

real-life
farm management
stories

AgriSuccess



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NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2012

On the cover:

The Pages are busy farmers, successful greenhouse entrepreneurs and tireless community volunteers who still manage to keep up with three active young daughters (page 4).

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from the editor



What motivates individuals to do their jobs? Is it just the money? If money is the only motivation, the individual will rarely be living up to potential.

We all know people stuck in jobs they don't like. It might be high paying with benefits, but the person is counting the years and the days to retirement. Meanwhile, someone else in a similar job exhibits enthusiasm. They're excited to go to work each day. They measure accomplishments rather than number of hours.

A couple of the stories in this edition pertain to motivation. General Rick Hillier, former Chief of Defence Staff for Canada, talks about what it takes to be a leader and how an effective leader motivates those around him or her. When everyone embraces the vision or purpose espoused by the leader, a great deal more can be accomplished.

Work motivation is also about perspective. In our story about temporary foreign workers, Philippe Quinn of Quinn Farm near Montreal talks about the amazing productivity of two workers from Guatemala.

Many of us don't aspire to hard manual labour. We want higher-paying jobs where we can use more of our brains and less of our brawn. Foreign workers, on the other hand, are often highly motivated even when the job primarily involves manual labour. Coming to Canada gives them an opportunity to better their lives and the lives of family members.

As farmers, we're business people and have to be bottom-line oriented, but is it just the pursuit of money that keeps us going? In most cases, there's also pride of accomplishment and perhaps a hope that what we build will be passed to the next generation.

Money is important – but it's probably overrated as a motivating factor.

Let me know what you think. Just email kevin@hursh.ca.

Right-size your farm insurance



Waiting until you have a claim to review your farm insurance policy coverage is leaving it too late, says Ray Erickson, an account executive with Western Financial Group in Weyburn, Sask.

“Farmers are constantly building, renovating, buying and selling,” says Gary Skogberg, director of the Co-operators’ farm portfolio in Calgary, Alta. “It’s easy for something to be overlooked. Our agents have gone out and found combines and tractors worth hundreds of thousands of dollars that would have been missed. Other times, they found producers were still insuring equipment they sold years ago.”

“Insurance policy holders should review their policies once a year at the minimum,” Erickson says. “We also recommend having your broker come to your farm once every three to five years for an on-farm review as well. They’ll review your coverage for your operation to make sure it’s up-to-date and adequately meets your needs.”

Many people think insurance coverage is black or white: either you’re covered or you’re not. But Erickson says there are many variations. For example, not all fire

insurance policies cover the cost of fire fighting, or debris and carcass disposal after a fire.

Coverage limits might also be a problem. Many older barns are only insured for their depreciated value and not the cost of replacement. If a fire occurred, producers would be facing a massive loss. Losses would be even higher if the barn was full of animals and you didn’t have livestock coverage.


“Some clients want to be covered for absolutely everything, while others just want to buy the bare bones,” Skogberg says. “There is no such thing as true all-risk insurance. You can get pretty close to it but you are going to have to pay for it.”

Standard farm policies are designed for primary producers, so commercial ventures, value-added processing and agri-tourism operations may not be covered. In a worst-case scenario, the company could even void your existing insurance coverage. That’s why it’s important for farmers to contact their insurance agent or broker when they make changes to their business model.

“I don’t know any insurance broker who wouldn’t be happy to come to your farm if you called them up and asked them to come out and review your policy,” Erickson says. “It won’t take up a lot of your time and might save you a lot of money.”



VIDEO: Learn the importance of working with your insurance agent to make sure you and your business are properly insured.
www.fcc.ca/agrisuccess112012



“Stop and think about what would happen in a worst-case scenario.”

How much liability insurance is enough?

Traditionally, most farmers have carried \$1 million in liability insurance coverage. But Ray Erickson says \$2 million is now a better place to start. You might consider raising it even higher with an umbrella policy that covers both your farm and auto liability limits.

“People don’t understand liability,” Erickson says. “They never stop and think about what would happen in a worst-case scenario, and that’s often exactly what happens. Farm machinery, for example, travels down public roads a lot to get from location to location. If you are found to be liable for an accident with a truck with a large valuable payload on it, and there are lots of them out there, that will eat up most of a million dollar liability policy right there. While that’s bad enough, a railcar accident can run well into the millions.”

“If a person comes on your farm and is seriously injured or killed due to your negligence, you are liable,” Gary Skogberg adds. “Accidents caused when your animals get out on the road are another scenario. We really see this a lot in some provinces.”

U-picks, agri-tourism and other value-added operations come with their own liability risks. Sitting down with your insurance advisor is a good place to start to make sure your coverage matches your operation.

Reduce your premiums

“Nobody likes to see their bills go up,” Erickson says. “The first thing many people do when we send them a policy renewal bill is look for ways to lower their premiums. Don’t do this by reducing your limits or cutting your coverage, though. You’re better off to take on some of the risk yourself and increase your deductible instead.”

Another way to reduce your premiums is to take advantage of loss prevention incentives, Skogberg says. For example, most insurance companies offer premium reductions to promote electrical inspections. Typically, producers have to pay for an electrician to come out to do an inspection, but the reduction in premiums often offsets the cost.

“Fires on farms, whether it’s a home or a barn filled with livestock, are devastating for farmers and a major cause of loss for us,” Skogberg says. “If we can help avoid the losses and give them some premium savings at the same time, why wouldn’t we? It’s good for everyone.”

BY LORNE McCLINTON / *Lorne has worked in the communications field for the last 20 years as a journalist, photographer, scriptwriter and corporate writer. He divides his time between Quebec and his grain farm in Saskatchewan.*



Keep busy, keep happy

There's a saying that if you want something done, you should ask a busy person to do it. If that's true, Chris and Crystal Page are exactly the kind of people you'd ask.

Besides farming with his father near Souris, Man., Chris helps Crystal and her parents run a greenhouse in town. They also own a second greenhouse in nearby Boissevain. Chris is a local school trustee and coaches minor hockey in winter, and Crystal is on the local figure skating board. Plus, they have three young daughters who are all active in sports and music.

Chris and Crystal grow 1,300 acres of wheat and canola, and Chris helps his parents John and Arlene Page farm another 1,300 acres nearby. Although the operations are owned separately, they work together buying equipment and inputs, dividing the cost on a per-acre basis.

In between his work on the two farms, Chris does the bookkeeping and payroll accounts for the greenhouse owned by Crystal's parents, Larry and Gerry Sadler. Crystal administers the retail side of the business and supervises up to 14 employees, including family members, during the peak season. Besides containing the retail plant operation and a small gift store, the greenhouse wholesales product into Saskatchewan. The nursery stock from the greenhouse in Souris supplies the greenhouse in Boissevain, where they've hired a local manager to take care of that facility.

The unusually wet weather of the past two years added to the challenges of running two businesses simultaneously. In 2011, Chris and his dad seeded only 300 of their combined acres because of heavy rain. The year before, they managed to seed only about half of their cropland, also because of flooding. Favourable weather this year meant they got every acre in on time.

The surging Souris River, which flows through its namesake town, was a challenge for the Sadler greenhouse business as well. Forced to close their operations early in June 2011 due to flooding, they tore down five greenhouses to make room for an emergency dike ordered by the province. The buildings have since been replaced and business is good again, thanks to a variety of plants and nursery stock that keeps customers coming back.

The Page operation seems in a constant state of growth: Crystal expects she'll eventually assume ownership of the business from her parents, and Chris hopes to take over the farm from his dad through an intergenerational transfer in the coming years.

Chris says he would like to see the farm grow by another 1,500 acres at some point in the future. One reason for expansion could be his interest in growing soybeans, which are not common in the area right now. Corn is another possibility.



A school trustee for the past two years, Chris attends up to four meetings a month, including regular board and committee meetings. Last year he served on the board's negotiating committee. Chris says he's developed a new appreciation for what goes on in schools and for the amazing things kids learn at an early age.

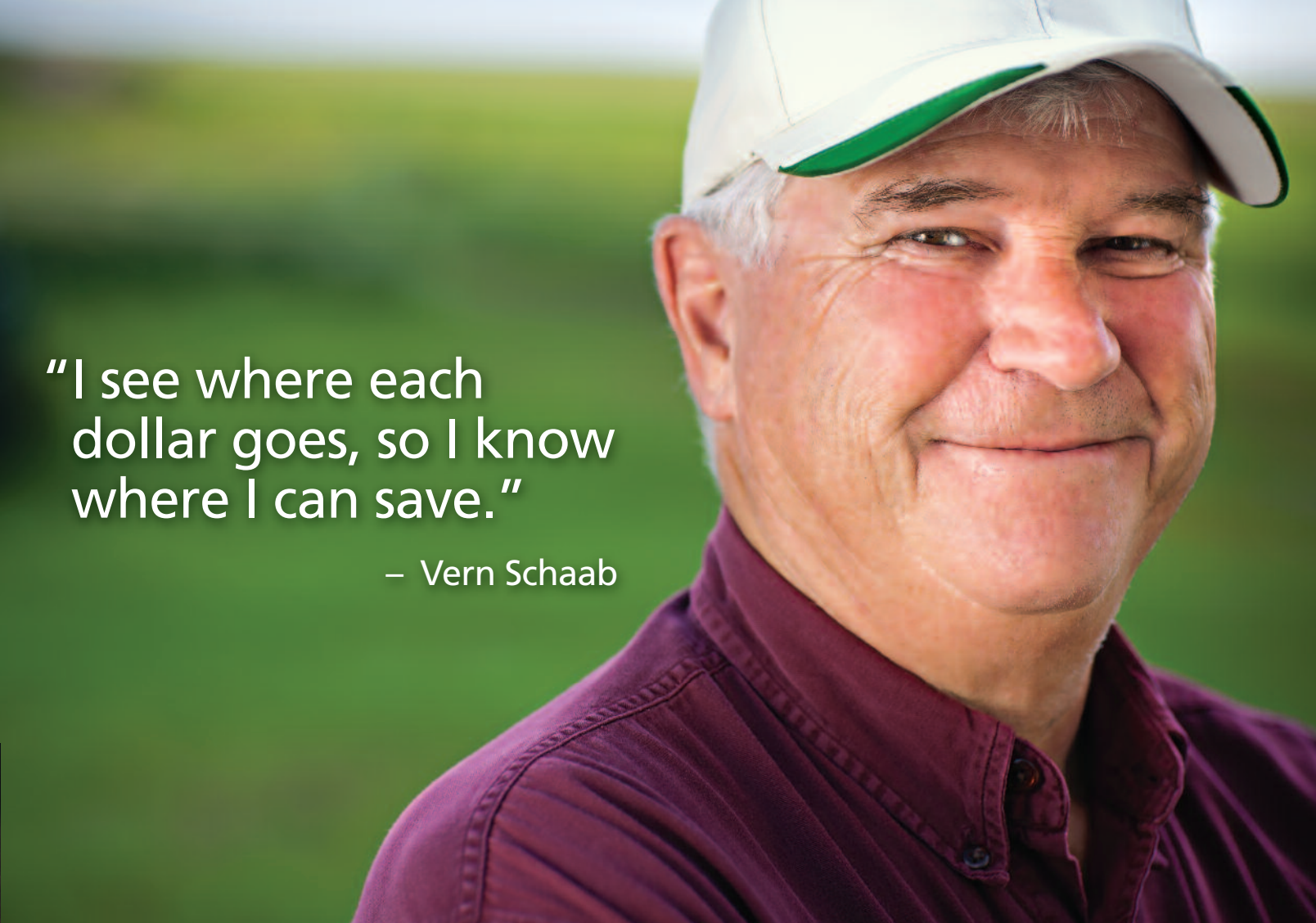
Chris and Crystal embody an outstanding business combination: a successful farm, a successful greenhouse and the ability to manage all their enterprises simultaneously. That, and raising their young family. No wonder they're busy – and happy at the same time.

BY RON FRIESEN / *Ron reported on agriculture for the Manitoba Co-operator, a weekly farm newspaper, for 23 years. Now retired, he's a freelance writer.*



VIDEO: See the full interview with Chris and Crystal. www.fcc.ca/agrisuccess112012





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Gen. Rick Hillier: Deconstructing leadership

One of Canada's most celebrated and influential leaders has advice on how you can strengthen leadership on your farm.

Are leaders born, or are they made?

I think many leaders in history – the great leaders in history – have been gifted leaders. But even with that gift of leadership, like Churchill had, there was still an incredible amount of preparation that allowed him to be successful. I have never found myself, as a leader, that there is a replacement for elbow grease. I believe that the vast majority of people can be leaders and indeed, that was one of our tenets in the Canadian forces.

What is the 95-5 rule?

Well, the 95-5 rule is quite simply a way of ensuring that leaders focus on those who make them successful. You can get sucked down a road with problem children, as we used to describe them: those who drag your organization down, those who are not up to doing the job, those who either have disciplinary or administrative problems. And if you're not careful as a leader, all of a sudden you can wake up some day and realize that you're spending 95 or more per cent of your time focused on the five per cent of the people who drag you down.

What is the trinity of leadership?

The trinity of leadership is about a leader bringing a purpose or a vision – in the military we called it a mission – and then focusing on the people who will make that leader successful or cause him or her to fail. And I really do believe that in life, people look for that greater purpose. They want something that takes them outside the walls, or the barn, in which they work. If you focus on people and get them understanding and making the purpose – the vision, the mission – theirs, then they can really use all their abilities to help you achieve it, even when you're not there. And lastly, actions speak loudly when you are a leader. You really need to line up the purpose with your actions and with your words.

GENERAL RICK HILLIER

General Rick Hillier is a lifelong soldier and Former Chief of Defence Staff for Canada.



VIDEO: See the full interview with General Rick Hillier. www.fcc.ca/agrisuccess112012

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FEATURE

Understand the contracts you sign

On June 15, 1999, a hailstorm wiped out Dan Mazier's Roundup Ready canola. It was the first time Mazier had planted the genetically modified variety, and he was surprised to discover he was still liable for the technical use agreement fee, even though the crop was completely destroyed.

Mazier admits he should have known. After all, the provision was right there in his contract with the company. But since he hadn't actually used the technology by applying the herbicide, the company eventually agreed to waive the fee. (Monsanto has just started adding the fee to the price of the seed rather than charging it separately.)

It's an incident that Mazier, who farms near Justice in southwest Manitoba, now regards as a lesson learned the hard way. "A contract is a contract, and you have to be aware of what you're signing," he says.

Today, contracts are routinely signed for equipment leases, various crops, deferred grain deliveries and other matters. They're complex, detailed agreements carrying the force of law. Understanding their implications is essential, but not always easy.

"Contracts are written in legal language by lawyers," says Anders Bruun, a Winnipeg lawyer who specializes in agriculture. "It's sometimes a bit of a challenge for

non-lawyers to make their way through that complex language."

Bruun advises farmers to ask a lawyer or a company representative to walk them through contracts step-by-step, to help them understand the content and their legal obligations after signing them.

Say, for example, a grain company agrees to take delivery of a producer's crop on a certain date. A producer who fails to deliver by that date can be held in breach of contract and so subject to financial penalties. On the other hand, if a company is unable to accept the delivery for lack of space, it can simply grant itself an extension. The producer has to wait to sell the grain and may experience cash flow problems in the meantime.

"People should be aware – that type of clause is in some contracts," Bruun says. "But you have to read the fine print to get it."

A contract usually contains a standard line near the bottom saying the person who signs it acknowledges having read, understood and agreed to the terms. But Rick White, general manager of the Canadian Canola Growers Association (CCGA), says producers may not have the time to go through every contract with a fine-tooth comb.

"They're always strapped for time, so sometimes contracts are signed with incomplete information and analysis," White says.

Simplifying contracts to make them easier to understand would go a long way toward avoiding difficulties, according to White. CCGA, which represents 43,000 growers in five provinces, would like to see an easy-to-read resource guide for marketing contracts. White says such a manual could help growers better understand their rights, obligations and options.

Bruun suggests one way to demystify legal jargon would be to phrase legal terms in everyday language. For example, "liquidated damages" could be changed to say, "the parties agree on the exact amount of damages if there's a breach of contract."

"A contract is a contract, and you have to be aware of what you're signing."

Some believe contracts between farmers and agri-businesses should be standardized, but others doubt a one-size-fits-all approach would work for agriculture.

"Each company a farmer deals with is unique and has unique business processes," says Trish Jordan of Monsanto Canada. "Standardizing contracts to make them applicable to all agricultural players in the marketplace would be a monumental task."

Jordan says producers today are highly knowledgeable about business management, and are generally accustomed to contracts. "But we would certainly agree that farmers should feel completely comfortable and fully understand what they are signing before entering into a contract with any company," she says.

Most contract disputes between farmers and businesses, if they occur, are settled privately. After all, Bruun says, it's in a company's best interest to have satisfied customers. Voluntarily providing plain language contracts could be a way to avoid potential misunderstandings. In fact, according to Bruun, it could be used as a marketing tool.

"I firmly believe it would be a competitive advantage to companies to have simple, straightforward language in their contracts," he says. "And make that a selling feature."

BY RON FRIESEN

Tips for managing grain contracts

1 Be aware of the consequences of failing to deliver by the date stipulated in the contract. Financial penalties can be steep.

2 Know where you stand if the company says it can't take the grain by the specified date. You may be stuck. Delivery contracts often contain provisions allowing companies to extend delivery dates for several months without penalty.

3 Grain companies are contractually bound to assign grades and calculate dockage according to Canadian Grain Commission standards. You have the right to appeal to the CGC if you're not satisfied.

4 Producers may hesitate to challenge companies because they think it could have repercussions for future business, but disputes can often be settled privately to mutual satisfaction.



FEATURE

Foreign workers benefit Canadian farms

Treating your employees well is important in any job, but sometimes those who are easiest to please are also the easiest to overlook. This is particularly true of hiring temporary foreign workers in Canada, an option that is becoming increasingly popular based on the support of federal programs and the willingness of foreign workers to work on farms.

Temporary foreign workers can be hired under two federal programs, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and the Temporary Foreign Workers Program for Occupations Requiring Lower Levels of Formal Training, under the agricultural stream. There are also provincial programs available.

Almost 25,000 immigrants come to Canada each year for the summer season to work on farms. Sixty per cent end up in Ontario, but more and more are heading to British Columbia and Quebec as well.

Philippe Quinn operates a U-pick and direct-to-consumer farm on Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrôt, just west of Montreal. The farm needs workers to pick everything

from asparagus to strawberries to apples, as well as serve customers at the farm's store. The notion of hiring foreign workers seemed complicated at first. Quinn depended on the support organization in Quebec, the Fondation des entreprises en recrutement de main-d'oeuvre agricole étrangère (F.E.R.M.E. Québec), which helped walk him through the process.

This was the first year he decided to hire temporary workers from outside the country. They brought in two men from Guatemala, both of whom seem to genuinely enjoy their work. While federal regulations allow dormitories to sleep up to six people, at Quinn Farm each has his own bedroom. Quinn occasionally drops by their trailer with baked goods from the farm store at the end of the day, a small token of his appreciation for their hard work.

According to Quinn, the Guatemalans in turn bring agricultural experience and an amazing work ethic to the job. "They are the most grateful, nicest, hardest-working people Quinn Farm has ever seen," Quinn says.

The good feelings go both ways according to a note Quinn received from Jose Gomez, who struggled through a language barrier to express his thoughts:

“I am very grateful that you are very good people and very generous to us ... I hope that Quinn Farm excels, you deserve so much more. This is the most striking farm I have seen. I really like working here at this farm, I hope to come next year and many more years. Thank you very much.”

New federal regulations do allow migrant workers to return for a total of 48 months (equivalent to eight summer seasons), which means eventually the farm will have to recruit and train new staff. Given the benefits that foreign workers provide for Canadian farms, provincial representations are being made to have this limitation changed.

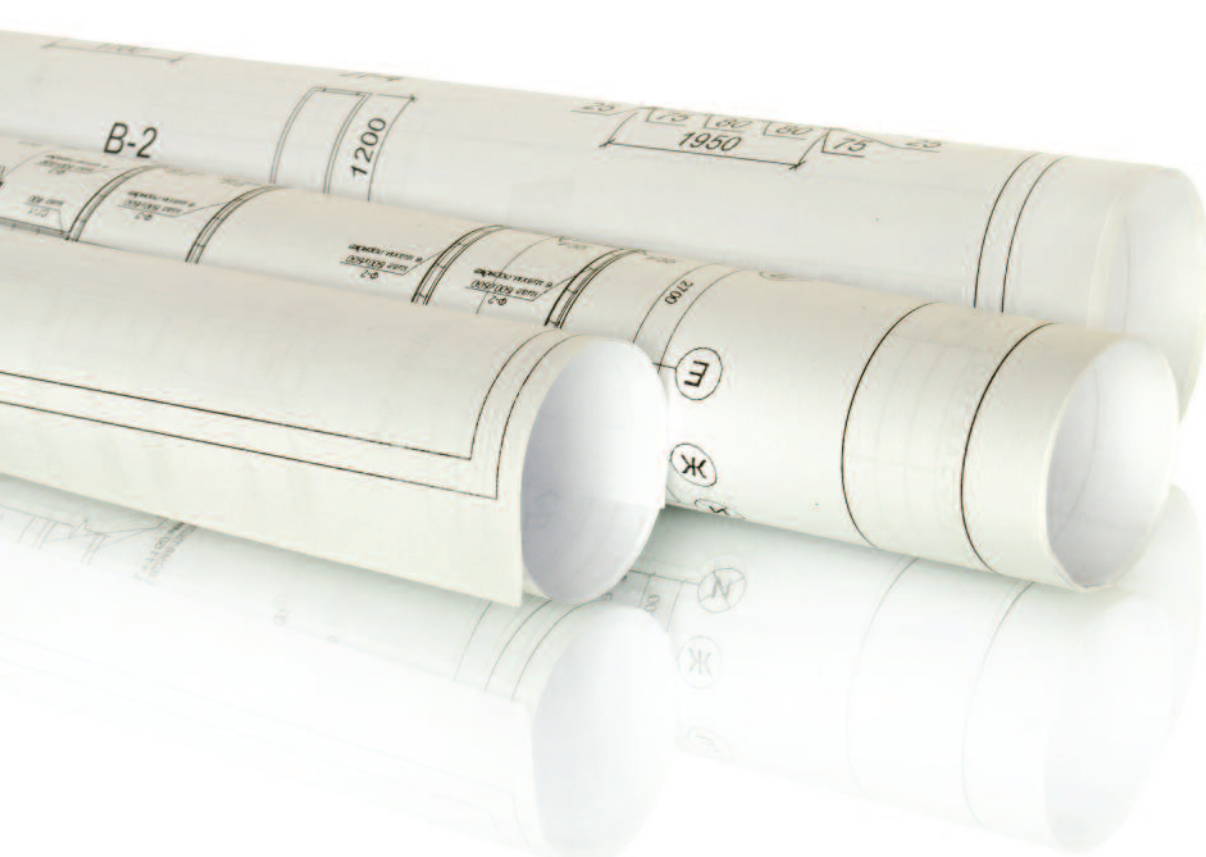
Meanwhile, government made amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations in 2011 to better protect worker rights. These include the need to explain how hiring a temporary foreign worker meets the needs of the employer and proof of “genuineness,” which evaluates the ability of the worker to fulfil the terms and conditions of the agricultural work.

Some provinces are in the process of reviewing regulations governing wages. “As of next year, in Quebec we won’t be able to pay by piecework,” Philippe Quinn says. Under the new Quebec regulations, pickers will be paid by the hour rather than the amount picked.

Regardless of the regulations, based on the experience at Quinn Farm it’s not difficult to keep temporary foreign workers happy and willing to come back. Decent working conditions that any Canadian would expect, and a token of appreciation here and there, is all it takes for the arrangement to pay off for both farmer and farm worker alike.

BY HUGH MAYNARD AND CHRISTINA FRANC / *Hugh is a specialist in agricultural communications based in Ormstown, Que. A graduate in farm management from Macdonald College (McGill University), Hugh is a seasoned journalist and broadcaster. Christina is a communications co-ordinator for Qu’anglo Communications and Consulting and a graduate of the Carleton University journalism program.*





FEATURE

Invest thought in farmyard renos

Planning and changing the farmyard is about taking the long-term view of your operation.


Improving efficiency – finding ways to do a job better – amid a farmyard of stationary buildings can be challenging. Most farmyards don't have much planning behind them: the location of buildings, flow between the structures and the house, and even building use have evolved over the years. You may find the trek to the barn a bit far, or wish the grain truck had more room to manoeuvre. But you tolerate the annoyance.

That is, until you start another renovation or construction project, says Krista Hulshof of VELD Architect in Cambridge, Ont. Hulshof says that during the building of a new barn or bin, updating electrical services or starting other major construction projects, farmers often take the opportunity to rethink the yard's layout.

"Yard renovation occurs because of something else," she says. "It becomes part of a larger project."

And once project plans involve a professional engineer, architect or designer, there's opportunity for improved efficiency. Planning and changing the farmyard is about taking a big-picture look at your farm, considering long-term plans and possibilities and fitting the puzzle pieces together.

"Overall workability of the farmyard is key, and often overlooked. It's about not having to go a mile across your yard when you just want to run out to the barn and check something," Hulshof says. "I help you make sure you lay these things out so they're not in the way of future building plans."

An aerial photograph of a farm. In the center, there are three large, dark metal silos standing next to a long, white barn with a grey roof. To the right of the silos is another white barn. Further right, there's a red brick house with a white roof. The farm is surrounded by green fields and some trees. A dirt road or driveway runs through the property.

Investing in renovating the farmyard during another construction project can, in the long run, be a money saver.

She reports that one of the most common instigators of farmyard renovations is site servicing changes. If electrical services need upgrading, it creates the natural opportunity to evaluate power line placement: are lines in the way of tall vehicles or too close to buildings? Do they need to be buried?

Construction of a new building can also prompt renovations, Hulshof points out. Farmyard flow can be improved through considering how the new building will be accessed, deciding which pieces of equipment need access and giving overall thought to how the building will be used.

Hulshof also considers the provincial regulations that often need to be met when selecting locations for new buildings. Although minimum distances must separate animal barns, and structures for gas and chemical storage must meet certain standards, layouts can still be efficient and effective.

Weather patterns should influence your farmyard plan as well, Hulshof says.

“You don’t want to create pools of water and then have to look at how to divert it later, once it hits your yard,” she says. “Sun, wind, rain, topography: all need to be thought about to ensure it does not burden your operation, as well as find where it can benefit you.”

Investing in renovating the farmyard during another construction project can, in the long run, be a money saver. The farm will run more smoothly if future uses have been considered. As well, safety can be enhanced.

“Planning now costs you a small percentage of the total project cost, but all your needs are thought about for now and the future – saving you time, money, and renovation headaches over the long run. Preplanning is always a good investment.”

BY ALLISON FINNAMORE / *Allison specializes in cultivating words. Based in New Brunswick, she is an agriculture and business communicator with nearly two decades of experience. She contributes to publications nationwide and works to help industry promote farming and rural living.*



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Emerging opportunity from high-value cellulose

Partners, researchers and investors are working with Blue Goose Biorefineries on making micro- and nano-crystalline cellulose from straw. This could be a game changer for farmers.

A few years ago, when I first talked with a representative from Blue Goose Biorefineries, I was skeptical. At the time, lots of start-up companies had their sights set on the biofuel industry.

Fast forward to July 18 of this year. At a Saskatoon news conference, the federal government announced a \$500,000 investment to increase the production capabilities of Blue Goose Biorefineries. The plan is no longer to turn plant residue into biofuel: instead, cellulose is being purified from straw and converted to microcrystalline and nano-crystalline cellulose.

Microcrystalline cellulose is used extensively in pharmaceutical and food applications. Demand is high and growing, including within the energy sector for oil well maintenance and fracturing techniques. Nano-crystalline cellulose is a new product still being researched, but value and future demand are projected to be very high.

Current production processes aren't environmentally friendly for either type of cellulose, but Blue Goose says it has a process that is inexpensive and has low environmental impact. The initial feedstock will be residue from crops like flax and hemp, and can be expanded to include cereal straw and wood.

There are thousands of potential product applications for nano-crystalline cellulose, everything from pharmaceuticals to foods to car parts to touch screens. It is described as "the new bioplastic." Products from the high-value cellulose can be stronger than plastic and still be biodegradable.

It would be easy to dismiss this as science fiction if Advanced Foods and Materials Canada (AFM) weren't

partnering with Blue Goose and assisting with the scale-up work. AFM is a national non-profit organization providing research, development and commercialization services for innovations in biomaterials, food and health.

AFM is contracting process scale-up research services with world-renowned POS Pilot Plant in Saskatoon, Sask., as well as the Bioprocessing Pilot Plant at the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at the University of Saskatchewan. Money is being invested from the federal government's Agriculture Innovation Program, and noted scientists such as the University of Saskatchewan's Bernard Laarveld are involved.

The patented process is closely guarded, but it must be credible or these agencies and people wouldn't be involved.

If the process can be successfully brought to commercial scale, it could mean production at a dramatically lower cost, resulting in an exponential expansion in product applications. There could be significant new opportunities for producers to sell crop biomass, creating a new revenue stream from raw products that are sometimes burned for disposal.

How the opportunities will unfold in the years ahead is impossible to predict. Many promising technologies fail to capture the success initially envisioned. But this is a development worth noting. This could indeed be a game changer all the way through to the farm gate.

BY KEVIN HURSH / *Kevin is a consulting agrologist and journalist based in Saskatoon, Sask. He also operates a grain farm near Cabri, Sask., growing a wide array of crops.*



The global economy is on our doorstep. Here are some impacts to consider in managing your operation.



World markets effect local change

In early 2012, there was a shortage of Canadian potatoes on the market due to a poor harvest the previous year. But consumers didn't miss a bag of chips: the United States had plenty of potatoes in stock, particularly the state of Idaho. It produces more potatoes than all the Canadian provinces combined.

It's a reminder not to take anything for granted with the global economy living on our doorstep. Imports can usually compensate for any regional shortages.

It works both ways. Canada may not out-produce the U.S. or the European Union in many commodities, but there are plenty of products – canola, pork and durum wheat to name a few – where we are market leaders due to specialty and/or quality factors. All it takes is a regional drought combined with a seasonal surge in demand, and markets can change direction in the space of a few weeks.

How does one plan for these macro events or forces? First, be aware of the landscape around you. Even if it's a specialty crop like strawberries, surplus production somewhere else can cut prices and leave local produce unsold. Consider the likelihood that something like this will affect your farm, and seek the information you'll need to manage such an eventuality.

Next, make sure you have a plan B. Your scenarios may be speculative and never used, but at least you'll have made some preparations. A spreadsheet is a great tool for making comparisons, and extension websites, such as Farm Management Canada (www.farmcentre.com), are chock full of guides and tools for these types of planning exercises.

Finally, pencil it all out. OK, we don't use pencils much any more, but the point is that all this thinking and planning should be down on paper so you have



a benchmark to refer back to (memory alone can be a poor management tool). Make sure it's accessible to others, such as your spouse or farm manager.

All it takes is a regional drought combined with a seasonal surge in demand, and markets can change direction in the space of a few weeks.

Just because local acreage of a crop is down or more cattle are going through the regional auction doesn't mean that prices will necessarily change in lock-step. External forces will always exert some influence on local markets, so should always be part of your plans.

BY HUGH MAYNARD



SAFETY ON THE FARM

Make safety resolutions

The upcoming holidays are a great time for producers to sit back and reflect on the year that was, and plan for the year ahead.

Crops, harvests, machinery and manpower are the issues that immediately come to mind. But thinking about the physical close calls and costly mechanical breakdowns that occurred on the farm in 2012 – like that jerry-rigged tow rope that snapped, or the combine that broke when the know-it-all cousin plugged the feeder house – make safety another key factor for producers to consider.

“When it comes to safety, the easiest way to go forward is to look back at the incidents that have occurred over the past year,” says Canadian farm health and safety expert Glen Blahey.

“Identifying the factors that led to events that could have resulted in injury or mechanical breakdowns in 2012 is the foundation for being able to better manage preventable injuries in 2013 and beyond.”

According to Blahey, who works for the Winnipeg-based Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) – a national non-profit group that works to reduce injuries and enhance safe practices in agriculture – the vast majority of farmers are aware of the need to protect family members and employees and avoid financial loss due to incidents.

He points to a recent Farm Credit Canada survey finding that 85 per cent of Canadian producers understand the importance of maintaining farm safety.

Only one in ten producers, however, said they had a written farm safety plan.

A key element of such a plan is the development of written standard operating procedures (SOPs) that clearly explain what to do in safety-challenging situations. (You can find a safety plan template at www.casa-acsa.ca.)

“Without clear working procedures, or with procedures that are poorly communicated to family members and farm workers, farmers tend to take a ‘Let’s get it done’ attitude. That’s risky,” says Blahey.

He lauds the efforts some producers make. One potato farmer he knows instructs delivery drivers to refer to the SOPs in every truck for detailed explanations of what to do in the event of mechanical breakdown or other foreseeable problems.

Unfortunately, Blahey says, many farmers don’t give enough priority to safety.

“The reality is that a clearly thought-out, rational procedure for what to do when equipment gets stuck or stops working is a sound business practice, like crop planning and other risk management initiatives aimed at maximizing farm profitability.”

Here’s to a happy, healthy and safe 2013.

BY MARK CARDWELL / *Mark is a writer and freelance journalist who lives in the Quebec City region. He is a regular correspondent for a dozen newspapers, magazines, trade and specialty publications in Canada, the United States and Europe.*

Farmland values keep moving up

The average value of Canadian farmland continues to rise, according to the fall 2012 FCC Farmland Values Report.

During the first half of 2012, the average value of Canadian farmland increased 8.6%. This followed increases of 6.9 and 7.4% in the previous two semi-annual reporting periods. Canadian farmland values have risen steadily during the last decade. The current average national increase is the highest since FCC began reporting on farmland values in 1984. The last time the average value decreased was by 0.6% in 2000.

Farmland values remained stable or increased in all provinces except British Columbia, which saw a 0.3% decrease. Ontario experienced the highest average increase at 16.3%, followed by Manitoba at 10.3% and Saskatchewan at 9.1%.

Quebec and Alberta experienced 6.7% and 5.7% average increases respectively, followed by Prince Edward Island at 3.1% and Nova Scotia at 2.8%.

Farmland values were unchanged in New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador.

“High-quality farmland suitable for specialty crops continued to be in strong demand,” says Michael Hoffort, FCC Senior Vice-President of Portfolio and Credit Risk. “Consolidation of farms in some provinces is an ongoing trend as producers seek to increase their land base and take advantage of efficiencies.”

Recent increases in farmland values have been mostly driven by two factors: continued high crop receipts and low interest rates. Some areas of the country are witnessing a market where multiple bids are being placed on the same property, which suggests this is certainly a seller’s market.


The Farmland Values Report is published each spring and fall and provides valuable information about changes and trends in land values across Canada. It’s an important decision-making tool for owners, renters, buyers and sellers of agriculture land. In addition to current data for each province, the Report shows trends over time and provides a narrative that details specific drivers of land values by province. FCC has produced this one-of-a-kind report since 1984.

To see the FCC Farmland Values Report video, visit www.fcc.ca/farmlandvaluesvideo.

Read the complete Farmland Values Report at www.farmlandvalues.ca.

Fall 2012

Canada	B.C.	Alta.	Sask.	Man.	Ont.	Que.	N.B.	N.S.	P.E.I.	N.L.
8.6%	-0.3%	5.7%	9.1%	10.3%	16.3%	6.7%	0.0%	2.8%	3.1%	0.0%



"Every day I get to walk outside
and see what we're building."

We can see our future

when we step out our front door."

– Jason Rider, Ontario

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