’re trying to figure out,” Van Groningen says, noting the ideal would be to space deliveries out through the day so one person can be dedicated to the job.

For producers thinking of launching similar ventures, Van Groningen advises to start small. “Don’t plan on taking over the world tomorrow,” he says. Instead, start with people you know, such as existing customers or people you or your family might know who are interested in buying from you, and determine how to make service convenient for them. Use social media.

Van Groningen, also president of the Ontario Independent Meat Processors, notes there’s lots of room in Ontario for direct-to-consumer sales. “We’ve got tons of meat imported into this province that we can work on displacing,” he says. The Farm to City model is “one more tool that we can use to try to do that a little bit.” **BF**



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## Wrestling the limits of place

When you farm in Ontario's northern areas, the hurdles are many. To succeed you've got to be practical, as this Rainy River farmer has found out.

by MARY BAXTER



Photo: HEATHER LATTER

**A**mos Brielmann has spent most of his farming career wrestling and exploring limits of one form or another.

There are the physical boundaries – the provincial and national borders near his Pinewood, Rainy River District farm operation. You'd think being situated close to the Manitoba and U.S. borders would provide the advantage of greater marketing opportunities for his crops and livestock. Well, it does – now.

“It used to be just a big, big

challenge,” says Brielmann. When the Canada Wheat Board controlled the marketing (it marketed wheat produced in northwestern Ontario), he couldn't sell his crop to elevators a stone's throw away on the other side of the border. The cost to transport grain was exorbitant. So, in 1997, Brielmann and his partners at the time, Jurgen and Rachel Schmutz, shifted the operation over completely to beef cows. “We moved on,” he says.

In the same way he decided to move on after jumping over the lines of

conventional production and spending nearly eight years in organic beef production. “Organic production was a big struggle, lots of work,” he explains. So he dropped the beef certification in 2011 and has since dropped the certification on grain, too.

He's glad to have tried. “You can be philosophically organic, saying this is a lifestyle, right, and this is my belief.” But farmers have to be practical, he says. “If you want to carve out a living out of the farm, you have to understand the economics.”

The district is not suited to organic production. Take for one the area's lack of proximity to large consumer markets. Moreover, in a region aptly named after the amount of rain it gets, it becomes difficult to get in the field in a timely fashion to do the weeding.

Today, Brielmann, in his late 50s, and his wife, Heidi, grow cash crops and background feeder cattle on their farm. The Brielmanns share farm operations with their son, Timo, who has his own farm. Just because the elder Brielmann returned to conventional production doesn't mean the challenges have disappeared. They've changed – increasingly complex, and hence difficult-to-fix equipment, for instance.

Although he speaks of the hurdles, this farmer with the philosophical streak does so with good humour and a zest for life experience.

"I really enjoy the ability to look at a challenge and say, how can we overcome it, and how can we make it so that it works? Challenge is not a negative. If there are no challenges, you're just getting lazy then."

#### **Describe your role on your farm operation?**

Manager. In the morning we discuss what we do and then I'm telling the employees what's on for the day and try to direct them. I'm also the person who is in charge of marketing and purchasing the inputs.

#### **How many people does your farm employ?**

Three employees, plus my son and me.

#### **Hours you work per week?**

10 hours a day, six days a week.

#### **How many emails do you receive per day?**

Between 20 and 30.

#### **Hours a day on a cell phone?**

If you ask my wife, she will tell you five hours at least. I would say, if you combine everything, at least an hour and a half.

#### **What about your smartphone?**

Our fields are very far apart. (There's

**"I really enjoy the ability to look at a challenge and say, how can we overcome it, and how can we make it so that it works? Challenge is not a negative."**

a 40-kilometre distance between the fields). So as I go from one place to the next, I have an app to listen to the market report. I do most of my emails on the phone.

#### **Email or text?**

I do both. If it is something where I want to keep that, or a conversation which I want to be able to look back at, then I want to have an email. But the short things, it just goes over text. Is it easier with text? I guess it's easier. Faster.

We bought some gypsum out of Iowa, and we had it in the bin and the product wasn't delivered right. It clumped up. And it's interesting, all the conversations I had with that company, it all went over texting. All the pictures, everything. There was not one email. That's kind of unusual. Usually you have a document on email, but that guy did everything over text.

#### **Any favourite apps?**

I have my apps and they're for my market report, and I have my app to look at my solar tracker, but I find them very time consuming, these apps, and addictive, so I try to stay away.

#### **Where did you last travel to?**

Europe.

#### **What do you like best about farming?**

I grew up on a farm and I always liked the smell of the soil, the excitement when you step on the field and you see the first wee little green blades of the newly seeded crop coming up. These kinds of things are so exciting emotionally for me. I would never want to give it up.

#### **What do you like least?**

The weather. I know I can't change it but it just worries me always. And I don't like early spring when the snow goes away and I stand there in the mud and have to feed cattle.

#### **What is the single most important piece of advice you've received?**

I had a friend in Germany, an older farmer, kind of a mentor. He said to me: "you should never, ever look back and say, I did this wrong. You should always go back and say, well, I did my best. I will learn from my mistake and



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I will move forward in a positive attitude.”

**What’s your management philosophy or guiding management principle?**

I like to challenge everybody who is on the farm to make his or her own decisions. So if they come to me and say, what do you want me to do, I say, “well this is what we have to do, how do you think we can do that? Tell me what you think is the best way and then we move forward.”

**Are you involved in any committees, boards associations, or volunteer efforts?**

Emo Agricultural Research Station Committee chairperson.

**What is your favourite recreational activity?**

Hiking in the mountains.

**What was the last book you read?**

*A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* by Daniel Ellsberg.

**What does your family think of farming?**

When we moved here to Canada from Germany, Heidi had to make a big step because of leaving her relations behind and so on. For me, it was much easier. She’s not a farm girl but she just went with it. My daughter, Susanne, was very much involved always until she went to university. Timo, he was always out on the machines and (with) the cattle and so on since he could walk. So they were very much always very much involved.

**What’s your most important goal?**

The farm has to be in better shape when Heidi and I leave it than when we got it. That means the soil, the visual appearance, the productivity – everything has to be in better shape for the next generation.

**How do you define success?**

When you feel that you reached your goal. When the farm is at the place

**“I like to challenge everybody who is on the farm to make his or her own decisions. So if they come to me and say, what do you want me to do, I say, “well this is what we have to do, how do you think we can do that?”**

where I am saying goodbye, I hope I can look back and say, OK, we did what we could, and it was good.

**Is your farm vehicle messy or neat?**

My jeep is messy. Timo, he just hates it. He vacuums his.

**What’s on top of your desk?**

Cell phone, two note pads, computer, my glasses and three bills that I had to go through and verify the weights in them.

**What was the last piece of equipment you bought for your farm?**

Air drill.

**What’s the best time of day?**

Early morning. Sitting there and having a coffee or tea and thinking about what you’re going to do in this day, it’s just a nice, exciting time.

**What was your most memorable crop year?**

There are two. One was 2011. It was nice and dry and we got all our crops seeded early and we got them off early and the hay was just good.

The other year was 1991. It was so wet and miserable and cold. We had just bought a new combine, so we bought some tracks for it and combined wheat and canola. There were ducks swimming in the fields. **BF**

*This interview has been edited and condensed.*

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# Gauging the market impact of the U.S. Midwest corn and soybean harvest

Where best to determine if 2016 will produce bin-busting U.S. corn and soybean crops than in that country's Corn Belt? How will those bumper crops affect Ontario commodity marketing?

by MOE AGOSTINO and ABHINESH GOPAL

As most farmers know, the price of corn and soybeans is impacted by a number of factors, many of which are not in the control of the individual farmer. For example, there are international markets and how the crops are doing in other countries. Ultimately, the coming together of such factors shapes international supply levels and influences prices.

For Ontario farmers, one of the biggest influences of corn and soybean prices are the crops produced in the American Midwest. Several significant milestones throughout the growing season affect corn and soybean yields in that area. This year, half of the U.S. corn crop was planted by April 1 while the remaining 50 per cent was planted in late May due to delays from a very wet spring. Some agronomists argue that late-planted corn is more susceptible to yield losses because it gets a shorter crop development window. In such cases, timely rains become all the more necessary.

Despite record temperatures in the early summer, the U.S. Midwest has been experiencing an excellent growing season. The first few days of July saw good rainfall, with some U.S. growing areas receiving as much as 4.5 inches of rain. The rest of July was hot and humid but provided enough moisture to offset the heat.

By the beginning of August, 80 per cent of the U.S. Midwest corn and soybean crop was looking good. Only 10 to 20 per cent of the crops were experiencing some concerns. With the majority of the crops in good shape, there is less concern with the 10 to 20 per cent that are experiencing less-than-ideal conditions. The prediction

is that 2016 could be producing the best U.S. Midwest crop conditions in 10 years, as evidenced by early August corn crop ratings of 76 per cent good to excellent and soybeans at 72 per cent good to excellent.

As farmers know, both U.S. corn and soybean crops need to have ideal growing conditions in late summer and early fall.

In 2016 a strong finish could lead to record yields and above-average kernel weights.

Farms.com Risk Management is forecasting an above average U.S. corn and soybean crop with a record corn yield of 170 bushels per acre (bu/acre) or better, and 48 bu/acre or better for soybeans. The record high for corn was 171 bu/acre in 2014 and 48 bu/acre for soybeans in 2015.

In fact, in early August, INTL FCStone Inc.'s commodity advisory also forecasted record-breaking U.S. corn and soybean crops, with average yields at 175 bu/acre and 48.8 bu/acre, respectively. This will take ending stocks above 2.5 billion bushels for corn and 450 million bushels for soybeans and put more downward pressure on prices near-term.

A record yield equates to an over-abundance of supply, which means Ontario farmers will not likely see strong corn or soybean prices this year. As farmers know, however, weather disasters and other unforeseen circumstance can quickly increase the price of either crop. If such conditions



2016  
Waist high soybeans near Grand Mount, IA.

2015  
U.S. soybean field in West Central, IN.

**What a difference a year makes! Last year in June, floods from rain was the big issue for farmers in the U.S. Midwest. This year in early July, the soybean crop was almost waist high in Iowa. Big vegetation in soybeans can be a concern early in the season, as growing conditions often deteriorate and yields often turn out to be poor.**

occur, opportunities for record crop prices could quickly enter the picture and, in such a case, farmers should swiftly book their crops.

What farmers should absolutely avoid doing is falling into the bear trap and desperately selling at the lower end of a typical yearly range, unless they have immediate bills to pay and are too cash-tight. A review of the long-term corn and soybean charts does reveal that patience pays, and we do get opportunities to sell during a counter-seasonal or late-season rally, depending on the year. Since La Nina weather conditions are widely forecasted to kick in by late in the year, which could have dramatic effects on crops, it's probably worth the wait. **BF**

*Maurizio "Moe" Agostino is chief commodity strategist with Farms.com Risk Management. Abhinesh Gopal is a commodity research analyst with Farms.com Risk Management.*

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# Putting 4R nutrient stewardship into practice

The industry-devised approach to nutrient management is a hands-on method of ensuring strong yields and the best performance from your inputs while reducing your environmental footprint. Here are some suggestions on how to implement 4R on your farm.

by DALE COWAN

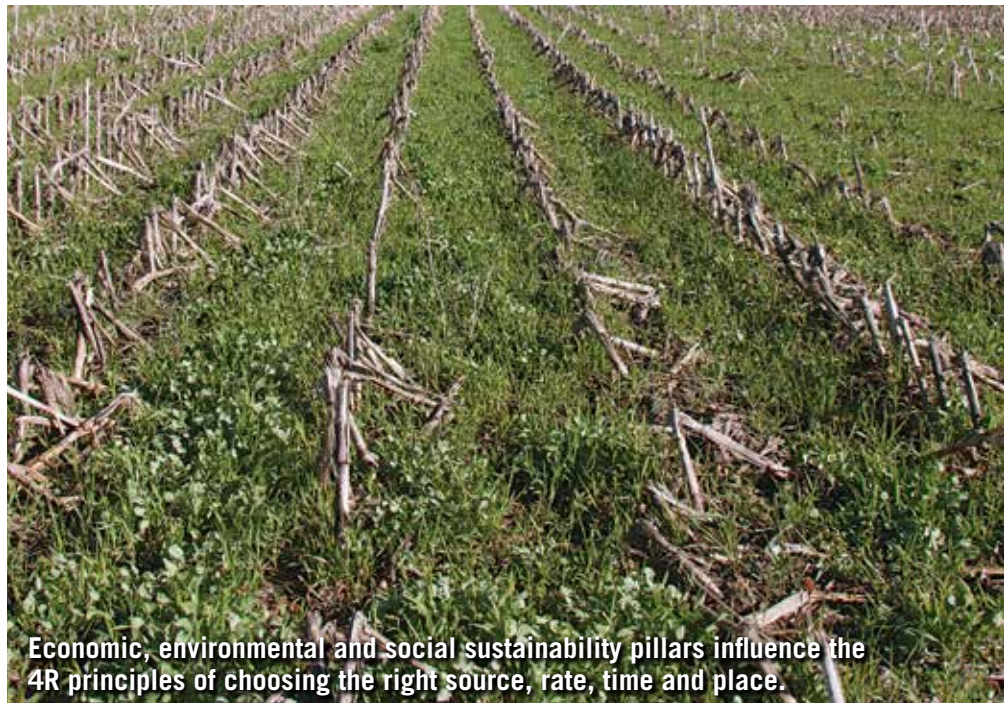
I think everyone in the agriculture industry has heard of, or is talking about, 4R Nutrient Stewardship. The farm-level field-specific approach to nutrient management consists of choosing the right products and applying them at the right rate, in the right place and at the right time to minimize the size of the environmental footprint, optimize harvested yield and maximize nutrient utilization.

In 2015, a memorandum of cooperation was signed by Fertilizer Canada, the Ontario Agri Business Association, farm-producer associations such as Grain Farmers of Ontario, and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The memorandum recognizes that the 4R Nutrient Stewardship approach integrates the sustainability goals of participants and stakeholders and is a good voluntary industry initiative to curb nutrient losses into surface waters.

Economic, environmental and social sustainability pillars influence the 4R principles of choosing the right source, rate, time and place. On-farm actions relating to 4R, therefore, should involve the following steps:

- Embrace practices that improve economics on farm in a measurable manner,
- Address and document environmental initiatives and concerns, and
- Adequately address and communicate social benefits to the community at large.

Goal setting on the farm becomes ever more important. Setting targets involves documenting current practices by identifying areas for improvement, putting in place a



Economic, environmental and social sustainability pillars influence the 4R principles of choosing the right source, rate, time and place.

written step-by-step implementation plan, documenting the progress and results and evaluating them and, finally, adopting a process of continuous improvement.

In reality, on most progressive farms these activities are part of normal business planning and practice. The only difference with the 4R approach, perhaps, is more detailed documentation of the components that support 4R principles.

To facilitate the initial effort of a 4R Stewardship approach, a farmer might consider choosing one or more performance indicators for either adopting or changing a farming practice. The choice can provide a focus or framework for implementing changes.

Some of the performance indicators are listed below (there are many and farmers can choose their own):

- Yield,
- Quality,
- Phosphorus loss reduction,
- Nitrogen use efficiency,
- Carbon credits,
- Value to crop input ratio – dollars produced for dollars spent,
- Reduction in field soil and nutrient loss, and
- Soil health.

As an example, a farmer might choose to look into improving nitrogen use efficiency. Under the 4R principles the farmer would first identify a field with which to work. Assessing current nitrogen (N) application best management practices and comparing those to the present practices used in the field would be the next step. Then the farmer would evaluate the choice of products used. This step includes investigating protected N sources, looking into

how rates are determined, examining different application placement technologies, and assessing a different timing for application.

At the same time, the farmer would consider the three sustainability pillars. What is the economic impact of making any of these adjustments? To find the answer, the farmer would set up appropriate strip trials to measure the response.

Environmentally, the goal may be to optimize N uptake and reduce carry-over of nitrate nitrogen postharvest. Again, setting up a testing procedure to document the outcome will help to establish the best approach.

Finally, there is the task of establishing social benefits. This is often the hardest thing to do, however, of the three pillars, social sustainability today carries perhaps more weight than the other two pillars.

What are the benefits to consumers and the public for a farmer to improve nitrogen use efficiency? As an example, one answer might be that reducing potential movement of nitrate to groundwater preserves groundwater quality. The practice replaces the need for costly infrastructure expenditures in a municipality that depends on groundwater to provide safe drinking water to the public. As a result, the practice could free up tax dollars to be spent elsewhere to improve community living.

The 4R Stewardship approach goes beyond the farm gate, and the memorandum that supports the initiative is an important milestone in industry and government relations. Think of the initiative as our opportunity to voluntarily demonstrate and document the importance of production agriculture to the economy, to the environment and to the public.

How many of your acres are under a 4R Stewardship management program? **BF**

*Dale Cowan is a CCA and a senior agronomist with AGRIS Co-operative Ltd. and Wanstead Farmers Co-operative Ltd.*



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The size of forage equipment and speed of operation has greatly changed.

## Companies set their sights on forages

Recent strides in private forage research and management products will have significant impact on crop yields.

by PAT LYNCH

**W**e have issues with forage production in Ontario. Corn and wheat yields continue to increase yearly. But forage yields have not changed much.

Well that is all changing. The use of new breeding techniques, application of fungicides and employment of better fertility strategies increased yields in corn and wheat. The adoption of these approaches will increase forage yields too.

It is hard to change alfalfa with standard breeding techniques partially because alfalfa has four sets of chromosomes. Factors such as yield are affected by many genes on the different sets of chromosomes. So now breeders are resorting to genetically modifying alfalfa. They have

done many different things. The most exciting is changing the genes that affect lignin. The end result is an alfalfa that is more digestible and retains digestible protein longer. This means you can leave alfalfa to mature to 1/10th bloom or later and not lose quality. You get the higher yield of more mature alfalfa but retain feed quality. This development equates to big savings in harvesting, which costs about \$75 per 100 acres. Yield that you would normally get in four cuts you can get in three. Yield that you would get in three cuts you will be able to get in two cuts. Maintaining yields while reducing the number of harvests results in a direct saving to the producer.

Roundup Ready alfalfa has been

planted for a number of years in the United States. In 2016 Roundup Ready alfalfa was planted in Ontario. The introduction of Roundup Ready alfalfa means you can control troublesome weeds like chickweed without using a cover crop. After you spray off chickweed you can seed grasses. Another advantage of Roundup Ready alfalfa is that when the stand starts to thin out you can spray Roundup to control weeds then seed grasses.

The genes for lower lignin, higher protein and digestibility will only be sold with the Roundup Ready gene.

There are questions as to how to kill Roundup Ready alfalfa. The answer is the same way we kill alfalfa now. Use dicamba with Roundup



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when you want to remove the stand. The other option is to use the mould board plough as our fathers did.

Another exciting change is a movement to pure grass stands. In cases where there is an abundance of liquid manure, having a stand of pure grasses makes sense. Some farmers are planting rye grass after wheat harvest, taking a cut in the fall and another cut in the spring before planting beans.

And there are some exciting things happening with grasses with some hybrid species. There is a new grass called festulolium, a hybrid forage grass developed by crossing meadow fescue with Italian ryegrass or tall fescue with perennial ryegrass. Festulolium hybrids combine the best properties of the two types of grass.

Another exciting thing is the 2013 DLF Trifolium Group A/S purchase of Pickseed Canada and Pickseed USA. DLF is the world's largest producer and marketer of grass and clover species. The company joins its

25 research stations with Pickseed research stations to come up with a network of 32 research stations around the world. It is the only company in Canada that does yield and quality research at a significant number of research stations. This small plot research is the same calibre of research that you would expect from government-run institutions. This privately-run research is one of the biggest things happening in forage production research in Ontario. Other companies, such as DuPont Pioneer and Quality Seeds, are increasing the number of on-farm plot demonstrations as well. The private research effort comes at a great time as governments have cut publicly funded research.

#### Using fungicides

Fungicide use has finally come to forage production. If you take a close look at alfalfa when you cut it you will notice a lot of dead leaves on the bottom of plants. This is protein. If those leaves were as big as cow flaps you might take a bigger notice of them. Priaxor from BASF Corporation is registered for use on forages. It controls a number of diseases including the most common – common leaf spot. The research trials I have seen show an increase in protein per acre at harvest. Not surprising since you are retaining more leaves.

This development will allow breeders to focus on breeding for yield, as opposed to disease ratings, as growers can now use fungicides as part of a disease management strategy.

#### Changing approaches to harvest

Another thing that is changing is how we harvest forages. Gone are the days of the six-foot sickle mowers that I used as a kid. The debate carries on as to whether it is better to crimp/crush forages to allow quicker drying or to lay them out flat and use a merger for best harvesting. Some believe conditioners actually slow down drying. When hay is conditioned the stems are smashed. Some research suggests moisture leaves

**“When I was a kid we could cut two to three acres an hour. Today’s equipment can cut 25 acres an hour. There is less maintenance. When I was a kid we had to grease the mower every hour.”**

stems through the cut ends, and smashing these stems slows down drying. These folks believe cutting forages, laying them out in a swath and then using a merger to form a windrow is the way to go.

The size of this equipment and speed of operation has greatly changed. When I was a kid we could cut two to three acres an hour. Today's equipment can cut 25 acres an hour. There is less maintenance. When I was a kid we had to grease the mower every hour. So that took another 15 minutes out of each hour. We would not cut after dark. Today's equipment can run more hours a day.

There is no doubt that if you can make “hay in a day” you will get high yields and higher quality. Getting forage off quicker allows for manure application after cutting. It is nice to get liquid manure on 24 to 48 hours after cutting. If regrowth starts and you apply liquid manure you will cause a yield drop.

Wouldn't it be nice to see a demonstration of the newest and latest in forage harvesting equipment? Well you can. This year, forage mower-conditioners and disc binds that are self-propelled and tractor driven will be demonstrated at this month's Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock. Different companies will tell you the benefits of their equipment. Whether those benefits be acres per day or lower maintenance power requirements, you'll be able to judge for yourself through side-by-side comparisons at the show. **BF**

*Consulting agronomist Pat Lynch, CCA (ON), formerly worked with the Ontario agriculture ministry and with Cargill.*

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# Keep your hydraulics running smoothly with regular maintenance

Today's hydraulic system components operate with incredible precision and require specialized understanding to maintain good working order.

by RALPH WINFIELD

Some of the older farm equipment operators remember when we had only hydraulically operated three-point hitches, and possibly one remote outlet for the trail plough, cultivator or disc. The actual hydraulic systems were relatively crude in design, and great care did not have to be taken to filter hydraulic fluids as those old gear and piston pumps could tolerate most anything that came along, including some water.

Power steering soon followed and the need for cleaner hydraulic fluid became a little more critical as manufacturers reduced component tolerances.

About 1980 we began to see piston-type hydraulic pumps and motors that had tolerances of only a few microns ( $\mu\text{m}$ ). They were used primarily for variable-speed drive systems. They replaced the old mechanical variable-speed drive systems that we had used on combines to give us infinitely variable ground speed. That development allowed us to better match ground speed to cylinder loading and greatly improved the combine field efficiency without having to stop and change gears.

The newer piston pump/motor systems soon provided us with very sophisticated, totally hydraulic drive systems for the large self-propelled field sprayers that are now in common use. Farm input supply companies own many of these sprayers, but large farm owner/operators now own almost an equal number.

Those high pressure, low-clearance piston systems did and do require high quality, clean hydraulic fluid. The piston clearance is often in the three to five  $\mu\text{m}$  range! Can you see



This planting unit with no markers is planting soybeans (no-till) into last year's corn stalks using a GPS as a marker system.

particulate matter in that size range? Not a chance! Even new hydraulic fluid should be filtered into the hydraulic tank.

Please remember that hydraulic fluid is only screened into the pump. It cannot be filtered into the pump. The pump sends the fluid to activators and motors or cylinders. A filter pressure drop at the pump input is not acceptable as it can cause cavitation. (A pressure drop could be caused by a build-up of contaminations in the filter.)

Cavitation is the change of the liquid to a gaseous product in a hydraulic system. Cavitation will ruin a hydraulic pump! Gaseous fluid compressed by a pump reverts to a liquid with destructive forces. The resultant scaly metal pieces will then contaminate the remainder of the hydraulic system. A complete system cleanup and rebuild is very, very expensive.

## Understanding hydraulic systems

Every farm team which operates newer hydraulic systems on tractors,

sprayers, combines, or other equipment should have someone who is knowledgeable about how these systems work.

Based on my many years of teaching, writing service manuals, and observing people in action, I think I have seen most of the mistakes people can and do make. Here is one example:

A hydraulic function becomes slow. Many people will look for an adjusting screw in the hydraulic system(s). Sometimes they will find an adjustable pressure relief valve. They will turn it in three or more turns only to find that it does not increase the function speed. Will they turn it back out? Not likely. The pressure relief setting therefore increases significantly. So when the speed fault is corrected, will the new setting result in blown seals and/or hose connections? You bet it will.

For this reason, most equipment manufacturers use non-adjustable pressure relief valves whenever possible. Unfortunately, some pres-



The variety of planting and firming equipment options available is very extensive.

sure settings must be made after the assembly is complete, such as for a hydraulic motor on a track drive.

**Schematics are essential**

Hydraulic schematics are essential for troubleshooting systems. Unfortun-

nately, they are not as readily available as they were in the past. This scarcity is often brought on by variations in systems for machines. However, in support of the manufacturer, it is also necessary for the repair technician to have pressure gauges

available in order to test circuits and readjust limit pressures. Most farm shops do not maintain sets of pressure gauges for setting pressures.

In the last three years we have seen great strides in controlling planting depth, seed depth and soil firming pressure. These types of controls become especially challenging where corn, wheat or beans are being planted into high residue soil cover.

Seeding control-device combinations are becoming so numerous and sophisticated that individual combinations of hydraulic control systems are just not readily available. Thus, unfortunately, no standardized hydraulic schematic is likely to become available for common use in Ontario or elsewhere.

**Staying on top of rapid change**

It is imperative that at least one member of every farm team that is operating planting and/or harvesting equipment take courses or find other



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means of becoming technically confident in the design and maintenance of hydraulic systems.

Fortunately or unfortunately, many sophisticated hydraulic systems are operated by sophisticated electrical systems. Added to those electrical systems is the GPS system that auto steers the planting tractor or the combine.

How much progress have we made in the last 20 years? Note in the planting picture on page 47 that no row marker system exists. GPS steering systems have obtained the capability to bring a tractor or combine back on the adjacent pass with accuracy to a few centimetres.

I hope that farm-equipment-dealer service staff are continually updated on servicing the latest in planting and harvesting equipment. There is, and will be, a great need for their services in the next 10 years. Possibly one of their challenges will be to provide service schools or workshops for

equipment owners and operators during the off (winter) season.

Training workshops can be a very effective means of sharing information if the leaders and participants are both willing to share their expertise and experiences. **BF**

*Ralph Winfield is a retired professional engineer, farmer and technical writer.*

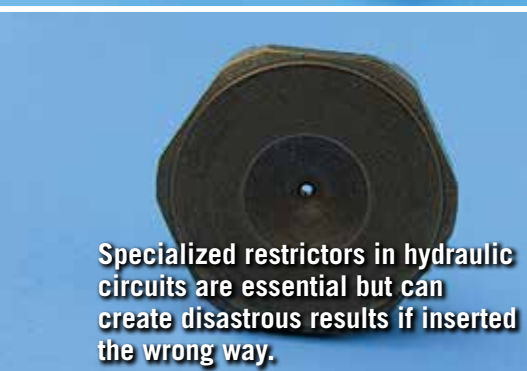


The number of hydraulic circuits required to control the functions of sophisticated planting units is very high.

Preset versus adjustable hydraulic pressure regulators limit the risk of misadventures with hydraulic systems.



Specialized restrictors in hydraulic circuits are essential but can create disastrous results if inserted the wrong way.



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# Yield data collection shines light on crop performance details

Replace assumptions and generalizations about how your crop has performed with hard data obtained from mapping yields and experience the benefits.

by JAAP KROONDIJK

Mention yield data collection to a farmer and typically expect to encounter either interest or disgust. Some have embraced it and see the benefit; others just think it is a gimmick and a waste of time.

I have stood on the side of a corn field with some people and the statement was made: “that is a 180-bushels-to-the-acre corn crop.” And their statement was right: the trucker hauled away that total yield. Great – no yield mapping technology required, right? A trained farmer’s eye was all that was needed!



Yield monitors provide a great sense of the variance across fields and the data is helpful for shaping crop management plans.

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Yet, once a producer acquires yield mapping for the combine a different picture of the field comes in mind. Yes, in the end, they trucked away the 180-bushel per-acre average. But, all of a sudden, the 260-bushel per-acre spots stand out from the 90-bushel per-acre spots which the eye does not see. And questions arise: what happened? How can we get 260 everywhere?

Yield mapping started in the early 1990s with a Midwestern U.S. company which figured out a way to register yield on the go in a combine. Some of the main manufacturers also adapted this technology, and others came out with their own variants. Farmers judged yield mapping on its accuracy by the scale tickets from the elevator, but it did not always live up to the expectations.

You could print a nice colourful picture, showing the different levels of yields, from the highest yield in nice green to the lower yields in “screaming” red. But what can you do with that? In the best case scenario, the picture was simply printed and stuck in a binder.

But some early adapters saw there had to be something to yield mapping, puzzled with it and used it to their advantage. I personally know someone who took a printed map with him in the tractor and started spreading lime on the lower-yielding areas. Voilà: the first controlled spreading system for putting lime where it was needed and not just spread over the whole field. Yield mapping gives you an overview of your field, in terms of what it actually did versus what you think it did.

I know a lot of you know your fields and are well in tune with how they perform. You are well aware of drain issues or sand knolls in your field, but how do you relay this information to your agronomist? A picture is worth a thousand words, they say. Yield mapping gives you a way to communicate your specific needs to someone who does not know your fields as well as you do. In turn, they can use this information to send a fertilizer spreader in the field

and control its output according to the needs in the field. The applicator can avoid applying fertilizer on a poor area that cannot utilize the nutrients and also prevent waste or run-off.

Yield is a good start to collecting data from your fields. Most new combines are factory-equipped with yield monitor systems and some even have all of the necessary GPS-related

equipment included. Equipment dealers and precision ag sales consultants also sell aftermarket kits for most machines for relatively reasonable prices.

Please do not get hung up on whether the yield mapping system reads 105 bushels per acre where it should read 95 or 115 bushels per acre. Sure, accuracy is important and nice.

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What you are after, though, is to see the variance in crop yield across the field. As long as the yield reads within reason and it reads the highs and lows properly, that is what is important. If the system is off a few per cent, that is, in my opinion, irrelevant. (Besides, even a weigh wagon loaded improperly is off way more than most people think, since most weigh wagons only have three load cells. You need six to eight load cells to compensate for side hills, load distribution, etc.) What you are after is to get a good layout of the field, in terms of where the low- and high-yielding areas are located.

Today, you can find many office software programs to read your yield data. Most programs can accommodate the overlay of different maps on top of each other. One example of an overlay would be placing the yield map over the tile map or soil map so you can see both at the same time. Another would be putting last year's corn yield map over this year's bean yield map. Numerous possibilities exist; ask your agronomist. Or, you can ask your custom applicator for his maps and see what he did for you. Were there test strips and do you know where they were located? It is not hard anymore to transfer data, so use that to your benefit! You can measure your harvested crop against your field inputs to see if the costs paid off.

With corn and bean harvest around the corner, use yield mapping to your advantage. And, yes, every year is different, so multiple years' worth of data is better than a single year's data. Start collecting and ask your dealer for advice. Most of them have trained staff who can give you many pointers, including the specifics on your machine and if you have the technology needed.

Yield mapping is the building block for considerations of crop management planning. It will show what works with your way of farming. It will show how different varieties perform side by side in your field, not the companies' test plots! It will confirm if what you did was the right thing or not. **BF**

Jaap Kroondijk is a farm boy mechanic who lives near Woodstock.

# From agriculture to trade

Gerry Ritz, never afraid to speak his mind, has some opinions to share.

by BARRY WILSON

When it comes to agricultural trade deals and what the rookie Justin Trudeau Liberal government should do about it, the Opposition Conservative trade critic preaches some tough love.

Gerry Ritz, 65 years old this summer and Canada's sixth-longest-serving agriculture minister with more than eight years in the portfolio from 2007 to 2015, has some strong views on trade issues that confront the new government.

And as trade critic, he has a platform to express those views.

Don't waste energy and political capital on negotiations over a new World Trade Organization deal based on the 2001 Doha Round agreement



Gerry Ritz

that WTO negotiators still have as their template. It isn't going to happen, he says. Every two years, negotiators gather, discuss and resolve nothing.

In fact, Canada should quit looking to the WTO as a forum to negotiate

new international agricultural trade agreements. He acknowledges the organization's usefulness as an arbitrator and regulator of existing trade rules, but says it is not a forum to create new global trade rules. "The way the WTO is structured now with every country having a veto, it doesn't work," says Ritz. "We have to move on."

And the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement Canada signed onto last year that would expand Asia-Pacific access for many agricultural products?

Ritz strongly supports it. If U.S. voters this fall elect a president determined to oppose TPP as it stands (both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump have said they are),



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then he suggests working with other 'like-minded' TPP countries to sign and implement a trade liberalization regime that needn't include the United States.

As it stands, the TPP includes a formula that ratification requires six of the 12 signatory nations representing 85 per cent of trade in the region, essentially giving the Americans a veto.

Ritz says he is urging other TPP

signatories to essentially ignore that rule and sign an agreement that gives them the trade liberalization benefits they negotiated and support. If the next U.S. administration does not want to be part of the deal as negotiated, that's their problem.

"Throw out the formula that is there now and just say like-minded people will move forward with this with or without the United States," he

says. "Japan, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand are in favour of that. Those who want to be part of TPP certainly can move forward with it. For the Liberals to say we have to hitch our wagon to the Americans and wait for them makes no sense to me."

During its first year in office, the Justin Trudeau Liberal government and trade minister Chrystia Freeland have concentrated on promoting the as-yet-unsigned trade deal with the European Union with little mention of TPP or WTO. Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay has kept a low trade profile.

Ritz, a former Saskatchewan grain farmer who once unsuccessfully dipped into ostrich farming, will mark two decades in Parliament next year.

His first nine years were in opposition. He then spent close to a decade in government, most of it as the agriculture minister who imposed a strong will, emphasized trade as the core of farm economy prosperity (while defending supply management and its trade aversion) and changed the traditional relationship between farmers and their expectation of government as a Big Brother banker when farm incomes decline.

He travelled regularly on trade missions, once claiming he ate more Canadian beef in China than in Canada. Now he is in opposition again, not agriculture critic and clearly loving it. He says he keeps in close touch with national farm leaders and international contacts that he made as agriculture minister.

"My role today I am very much enjoying because it is a continuation of what I was doing in agriculture," Ritz said in a summer conversation. "People in the media called me the quasi-trade minister when I was agriculture minister and I certainly embraced that role. I think trade access is the key for agriculture and the future." He seems to be enjoying the freedom of not having government restraints. **BF**

*Barry Wilson is a member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and specializes in agriculture.*

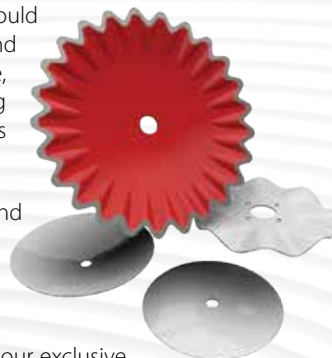
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## It's a beautiful day in the agrihood

Land developers in Canada and the United States are using farms to entice potential homeowners into residential developments.

Developers promote these communities, designed to tempt residents passionate about fresh and local food, as agrihoods, short for agriculture neighbourhoods.

The latest neighbourhood to be built around a farm is **The Cannery**, a 547-home, 7.5-acre community in Davis, California. **The New Home Company** development opened August 2015. Homes start at US\$400,000. Residents can sign up for a weekly box of produce and enjoy the agricultural scenery.

"They can see the pumpkins being harvested or the tomatoes being planted or the different seasons that happen on a farm," New Home northern California president **Kevin Carson** told *The Associated Press* on May 17.

Similar neighbourhoods exist in Virginia, Arizona, Illinois and in Canada.

**Frost Creek Development Company** is building a 129-home community called **Creekside Mills at Cultus Lake** in Lindell Beach, British Columbia.

The four-hectare community features homes beginning in the mid C\$600,000s and a full-time farmer to

look after the fruits, berries and vegetables.

**Jon Van Geel**, **Frost Creek** sales director, told *The Globe and Mail* in 2015 that the company wants to create an area where residents can pick an apple from a tree on their property, and make pie from it. **BF**



## Ethanol a mystery to U.S. drivers

A majority of polled American drivers do not know about the addition of ethanol (principally made from corn and other field crops) to gasoline, according to a summer survey by *Reuters/Ipsos*. According to **Laura Sheehan**, a public relations specialist in the energy sector, this can be explained by the fact that lobby groups focus on the federal government, rather than the consumer.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, 93 per

cent of consumers were concerned about the price of gas. The location of the gas station was another central factor in purchasing decisions.

In accordance with the federal renewable fuel standard program, over 95 per cent of motor vehicle gasoline contains 10 per cent ethanol, according to a May report from the U.S. **Energy Information Administration**.

About 2,500 Americans responded to the online survey. **BF**



## Fish farming in a cargo ship

**Marine Harvest ASA**, the largest Atlantic salmon producer, wants to farm

fish inside a cargo ship, reports *Bloomberg*.

The July article says while salmon prices are soaring, fish farms are suffering outbreaks of sea lice, which often kill fish.

**Marine Harvest's** idea is one of several applications to a Norwegian government program that offers

farming licences at a reduced cost to projects that solve the lice problem and curb fish escapes.

The *Bloomberg* article quotes an Oslo investment securities analyst who estimates the **Marine Harvest's** farm prototype to cost US\$28 million, or about half the amount of a conventional farm. **BF**



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## Chilean dairy set to become world's largest robotic milking farm

In late June, according to an article in *DairyReporter.com*, a farm in Chile had signed an agreement to install 64 milking robots to increase milk production and lower labor costs.

When the farm introduced its current 16 milking robots in 2014, farm owner, **Agricola Ancali Limitada**



GETTY

(part of the **Bethia Group**), saw an average yield of 45.2 liters per 920 cows, or a 10 per cent increase in milk production, the article says. After installing the 64 milking robots, the Chilean farm, which holds about 6,500 cows, will be the largest robotic milking farm in the world. **BF**



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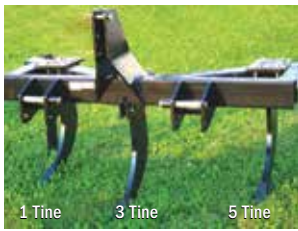
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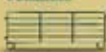
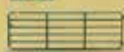
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