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With pride in agriculture and a positive yet realistic outlook, AgriSuccess is dedicated to helping Canadian producers advance their management practices. Each edition aspires to present content that is:

- engaging
- motivational
- innovative
- actionable

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A mental health New Year's resolution

A stigma still exists around mental health issues.

A long-time farming friend told me recently that he was suffering from anxiety issues, particularly when trying to make routine farming decisions. This caught me by surprise and I didn't know quite what to say. In retrospect, I should have been a lot more supportive.

When someone tells you they have back problems, arthritis in their knee or migraine headaches, sympathy and understanding come easily. Why, then, is a mental health issue any different?

Very few of us have perfect physical health. We have imperfect eyesight, teeth that need to be fixed or some nagging problem from an old injury. Some are blessed with much better health than others, but physical health typically deteriorates with age.

In truth, very few of us have perfect mental health either. Most of the time, it isn't serious. Maybe it's periods of mild depression, trouble coping with stressful situations or trouble sleeping at night.

Sometimes it is serious and professional help is needed, just like when a physical health problem becomes too much to manage alone.

Farming can be a stressful business. Weather, markets, finances, family.

Just as there are reasons why farmers are more likely to suffer hearing loss, there are reasons why mental health issues can emerge.

There's no more reason to be ashamed of a mental health issue than a physical health issue and the same understanding and support should be afforded to both.

I'm making that a New Year's resolution.

We always appreciate your feedback and story ideas. Email kevin@hursh.ca or catch me on Twitter @kevinhursh1. ■

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Should you choose fixed or variable rates?

BY LORNE McCLINTON

Interest rates in Canada are on the rise for the first time in seven years. The Bank of Canada increased its key interest rate by 25 basis points in July, followed by another 25 basis points in September, doubling the rate to 1.0 per cent. The upward trajectory has producers wondering whether it's time to lock in a fixed rate on at least some of their loans.

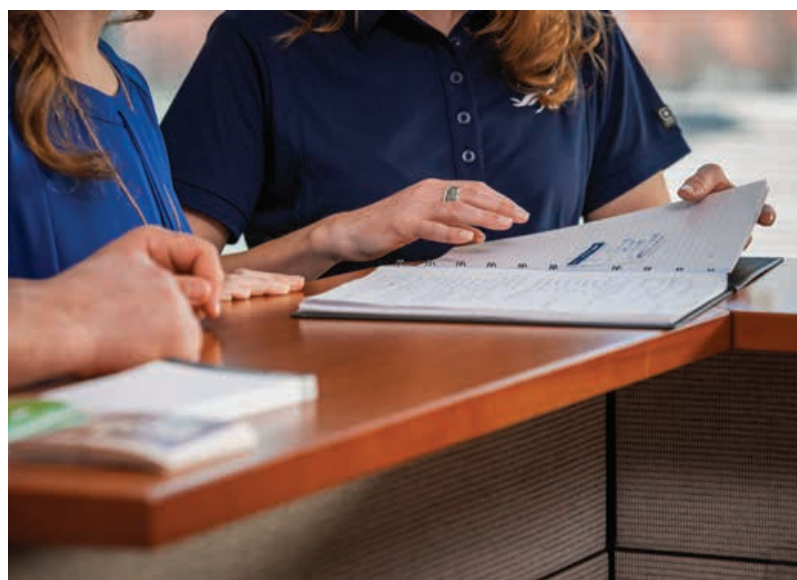
"We are asked all the time whether a producer would be better off going with a fixed or variable rate loan," says J.P. Gervais, vice-president and chief agricultural economist with Farm Credit Canada. "Floating interest rates have worked for farmers for many, many years, because the long-term charts show that interest rates have been declining for 30 years. But just because the rates have been trending down, there's no guarantee they will remain this low forever."

Don't panic

Even if the Bank of Canada continues with some small rate increases, producers shouldn't view it as something to be alarmed over, Gervais says. The increase to 1.0 per cent only brought rates back to where they were in 2015 before being adjusted downwards to help the economy adjust to the slowdown in the oil and energy sector.

Ask yourself how an interest rate increase would change your margins next year, Gervais suggests. Is your working capital optimal should you face tighter margins? How would it change your long-term profitability? Use this increase as an excuse to look at where you stand in your balance sheets.

Whether you switch to a fixed-rate loan or let it float ultimately comes down to your tolerance for risk. If you're comfortable with the level you have, there isn't any reason to fix anything. However, if you're highly leveraged, you might come to a different conclusion.



What's your comfort level?

"Nobody knows where interest rates are going to be in a couple of years," Gervais says. "Some people will decide they don't want to worry about interest rates on top of production risk, price risk and the other worries they face, and will lock in their rates for five years. Others will reduce their risk by taking a fixed rate on their next loan. It all comes down to what producers are comfortable with."

Some small increases aren't a sign the long-term trend towards low interest rates is reversing, Gervais says. However, it does give producers a good reason to sit down with an accountant or financial advisor and discuss how a one or two per cent increase in borrowing costs would impact their operation. ■



NOTHING SHEEPISH ABOUT ADVOCACY ON THIS FARM

BY OWEN ROBERTS

From the time they graduated (two years apart) from the University of Guelph in the 1990s, through to their current leadership roles in Ontario agriculture, Mark and Sandi Brock have become widely known for their honest and public portrayal of modern farming.

And they're challenging other producers to join them, to make sure urban Canada is getting the right messages.

"Agriculture needs to align itself with influencers and stop talking to itself," Mark says. "We need to be giving unified messages that people are less apt to forget."

The Brocks run Shepherd Creek Farms, a grain and livestock operation near Staffa, Ont. The farm consists of 1,600 acres of corn, soybeans and winter wheat, plus 500 breeding commercial ewes for the production of market lambs. The crop side is Mark's; Sandi looks after the livestock.

They married after university and started farming as part of the broader Brock family, with Mark's dad and brother, in poultry and seed sales. Sandi worked with the family business for 13 years in a management capacity.

But after a few years, they decided they wanted to farm alone. It's not that there was friction ("We still all get together for family dinners," says Mark) but rather, because his and Sandi's independent spirits were leading them in a different direction.

For example, Sandi was raised on a dairy farm near Paris, Ont. Livestock is in her blood, and she loved spending time in the barn. She also figured she had something to say to consumers, through social media, about farming.

For his part, Mark was likewise moving in a new direction, with an eye toward farm politics. He was





elected to the Grain Farmers of Ontario board of directors in 2010, and envisioned himself in a role helping agriculture be better perceived by consumers and decision-makers.

Another consideration in their decision to farm separate from Mark's family was their desire to build a legacy for their children Jack, 16, and Jess, 15.

"We wanted to create something that was ours, and our kids'," Mark says. "Sandi and I never mix our dreams with the kids' dreams, but we wanted to build this farm together, so they would have something to farm if they chose to."

Overall, they wanted to chart a new course for themselves. So in 2012 they branched out, and Shepherd Creek Farms was born.

Management skills upgrade

To help the farm succeed, they took their management skills to a new level. That began by enrolling in the CTEAM (Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management) program, where they learned about the importance of building a strategic vision for their operation.

Key to the process was writing five-year objectives, understanding the barriers and challenges they faced and how to build on their successes. Ultimately, they focused on three areas: relationship building,

working on areas they struggle in, and personal drive. They revisit their plan periodically so they don't get "caught in the weeds," Mark says.

"It's easy to end up doing mundane day-to-day work. But farm businesses need to go back and regularly look at their strategic plan and make sure they're headed in the right direction," he says.

Another thing they learned was the importance of communication – not only speaking, but listening. "Knowing where people are coming from is vital for understanding them," Sandi says.

While strides are being made to help urban Canada better understand agriculture, consumers continue to approach farming from a position of caution, rather than trust. "As farmers, we're defending ourselves a lot, and we're under pressure," Mark says. "There's a gap in understanding between us and decision-makers, and environmental non-governmental organizations are filling it in."

Advocates for agriculture

That's where the Brocks say they and other farmers need to step it up. They believe farmers have a role in advocacy, by being conduits of solid information to those making decisions that affect farming – consumers and bureaucrats among them.

"Advocacy can be like herding cats," Mark says. "It requires focus so messages are not scattered. Otherwise, we're just telling nice stories that aren't moving the industry forward."

Social media increases the opportunities to tell those stories in a different and open way. For example, Sandi has developed a niche on YouTube for the approachable, behind-the-scenes posts about her sheep operation, called Sheepishly Me.

Content-wise, her entertaining and sometimes harried approach goes beyond what you might expect from a video blog about sheep production. Like in a post from August when she and daughter Jess sit in front of a make-up mirror, challenging each other good-naturedly on their respective knowledge of cosmetics versus sheep.

The Brocks believe farmers can help people understand what's going on in barns and fields across Canada – and even in farmers' homes, which are a lot like everyone else's. And they plan to make the most of the opportunities they've been given to do so. ■

Follow Owen: @TheUrbanCowboy

Follow Sandi: @SandiBrock

Watch Sandi: @SheepishlyMe

DOT changes how we view tractors

BY KEVIN HURSH



The autonomous implement platform known as DOT is certainly an eye-catching and interesting development in the farm equipment world, but is it disruptive technology? Is it a game changer?

“Yes,” says Mike Raine, without hesitation. As managing editor of the Western Producer newspaper and long-time agriculture reporter and farmer, Raine attends farm equipment shows around the world.

“You can really see the utility of the system,” Raine says.

Introduced at last summer’s Ag in Motion outdoor farm show in Saskatchewan, DOT is receiving worldwide attention.

“DOT moves past big and gets past extraordinarily wide.”

Simply put, DOT is a U-shaped chassis, an autonomous 163 horsepower diesel power source that quickly connects to any compatible implement whether a seeder, sprayer, roller or grain cart.

Autonomous tractors have been in development for years and are widely believed to be the future of agriculture. DOT adopts that future, but embraces a radically different approach.

With DOT, the implement within the U-shaped cradle provides the weight. No need for a heavy tractor. And no need for an air-conditioned cab with all the creature comforts.

A DOT platform could be used throughout the year with various implements. The wheels are driven hydrostatically and turn sideways to allow for narrow-width road transport.

The seeder initially built for DOT is 30 feet wide while the sprayer is 60 feet.

“DOT moves past big and gets past extraordinarily wide,” Raine notes.

“You can run more units and run them longer.” Delivering seed and fertilizer accurately across an 80 or 100-foot drill is a big challenge, and you need to haul

a large cart filled with seed and fertilizer across the landscape.

Raine also notes that many agricultural areas have too many field obstructions to accommodate extremely large equipment.

One of the main drivers behind ever-larger equipment has been the shortage of farm labour. When you don’t need a person sitting on each implement, there are actually efficiencies to be gained with more moderately-sized units.

DOT is the brainchild of Norbert Beaujot, the founder of SeedMaster, an air drill manufacturing company based near Regina. SeedMaster has built the first DOT-compatible implements. Will other companies see this as the way of the future and also start developing implements for DOT? That would be a signal that DOT is truly a game changer.

“I’ve talked with short-line manufacturers interested in making DOT-compatible implements,” says Raine, “and he’s got the attention of some big manufacturers as well.” ■

Follow Kevin: @kevinhursh1

 **VIDEO:** Learn more about DOT and see live equipment demos at SeeDotRun.com.



Real-world lessons from farm-built brands

BY KIERAN BRETT

In 1974, Allen and Heather McWilliam left the hustle and bustle of Victoria, B.C., and bought a farm up-island near Courtenay. For the young couple, this was more than the beginning of a career in agriculture. It was the start of a brand journey for their business, Tannadice Farms.

As Allen McWilliam explains, it didn't take long for the couple to see they'd created something bigger than themselves.

"We noticed the farm name was more recognizable than our family name," McWilliam notes. "Even if people didn't know us, when we'd talk about Tannadice Farms, their eyes lit up and they knew a lot about it."

The name Tannadice Farms was chosen to honor the McWilliams' shared Scottish heritage and the roots of the Angus breed they raised. Today, Tannadice Farms' beef, pork and poultry products are found in restaurants throughout Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

The brand is strongly showcased on their professionally built website and through their active Facebook presence. It's on these media that the McWilliams connect with consumers seeking information about Tannadice products. As powerful as online media can be, Allen McWilliam believes there's also a role for activities like farmers markets and public speaking in building a farm-based brand.

"Advertising will get you some response," he says, "but getting in front of a group to have a conversation is so much better."

How a brand can add value, reduce risk

For a farm with a proven production business, setting up a consumer-facing brand may seem risky. In 2000, as Jason Persall looked at options for his fourth-generation family farm, he felt the opposite.



“There’s risk all around us,” says Persall, whose family farms near Waterford, Ont. “Some we can control and some we can’t. I wanted to take back control of some of the risks we had with our farm operation, so we looked at value-added.”

Today, Persall Fine Foods Company’s state-of-the-art cold-processing facility creates extra virgin safflower, canola and soybean oils. These products are sold under the company’s Pristine Gourmet brand.

To Persall, this value-added business has been a great way of managing commodity price risk and growing profits without buying more land and equipment.

When Pristine Gourmet failed to gain traction in the retail grocery market Persall initially targeted, he was discouraged but resolute. A chance meeting with a chef was the spark that

led him to connect with restaurants and processors looking for high-quality products. That did the trick.

Pristine Gourmet represents what Persall refers to as “farm estate branding.” Their brand evokes the family’s farm heritage, the passionate makers behind the product and the distinctive taste created by the unique soil around Waterford.

“For us, the path to success was through the back door rather than direct to consumers,” Persall notes. “We never looked back once we built our brand with that focus. If you align with what the bigger companies are looking for, your road to success widens.”

Brand lays foundation for future ventures

Casey and Henrica Van Dyk began farming near Caledonia, N.S., in the mid-1950s. As they expanded the farm, they discovered wild blueberries on their property. In the 1990s, they set up a commercial wild blueberry business, supplying fresh-picked berries to local grocery stores.

The Van Dyks found, however, that selling fresh wild blueberries in a four to six-week harvest window had its limitations. To build a more sustainable business, they decided to make wild blueberry juice that could be sold all year.

In 1998, the Van Dyks hired Randy MacDonald to be their business manager. After a period of consumer research and product development, they launched Van Dyk Wild Blueberry juice, an antioxidant-rich juice made from their blueberries. Today, the juice is sold Canada-wide, with a strong international wholesale component.

For the Van Dyks, hiring professionals to create their name and look was the way to go.

“The process wasn’t cheap, but it was money well spent,” MacDonald says. “Our design firm captured the essence of what we were trying to do. I recommend talking to several companies to make sure there’s a mutual level of comfort and understanding.”

Today, the company goes by the brand name Van Dyk’s By Nature to enable growth into new products such as dried wild blueberries and wild blueberry honey.

Sadly, the future will play out without the company’s founder, as Casey Van Dyk passed away in June 2017 at age 86. Still, the Van Dyk brand and the vision behind it will continue to guide the business.



“Casey’s cornerstone of doing business was to do it right,” MacDonald explains. “He had the idea of a healthy juice, he had the blueberries and he had an entrepreneurial spirit. He felt that if you provided the very best quality you could, consumers would acknowledge that over time.” ■

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Management clubs help farmers learn from each other

BY LILIAN SCHAEER

Sometimes the greatest resources are your fellow farmers. That's what the Ontario-based Agri-food Management Institute (AMI) realized several years ago, launching a management club program to enable group-based, peer-to-peer learning under the guidance of a business advisor.

Today, a group of young apple growers – both young in age and young to apple growing – is setting a strong example of how farmers can continually learn from each other in spite of distance and busy schedules.

The group was started by now-retired Ontario apple specialist Leslie Huffman, who had seen a similar initiative in Pennsylvania, and Ontario Apple Growers (OAG) general manager Kelly Ciceran, whose organization was seeing an influx of new growers enter the industry.

The AMI-supported business advisor helped facilitate the group's initial meetings; after one year, grower Brian Rideout became the group's chair, tasked with keeping it going. Not from an agricultural background, he started farming with his fruit-grower father-in-law on the shores of Lake Erie 18 years ago.

Ian Parker of Wilmot Orchards near Newcastle, Ont., who was also at the group's first meeting, has been in the apple industry for about five years.

"There's a lot of knowledge in this group because a lot of guys are second, third or fourth-generation apple growers. As

a first-generation grower, it's good to know there are other young people I can ask questions of," Parker says.

Although Rideout takes an active role in organizing group activities, the growers receive ongoing support from Ciceran and the OAG, including helping to organize one or two face-to-face meetings annually in conjunction with existing apple industry events.

"For the OAG, this is the next generation of farmers. They will be our leaders, so we want to encourage them and give them the support they need," Ciceran says.

Keeping members connected between those in-person opportunities is a WhatsApp group administered by Ciceran. The ability for instant communication with colleagues province-wide is what members find particularly helpful and has allowed them to continue to build camaraderie as well as mine each other's knowledge.

Group membership is at more than 50, and includes industry partners representing input suppliers as well as government agronomic specialists.

"WhatsApp has been really handy – you can fire a quick question on there and people pipe up within minutes with answers," Parker explains. "And it's not just information, it's also help with contacts or getting products you need on the farm."

According to Ciceran, the AMI-supported advisor was valuable helping the group



"WhatsApp has been really handy – you can fire a quick question on there and people pipe up within minutes with answers."

get started, and both Rideout and Parker agree the electronic and in-person connections are important to the future of Ontario's apple industry.

"We all benefit from helping each other grow the best crop possible," Rideout says.

While AMI support for launching management clubs is limited to Ontario, this concept for management clubs may be applicable to many commodities and sectors across the country. ■

More information on the Agri-Food Management Institute management club program is available under Programs at TakeaNewApproach.ca.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

WHAT'S YOUR BEST **FARM CASH FLOW TIP** FOR GOOD OR NOT-SO-GOOD TIMES?

We asked our Twitter audience for advice:

- 🐦 Live within means. Don't chase unicorns; get a good account manager.
- 🐦 Know your costs, weigh your decisions in-season based on potential return, insurance and risk.
- 🐦 Develop a capital purchases budget and stick with it. Don't confuse "paying cash" with using operating line.
- 🐦 Be proactive, not reactive; foster a strong relationship with lenders; treat cash as the lifeblood of your business!

Source: Twitter; some responses edited for clarity.

WHY SEEKING ADVICE FROM YOUR PEERS **MAKES \$ENSE**

Have you ever considered being part of a peer advisory group for input on problems and opportunities in your business? **Here's why you should:**



Outside eyes can be more objective and see the big picture



Get new perspectives on your ideas through "sounding board" feedback



Build new business connections by sharing contact networks



Benefit from co-ordinated field trials or new technology tests, or shared benchmarking and funding program information



Share in training or continuing education opportunities to reduce costs

Source: 5 Advantages of a Peer Group, by Danny Klinefelter

BRINGING **BIG DATA AND PRECISION AGRICULTURE** TOGETHER

The new era of farming is smart – giving farmers a continuous online connection to their livestock and crops. The result? More information for better food quality and better human and animal health.



Precision feeding systems



Rapid disease diagnostics



Crop quality monitoring

Source: CanadianPoultryMag.com

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CENSUS SPOTLIGHT

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Farm corporations are three times more likely to have a written transition plan in place than sole proprietorships.

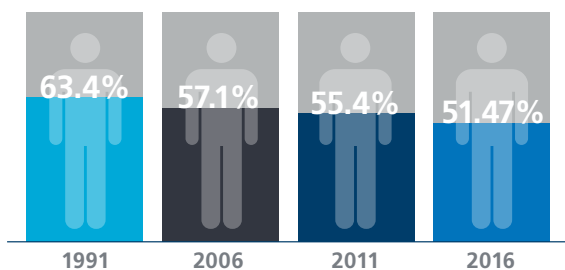


3 out of 4 farms will change hands in the next **10 years**.

Source: Farm Management Canada

CENSUS TRIVIA

Just **over half** of all Canadian farms are sole proprietorships. It continues to be a popular business structure for Canada's farmers.



Source: Statistics Canada



BUGS IN THE FUTURE OF FARMING

Did you know? North America's largest cricket farm is located near Peterborough, Ont. where the insects are raised in so-called "**Cricket Condos**."



A tablespoon of edible cricket powder weighs about **10 grams** and contains **seven grams of protein** and **42 calories**.

Source: Real Dirt on Farming IV (released November 2017)



More than 2 billion people worldwide eat insect proteins (mostly outside North America)

TURNING ONE FARM INTO TWO



The following fictional case study was created by BDO Canada.

Working together, brothers Derek and Darryl had built a successful, diversified operation with 150 dairy cows and about 2,500 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and forages in eastern Ontario. Both in their early 50s, they know it's time to structure the operation so their respective families can continue farming. Each brother has one child involved in the farm.

They decided to have one meeting a month and hope to build a solid plan within a year. At the first meeting, Derek's daughter Kerry shared that she was comfortable at the current scale and not motivated to keep expanding. Her husband Art is supportive of the farm, but has his own career off the farm and enjoys cottage life, travel and other interests. Darryl's son Paul is all about growth and continuing to expand. His wife Jenny works full time on the farm and is fully committed to growing the operation.

ONE FARM OR TWO?

The families had never had this discussion before, and both were surprised by the other perspectives. It was obvious that dividing the farm was the right approach, even though they would be forgoing favourable tax rules for transferring farm assets to the next generation. Transferring assets between siblings or to nephews must be done using fair market values. Their accountant was supportive, saying there would be no benefit to creating a transition plan just to minimize taxes if it took them to a place they didn't want to go.

The decisions didn't get easier. To this point, Kerry and Paul had been equally involved in both the dairy and grain operations, but Kerry was more of a cow person and participated in decisions regarding herd genetics and barn upgrades. Paul saw his future on the grain side. They all agreed to work toward creating a dairy operation for Kerry and a grain operation for Paul.

The equipment was all owned in Derek and Darryl's corporation. Kerry and Paul discussed owning equipment together, but decided a better approach would be for each of them to own their own equipment, providing custom work to each other if needed.

It was obvious that dividing the farm was the right approach, even though they would be forgoing favourable tax rules for transferring farm assets to the next generation.

Again, despite some tax benefits to leaving it all in the existing corporation, everyone agreed that a clean split would be preferable. So, using their insurance policies as a starting point, they compiled a list of all equipment, agreed on the values of each piece and chose who would get each one.

LAND DECISIONS

It took three monthly meetings to get to this point – now it was time to talk about the land. Some of the land was held by the corporation Derek and Darryl created, but some farms were owned by each of the brothers individually. Both the dairy operation and grain storage facilities had been built on the original home farm. It took a lot of back-and-forth, but the eventual decision was that the home farm would be the dairy base. Paul could use the existing grain storage facilities and would build new drying and storage capacity at another farm, accommodating his long-term vision of creating a commercial grain elevator enterprise.

The farms closest to the dairy barn were mostly tiled, more productive and worth more on the open market. This created a sticking point. Paul felt the value of the land and dairy quota skewed the arrangement in Kerry's favour. Kerry argued that she needed enough land base close to the barn to manage manure and grow enough feed. Eventually Derek and Darryl proposed that Kerry would get less land than she had negotiated for, but Paul would be required to make a commitment to keep some of his acres in forage production that Kerry could buy to help meet her feed requirements.

WHO GETS THE FARMHOUSE?

This didn't sit well with Kerry and Art, and they cancelled the next monthly meeting because emotions were running high. When they came back to the table, they were ready to accept the proposed allocation but had a significant request: to live in the

original farmhouse on the dairy farm, even though Derek and Darryl had stated from the outset they wanted to stay in their respective houses for at least the next 10 years. Darryl's wife had just completed a major renovation on the house on the dairy farm and dug in her heels.


Kerry and Art had two small children and they argued it just didn't make sense for them to have to drive or walk any distance to get to the barn. They were adamant on this point, and felt they had made concessions on the land allocation proposal.

Two months went by with no further discussion, but eventually Darryl and his wife compromised. They would stay in the farmhouse for two years while they built a new house on an adjacent farm.

It took well over a year to finalize a plan that created a separate corporation for Derek and Darryl, which they in turn transferred part ownership of to their respective children. A timeline was established that enabled the uncles to slowly transition out of the operation. Some of the tax issues that arose from transferring assets between Derek and Darryl were mitigated by the use of replacement property rules and utilizing their available capital gains exemptions.

Not easy, not fast and no one gets everything they want, but the end goal of creating two viable operations was achieved. ■

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BDO Canada LLP is a national accounting and advisory firm serving producers from offices across Canada.

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A person wearing a teal long-sleeved shirt and black leggings is running on a snowy path. The person's right leg is lifted, showing a teal and black running shoe with a white sole. The background is a snowy forest with bare trees and a bright sun creating a lens flare effect.

Making and keeping New Year's resolutions

Q New Year's resolutions often revolve around health and fitness. For farmers making such resolutions, what advice can you offer?

**COLLEEN DYCK**

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**KIM WAALDERBOS**

Dairy farmer and farm writer
Upper Hainesville, N.B.

The biggest mind shift that helped me when it came to resolutions is setting an incredibly low goal. Sounds counter-intuitive, but most farmers I know are used to having to-do lists longer than what's possible in a day. If a goal seems out of reach before you start, the odds of completing it go way down.

My goal every morning is to put my runners on and walk for 10 minutes. Then I have full permission to quit. The thing is, after five minutes it's easy to start running. After that, 10 minutes doesn't seem so bad, and I might just do 30 or 60. Just wake up thinking, all I have to do is put on my runners – that's it! But inevitably, more ends up happening. Farmers by nature tend to go the extra mile (so to speak).

Creating the habit is the hardest part, but every time you step out the door you're making it easier to do it again.

While modern agriculture has changed considerably over past years, the way to lose weight hasn't: move more and eat better. Sounds easy, right? However, if it were, we wouldn't be making the same resolution year after year.

Farmers, like everyone else, are busy. From family demands to business deadlines, there often isn't much time to focus on oneself, which is a challenge. The good news is you don't need a gym membership – just a pair of walking shoes and the desire to get healthier. Add a walk to your morning or evening routine, or perhaps both. As time progresses, simply expand your walk. Every new step you take helps.

Then, start making healthy food choices. Think first what you're putting in your grocery cart, as that's where good food choices begin. If healthy foods go into your cart, it will limit the temptation at home to make poor food choices. What healthy foods? Think of what Canadian farmers grow. If you stick to that, you're taking steps in the right direction to meeting your resolutions.

Whatever you resolve, be realistic.

Know yourself. What makes you tick?

Make resolutions that consider your strengths and anticipate your weaknesses. If you know what's likely to throw you off course, you can plan ahead to include a friend for accountability, or schedule tasks at a time when you have the most energy, or include reminders of what motivates you, or check off days on the calendar.

Be specific. I've found it helps to identify what, when, where and how often I intend to do something. Like instead of resolving to eat healthier, I might resolve to choose one healthy snack each morning, or forgo the sweet treat at afternoon coffee break.

Be deliberate. Schedule your resolution.

Try to tie it to something you already do. For example, I have two strength exercises I do at chores each morning while waiting for my young calves to drink their milk. Sure, I look like a dork, but I haven't forgotten since I tied it to this daily chore.

Move in baby steps if you must. Ultimately, you're investing in your physical and mental health – and that's always a win. ■

Agricultural trade sweet spots

How does Canada stack up in the world?

Canadian exports of agricultural commodities and manufactured foods were valued at US\$43.8 billion, or 4.1% of total agri-food exports, in 2016. With global demand growing for both raw agricultural commodities and food products, we see Canada as a leader in six commodities poised for the most optimistic growth.

Canada was the world's fifth-largest exporter of agricultural commodities in 2016, with exports valued at US\$24.6 billion. Pulses, soybeans and fresh fish (Figure 1) made up Canada's sweet spots, fitting into three Top 15 categories in 2016: the world's top 15 highest-dollar exports and top 15 fastest-growing exports, and Canada's top 15 highest-dollar exports.

Canadian exports of processed foods, worth US\$19.1 billion in 2016, made us the 11th-largest exporter globally. Food preparations, malt extract and coffee were Canadian export sweet spots in 2016 (Figure 2).

Many Canadian agri-food exports are among the highest-dollar world exports or are growing quickly at the global level. This is good news.

As global household income continues to grow, changing demand for vegetable oils, red meat and plant-based proteins will only strengthen our current ranking among world leaders. ■

FCC AG ECONOMICS

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fcc.ca/AgEconomics

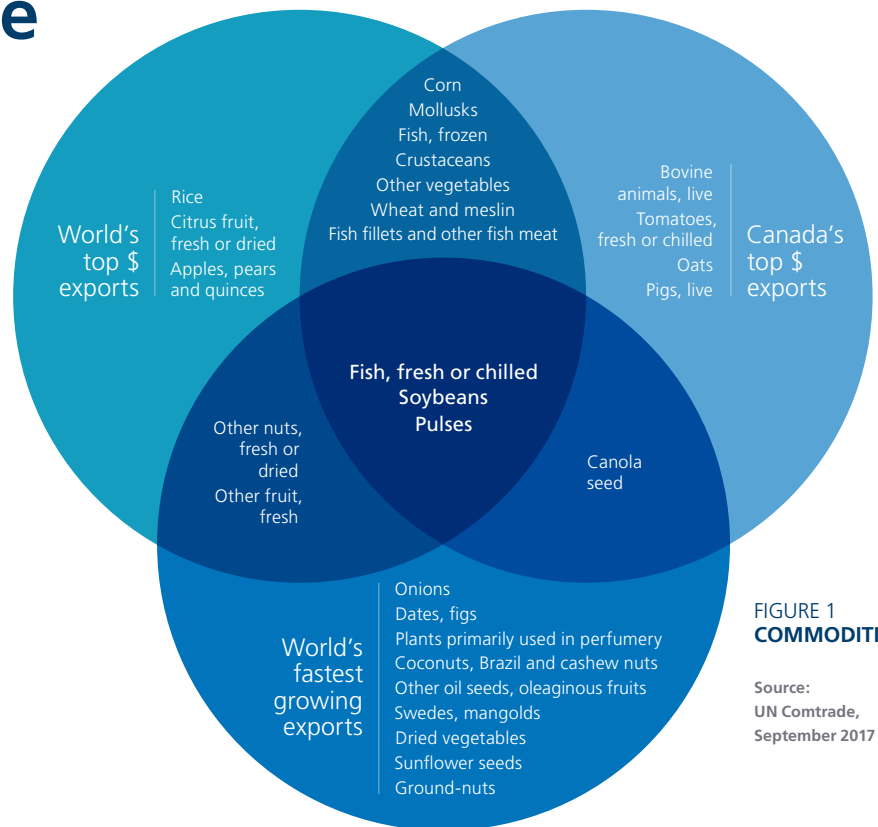


FIGURE 1
COMMODITIES

Source:
UN Comtrade,
September 2017

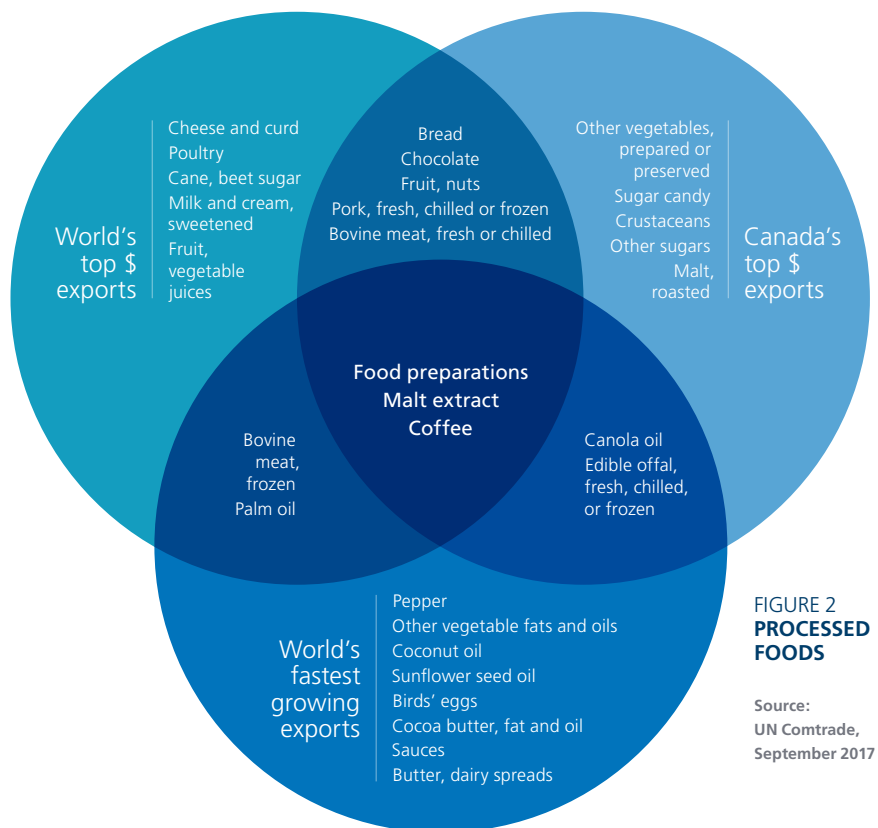


FIGURE 2
PROCESSED FOODS

Source:
UN Comtrade,
September 2017

Wearable tech coming for ag

BY PETER GREDIG

There have been many starts and stops with wearable technology in the mainstream marketplace. Smart watches have come and gone, and now appear to be gaining some traction again. Google Glass™ wearable computing devices peaked on the hype cycle then disappeared, but it and other eyewear devices are now finding a home in technical training and specific-use applications, including agriculture.

Sales of smart personal monitors like Fitbit® exploded over the past two years, but the market has shifted from a fad to the “show me the real benefits” stage.

Devices designed specifically for agriculture have targeted livestock rather than humans. Ear tags and collars that monitor temperature, heartbeat, respiration and location are available for beef and dairy cows. Some devices have cameras as well. The data collected can help farmers manage herd health and detect estrus for more efficient breeding.

There's even a bolus e-pill that stays in a cow's rumen for life, sending data, including rumen activity, to cloud-based software. Changes in any of the vitals are often an indicator of health problems. The algorithms used to monitor the data and predict problems will only get better as more data is collected.

It's even possible to geo-fence specific animals, automatically opening or closing access to pens or fields based on the GPS location of the animal. This is an Internet of Things (IoT) scenario where wearable devices interact with other connected things.

There'll be even more livestock-oriented wearable technology because of the surge



Ear tags and collars that monitor temperature, heartbeat, respiration and location are available for beef and dairy cows.

in devices being developed for the pet industry, a market that could reach US\$2.4 billion by 2022, according to Grand View Research. Livestock-rugged versions will trickle down to meet agricultural needs.

For we humans, there are wearable devices that, while not designed for agriculture, can deliver benefits. Construction companies can invest in a smart safety vest that alerts equipment operators of workers' locations, even when they can't be seen. Ultimately, the vests and machines will interact and the equipment will automatically stop to avoid injury – an obvious fit for farms, where people and heavy equipment often work in close proximity.

Equipment manufacturer Caterpillar is developing Smartband, technology that monitors and manages fatigue levels of operators. The goal is to understand how fatigue can affect health, safety and operational performance. Caterpillar claims the Smartband can assess ongoing sleep patterns and predict how a worker's fatigue will change for up to 18 hours after the start of their day.

Wearable devices are just another example of how connected sensor technology will allow us to manage, monitor and measure almost anything. ■



Apply online
March 1 to 29

FCC AgriSpirit Fund **awards up to \$25,000**

If you've spent time in rural Canada, you may be aware of some of the projects FCC has sponsored through the FCC AgriSpirit Fund. They're the ones run by people like you, people who commit countless volunteer hours to enhancing the lives of everyone in their communities.

Sometimes we're asked, what does a successful project under the FCC AgriSpirit Fund look like? There's no single answer.

For example, the town of Rosemary, Alta., used their funds to improve the lobby, kitchen and washrooms in the Rec-Plex. The Adjala-Tosorontio Fire Department in Ontario purchased equipment for a new fire truck. The healthcare co-op in Lac-Champlain improved and expanded their facility to allow more services. And the Boys and Girls Club of Summerside, P.E.I., is installing a three-floor wheelchair lift.

Do you have a project that will benefit your community? If you can answer "yes" to these questions, consider applying for the FCC AgriSpirit Fund in 2018:

Are you in rural Canada?

The FCC AgriSpirit Fund focuses on rural Canada, so if you represent a charity or non-profit group in a rural community, city or town of fewer than 150,000 people, your project could qualify for up to \$25,000.

Does your project benefit the whole community?

Capital expenditures for almost any building or equipment that will enhance life for you and your neighbours can qualify – health care facilities, hospital or hospice equipment, fire trucks or gear, community halls, recreation centres, theatres, sports fields, playgrounds and more.

Are you ready to apply?

The application period is open from March 1 to 29 only, so visit our website today and get a head start on understanding the application process.

For more information – including more examples of past successful projects – visit FCCAgriSpiritFund.ca. ■

Here's to the **PRODUCER**

"My whole life, I've loved working with cows. People want to know where their milk comes from. I'm proud when I can say it came from my farm, because I know it's the best quality milk possible. My name is Sara Simmons and I own Pure Holsteins."

From all of us at FCC, thanks for making Canadian agriculture so amazing.

#HeresToCdnAg



fcc.ca



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CANADA'S **AGRICULTURE DAY** | February 13, 2018

What will you do to celebrate?

Here are some ideas to get you started:



1

Take a pic of your farm or family, say why you love ag

#AgProud #CdnAgDay



2

Share a pic of your favourite Canadian food

#Foodie #CdnAgDay



3

Host an event at work, school or in your community

#AgProud #CdnAgDay

Visit **AgDay.ca** for more ideas

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