MEMBER PROFILE

Doug Martin

Grain and hog farmer remains sold on winter wheat
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Doug Martin
Sold on winter wheat because it has advantages not always measured in a bank account

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President’s message
KAP at work
General manager’s message
Doug Martin

Grain and hog farmer remains sold on winter wheat

BY RON FRIESEN
n 20 years of growing winter wheat, Doug Martin had never lost a crop until last year.

Mild weather and melting snow in January left Martin’s winter wheat field covered with water, which became sheets of ice when the temperature finally dropped back to normal winter levels.

“I remember climbing on a feed bin in January after the melt and looking out over the winter wheat field,” Doug recalls. “It was like a skating rink. Half of it was covered in sheet ice.”

By then, the crop was dead. The only thing left for Doug to do was file a crop insurance claim.

Doug was fortunate. He was able to settle the claim quickly and reseed the field to spring wheat in enough time to have a good crop that fall.

Still, his experience typifies some of the problems winter wheat has been having in Manitoba lately. But as a veteran winter wheat grower, as well as chair of Winter Cereals Manitoba, Doug remains optimistic about the crop’s future.

“We are survivors,” he says.

Survival may be the name of the game these days for Manitoba growers, who have watched winter wheat expand from a niche crop 30 years ago to a major player, only to see acreage fall precipitously in recent years.

In Manitoba it has plummeted from a peak of 600,000 seeded acres in 2013 to just 140,000 acres in 2017. That year, largely as a result of weather, only half of the winter wheat put in the ground the previous fall ended up being harvested.

Winter wheat has come a long way since the 1980s when much of the crop was concentrated in southwestern Manitoba and varieties were susceptible to leaf rust.

Since then, breeding programs have succeeded in producing varieties with moderate to good rust resistance. New disease management strategies, including crop rotation, seed treatment and fungicide applications help growers deal with other disease pests, such as fusarium head blight.

There are also significant benefits to growing winter wheat. According to the Western Winter Wheat Initiative, advantages include: soil cover during the fall and winter reducing the potential for soil erosion; yields 15 to 40 per cent higher than hard red spring wheat; providing habitat for waterfowl; using spring moisture more efficiently than spring cereals; maturing earlier than spring wheat.

If weather were the only problem, that would be one thing. But advances in new high-yielding spring wheat varieties put winter wheat under competitive pressure.

A new wheat class called Canadian Northern Hard Red already includes U.S. Dark Northern Spring varieties such as Faller, Prosper and Elgin ND. More Canadian Western Red Spring varieties are expected to round out the class this year.

Yields from these varieties are getting close to winter wheat and their medium protein quality makes them competitive, says Cam Dahl, president of Cereals Canada. A recent surge in exports of similar wheat varieties from the Black Sea region adds to the pressure on domestic winter wheat, he says.

“That’s probably the biggest difficulty that winter wheat is facing now.”

But Doug Martin remains sold on winter wheat, especially since it has advantages you can’t always measure in a bank account.

For one thing, it’s a major feed source for the hogs he and his cousin Gerry Martin raise on their 2,500-acre farm near East Selkirk. The 1,200-sow farrow-to-wean operation which provides weanlings to Genesus, a breeding company based in Oakville, Manitoba that sells swine genetics worldwide.

“People who use it for feed like winter wheat because they can use a little bit more soybean meal to balance the rations,” says Doug.

Doug also sees winter wheat as a conservation crop, especially when seeded into canola stubble, providing ground cover and erosion control in the fall.

“If you seed winter wheat into canola stubble, at least you know your soil’s going to stay at home.”

And even if you lose a crop to winterkill, it’s not a total loss. “You maybe might lose a crop but you’re able to reseed quickly and get another crop,” says Doug.

Winter wheat probably wasn’t on the mind of Jim Martin, Doug’s grandfather, when he established the farm in 1917. He also wouldn’t have foreseen that the farm would eventually expand tenfold from 240 acres a century ago.

Perhaps Doug’s dad would have been surprised, too. Wilfred Martin passed away last January at the age of 91 after seeding some 60 crops from the age of 14 when he began farming as the oldest in the family. »
By contrast, Doug was a relative latecomer to farming. After obtaining both his agriculture diploma and degree, he was a sales representative for an agricultural chemical company. He started working the family farm at the age of 28.

Today, Doug and his cousin Gerry grow spring wheat, winter wheat, canola and soybeans — as well as corn for the first time since the 1970s. Doug hopes to work corn into the hogs’ feeding ration.

It may come as a surprise to western Canadians that most wheat grown in the world is winter wheat. Major regions such as Europe, Russia, Ukraine and the U.S. Midwest specialize in winter wheat because of a moderate climate. Even Eastern Canada produces mainly winter wheat. Meanwhile, spring wheat predominates in Western Canada because of the cold winter weather.

But researchers are working to change that. Part of the money Winter Cereals Manitoba collects through a 98¢/tonne checkoff goes toward improving resilience in winter wheat varieties.

Researchers at the University of Saskatchewan use cold chambers replicating winter conditions to select genes for winter hardiness. Data collected from those experiments are used by scientists at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Lethbridge to incorporate those genes into AAFC’s breeding programs.

“Ultimately, that’s our goal — to have more cold hardiness, something that will withstand the winter weather we get here,” Doug says.

Cam Dahl agrees winter wheat has undergone huge improvements in recent years, thanks to research.

“I think on the research side we’ve made tremendous progress on winter wheat, both in terms of disease resistance, as well as quality and yield,” says Dahl. “Is there a significant future for winter wheat in Western Canada? My answer is ‘yes.’”

Doug’s determination as a winter wheat grower exemplifies that optimism. Despite last year’s disaster, he plans to seed his usual 300 to 400 acres of winter wheat this fall, just as he has done for years.

Besides farming, Doug is active as a representative for his industry. He currently serves as a Manitoba Pork Council district adviser for its eastern district, and has also been a member of KAP’s district five ever since he attended a district meeting in 1986 — the year he started farming.

Doug and his wife Laurie have two children: Trish, 23, and Kevin, 20. Trish is in fine arts at the University of Manitoba and Kevin, who just graduated from the U of M’s agriculture diploma course, is going back to get his degree.

The family is starting to think about an intergenerational farm transfer, although it’s still early. So there’s plenty of time to decide the future of winter wheat on the Martin farm near East Selkirk.
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Transportation Modernization Act:
a good example of sober second thought

BY DAN MAZIER, KAP PRESIDENT

BILL C-49, THE TRANSPORTATION Modernization Act, has finally passed — but not without Senate improvements. The Senate Committee on Transport and Communications’ careful review of the bill did at times frustrate many stakeholders and parliamentarians, but it’s thanks to this review and the committee’s amendments that we now have a stronger bill that meets more of farmers’ needs.

In advocating for improvements to this bill, I have come to appreciate the benefits of a more independently minded Senate.

Let me explain.

The Senate website says, “Parliament’s 105 senators shape Canada’s future. Senators scrutinize legislation, suggest improvements and fix mistakes. When the Senate speaks, the House of Commons listens — a bill must pass the Senate before it can become law.”

Therefore, the Senate has the ability to rise above the pressures of elected office and party lines to advocate for the national good as it views it. It did this with Bill C-49.

The bill in the form originally passed by the House of Commons was lacking three key components we had requested.

KAP and other stakeholders therefore suggested the Senate committee make amendments to address these issues: adding soybeans to the grains covered under the maximum revenue entitlement (MRE); improving long-haul interswitching eligibility; expanding investigative powers for the Canadian Transportation Agency when problems arise.

When the Senate held hearings on the bill during this past spring, I personally made a presentation, as did many others in the industry. The Senate realized that these amendments were important to our industry and would strengthen Bill C-49.

Therefore, it passed the bill with our recommended amendments and sent it back to the House of Commons. The House accepted these amendments, but there were other non-related amendments it would not accept and sent the bill back to the Senate.

The Senate had to review the impacts of this and face the potential of delaying the bill even longer. However, it held a steady focus on what needed to be done and C-49 was passed on May 23.

The bill provides a large measure of security for farmers, knowing that shippers now have additional tools to address railway inadequacies.

The passing of this bill has been decades in the making due to the long, long history of poor rail service. Other bills have attempted to correct the rail issues experienced by grain shippers, but did not have enough teeth.

It is estimated that the rail crisis in 2013-14 resulted in $6.5 billion of lost revenue for farmers, and no one yet knows what the tally will be for the 2017-18 backlog. The passing of Bill C-49 will help to avoid this kind of situation going forward by preventing shipping delays that cause serious loss of profits for farmers and major losses to the Canadian economy, as well as a loss of confidence in overseas buyers.

This process showed me that the House of Commons and the Senate have very different purposes. While the House created a C-49 framework, the bill needed to be meaningfully reviewed with a lens that would look at the impact to Canada and to agriculture in this country.

The Senate, I stress, did this. It took its time, but the result is a stronger bill. The purpose of the Senate is to provide sober second thought, and that’s exactly what it did.

It was fulfilling on my part to have conversations with members of the Senate, who are genuinely interested in how rail transportation affects our industry. Without their concern, we would not have more accessible long-haul interswitching, soybeans would not be included in the MRE, and the Canadian Transportation Agency would not have the ability to proactively investigate problems. PV
KAP at work

What KAP is doing on behalf of all Manitoba farmers  BY VAL OMINSKI

LOBBYING FOR BILL C-49 AMENDMENTS
› KAP president Dan Mazier spoke to the Standing Senate Committee on Transportation and Communications regarding Bill C-49, the Transportation Modernization Act. He, along with other stakeholders, pressed for soybeans to be included under the maximum revenue entitlement, more accessible long-haul interswitching, and empowerment of the Canadian Transportation Agency to proactively investigate problems. The Senate championed these recommendations, made amendments, and the bill was passed on May 23. See more details in the president’s message on page 8.

ADDRESSING THE SENATE ON CARBON PRICING BILL
› KAP president Dan Mazier spoke to the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry about the carbon tax for industrial fossil fuels. He stressed that farmers, and especially young farmers, are concerned the carbon tax on companies involved in shipping and fertilizer production — among others — will be passed on to farmers. This, on top of rising input costs, could cut into farming profits considerably. He asked the committee to insist that the Government of Canada implement a program that monitors and reports on the economic impact to farmers.

LOBBYING THE PUB FOR NATURAL GAS EXPANSION
› KAP has submitted a letter to the Public Utilities Board providing recommendations on how it should proceed with a review of the natural gas expansion feasibility test. The PUB will be conducting this review in order to examine whether the current test for the economic feasibility of expanding natural gas lines to new areas is still suitable. The letter is in response to a recent KAP resolution calling for KAP to lobby the PUB to review feasibility test requirements to create more opportunities for rural natural gas expansion.

OPPOSING HYDRO’S 7.9% RATE INCREASE
› The Public Utilities Board recently rejected Manitoba Hydro’s request for a rate increase of 7.9 per cent on electricity, and instead approved a 3.6 per cent increase. KAP was an official intervenor at the PUB hearings to examine Hydro’s request. This provided the opportunity for our legal counsel to present evidence from our experts on how the proposed rate increases would impact agriculture.

PRESSING FOR MORE CARBON TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR FARMERS
› The province previously announced a carbon tax exemption on marked fuel, and KAP lobbied extensively for the addition of exemptions on propane and natural gas for heating greenhouses, barns and grain dryers. In the spring, the government announced these exemptions. KAP thanks the Manitoba government for recognizing that farm commodity prices are set on the world market, meaning that farmers cannot increase selling prices to compensate for additional taxes.

PUTTING MEMBERS’ CONCERNS FORWARD TO MASC
› KAP met with MASC officials in the spring to put forward requests arising from resolutions passed over the year. These include separate coverage for hybrid fall rye, separate hail coverage for pod-shatter-resistant canola, and acquiring more data on wildlife damage in order to look at ways to improve prevention and compensation programs.

KAP young farmers also met with MASC officials, and asked for an increase to the rebate-eligible portion of loans under the Young Farmer Rebate Program. That rebate-eligible portion is currently the first $150,000 of a loan. They also asked for a change from a 10 to five per cent down payment on loans for young farmers, given the increased values of farmland.

RESOLUTIONS ON ENVIRONMENT, GRAIN SHIPPING
› Delegates to Keystone Agricultural Producers’ spring advisory council meeting on April 6 passed 10 resolutions — including two that address plastic waste from grain bags, silage covers and bale covers, as well as seed fertilizer and pesticide containers. Delegates called on KAP to work with Cleanfarms and other interested stakeholders to increase the number of collection sites for these items in Manitoba. They also called for KAP to lobby the province to include plastic bag rollers as a beneficial management practice under the new Ag Action Manitoba program, eligible for 50 per cent in funding. Rollers are required to package plastic bag waste for recycling. Fv
You would be hard-pressed to find a producer who doesn’t agree that safety is important. Yet participation in formal safety programs tends to be on the low side, and many are unfamiliar with the workplace safety and health legislation that applies to their farms.

The Manitoba Farm Safety Program, established in 2017, hopes to change that. It’s overseen by an advisory council of farmers and based on the common-sense premise that a safety program for farmers should be designed by their peers.

Melanie Moran, a vegetable grower who sits on the Farm Safety Council, explains that the program is trying to get away from the kind of one-size-fits-all approaches that treat farming as no different from a construction site, factory, or industrial kitchen.

Farmers, she says, face unique challenges due to the diversity of their daily tasks and work environments.

“Everyone has their workshop, and their machinery,” Moran says. “But you’re also on the highway, you’re working with livestock, you’re working at heights, working alone. A lot of people don’t understand the variety of it.”

Peter Penner, who represents the Manitoba Beef Producers on the council, agrees. He adds that programs that don’t properly take producers’ needs into account can fail to gain traction with those they hope to educate.

But that doesn’t change the fact that the industry still needs safety programming, says James Hofer, a pork producer and fellow member of the council.

“Farms are only getting larger and I think the challenge is, although we might be good at raising animals or raising crops, where we fall short is in training employees, setting up standard operating procedures, and making sure that standards are met in those areas.”

Who is the FSP safety council?
The Farm Safety Council oversees the Manitoba Farm Safety Program, setting its goals, evaluating its effectiveness, and encouraging producers to participate.

While the program does seek to help farmers comply with provincial safety regulations, it’s not a government initiative — quite the opposite.

The program is hosted by KAP and the council is made up of 10 representatives from commodity groups across Manitoba. The eight of the 10 are farmers who fit in meetings and council work between sorting cows, feeding sows, or harvesting vegetables.

All come to the table with an interest in farm safety and decades of practical experience on their own farms.

Melanie Moran is the office manager for Mayfair Farms and part of the farm’s fourth generation. Mayfair grows 1,700

Melanie Moran, a fruit and vegetable grower pictured above with her young daughter, is a member of the Farm Safety Council. “We understand we have a responsibility to keep a lot of people safe.”
acres of fruit, vegetables, and dry beans in Portage la Prairie, and employs anywhere between 70 to 90 seasonal workers each year.

“We’re trying to learn to embrace change rather than resist it,” Moran says. “We understand we have a responsibility to keep a lot of people safe.”

For Mayfair, this includes a thorough orientation for each worker at the start of the season, whether they are a new or returning employee. Training includes operating procedures, emergency planning, handwashing, food safety, and emergency contact information.

“Many of our employees are migrant workers,” adds Moran, “so we’re also trying to address the language barrier by implementing more translated signage and training videos.”

On the other side of the workforce spectrum, Peter Penner often works alone on his cow-calf and backgrounder operation south of Winkler.

“During calving, my son is in university and my wife is at work, so there can be some 18 or 20 hour days, working all day and night,” he says. “It’s about six weeks of that type of intensity. You put in long hours, and sometimes that’s when accidents can happen.”

Penner says one of his priorities over the last few years has been making structural changes on the farm with an eye toward safety. He’s updated a lot of his corraling to implement more alleyways and to use gates that swing both ways.

“They always say cattle are unpredictable, but you can take some of that unpredictability away by having good facilities and not giving them a lot of options when you’re coralling them,” he says.

James Hofer has been working with livestock all his life, beginning with helping on his dad’s goose operation as a child. He moved on to hens, dairy, and turkeys, and has now been managing Starlite Colony’s hog barn since 1996.

The barn, located near Starbuck, has 600 sows farrow-to-finish. There are six employees working with the hogs, and 50 or 60 employees across the entire farm.

Over the last few years Starlite has been refining its safety protocols, ensuring that harnesses are worn for all work at heights, and latex gloves and safety glasses are used when handling chemicals. Dust masks are also required in most work areas.

“What one has to know is what the dust is made up of all over the farm,” he says. “In the barn you’ve got dry skin from the animals, dust from animal feces. You may have mice, or you may have mould in the grain. It can get into your upper respiratory tract and start growing. Years ago farmers would never wear masks, and Farmer’s Lung became an issue.”

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For your SAFETY
FSP goals and activities

The overall goal of the Manitoba Farm Safety Program, Moran, Penner and Hofer agree, is to reduce preventable accidents and injuries on the farm.

As for how to get there, they are committed to building a program by farmers, for farmers.

“We’re trying to promote and have consultations with grassroots farming communities, starting small by encouraging farmers to become champions for farm safety,” says Hofer.

A big part of this, Moran says, is earning trust.

“I’m sure that many producers are worried that if you participate in our program, you’re going to red-flag yourself, but that’s not what it is,” she says. “It’s just farmers trying to help other farmers follow the rules and keep their employees safe.”

The program employs a consultant, Morag Marjerison, who meets with producers to make recommendations about ways they can improve safety practices on their farm. This can include a tour of the farm operation, or can be at another location, depending on comfort level.

Throughout June, Marjerison also held a series of public workshops in different communities, going over the basics of workplace safety and health regulations and how they apply to farms.

Marjerison’s advice is usually well received, Moran says, in part because she comes from a farming background herself. “I can’t say enough good things about Morag,” she says. “She understands the farming lifestyle and she’s very understanding about the realities farmers are facing trying to adapt to safety requirements.”

Marjerison has also been working with a small group of egg farmers to develop a beginner safety manual specific for their corner of the industry.

Complying with everything in the Workplace Safety and Health Act is an enormous undertaking that can overwhelm producers into paralysis. The idea of this project, Hofer explains, is to identify areas to begin with coming into compliance, and then building from there.

“The smaller group that started out working on the project then promoted it to a larger group,” Hofer says. “Board members got their farms into the program and went through the process, others saw them championing it, and the uptake took off.”

Reason to be hopeful

It’s important to talk about the areas for improvement in agricultural safety. But Moran, Penner, and Hofer all stress that there is also progress being made.

More and more people are becoming aware of and taking advantage of the Manitoba Farm Safety Program. And producers are already making strides in shoring up safety practices on their own farms.

“I have seen a lot of cattle producers in the last few years putting new penning in,” Penner offers as one example. “They’re going with steel and getting away from wood. Usually when you’re going with steel you’re also putting gates in, and it’s a lot safer facility.”

Hofer pointed to manure-handling and heavy machinery operation on highways as other areas where improvements have been happening.

Most importantly, Moran adds, the will is there, and always has been.

“Farmers as a whole are good, caring people, and most of them are working with their families and kids in their farmyards,” Moran says. “In the back of their mind they are always thinking about safety, because they are working with people they care about most.”

For more information on the Manitoba Farm Safety Program, visit: https://www.manitobafarmsafety.ca
It seems Keenan Wiebe didn’t consciously choose to become a farmer, but given family roots so deeply entrenched in farming, it may be that it’s in his DNA.

Keenan said his mother Carol loves to tell a story about her youngest son — a memory from around the time he first started walking.

“My grandpa, who became a welder, made an entire line of equipment for a pedal tractor,” said Keenan. “My mom said I would go on the cement pad and spend all day there playing with it. Someone later asked me if I always knew I wanted to be a farmer, or if I just decided to later on, and I would say ‘I don’t know, I never really thought about it.’ My mom just bursts out laughing and says, ‘He didn’t have to think about it! It was just in him already!’”

Keenan Wiebe
Fourth-generation farmer, entrepreneur and forward thinker
BY JILL WINZOSKI

Keenan and his dad Dave.
Keenan Wiebe, 25, is the youngest member of Wiebe Family Farm, a fourth-generation grain and oilseed operation that owns and rents a combination of 4,000 acres near Starbuck, Manitoba. The farm produces wheat, oats, canola and soybeans, and has experimented with other crops like corn, canary seed and flax.

Established in 1936 by Keenan’s great-grandparents, the farm was passed onto his grandfather Cornelius, 86, (also known as Corny or Neil) and his brother John, 84 (known as Junior) — who make regular visits for morning coffee and, of course, to keep an eye on things.

“They walk around and they notice if anything’s changed in the yard,” said Keenan’s dad Dave, who also works on the farm. “‘What’s with that? Why do you have the auger there? What are you hauling? Why is the truck unhooked?’ They notice everything. Or they might look at something and say ‘Bah, we don’t know anything about that anymore,’ and ignore it, since the technology has changed so much.”

It’s hard to imagine a farm being more of a “family farm” than the Wiebe operation at harvest time.

“Grampa still drives the older combine, my mom will bring supper out, and grandma (Hilda) will bring pie in the afternoon and stay til he shuts it down,” said Keenan.

Dave’s cousin Kurt also works on the farm. He and Dave operate a seed cleaning plant during winter months, which they started when they first began farming. Keenan’s older brother Jeff also works on the farm on evenings and weekends — when not working at a brewery in Winnipeg.

“Jeff is passionate about farming too, but says farming is changing and we need to do more than we’ve been doing with the land,” said Keenan. “So he’s interested in added value and looking for different opportunities out there to bring back to the farm.”

In 2014, Keenan embarked upon a business venture of his own — along with two other farmers from Winnipeg Beach/ East Selkirk and Newdale — producing cold-pressed, premium canola oil under the banner CanFarm Foods. The extra-virgin oil is significantly darker than conventional canola oils, which typically require heat or chemicals in the extraction process, Keenan explained.

Similar to regional olive oils or wines, the canola oils from different parts of Manitoba vary in taste depending on each region.

“The cold pressing keeps its colour and flavour a lot more, and is ideal for salads and straight non-cooking use,” explained Keenan. “We were trying to take that European idea of different regional flavours and make it a little more local.”

Pressed in Brandon and stored and bottled in Warren at a commercial kitchen, CanFarm canola oil is available at Winnipeg Co-op stores and local boutique stores around Manitoba.

The enterprising young farmer said he owes a lot of his keen business savvy to his agriculture degree from the University of Manitoba.

“You might be a farm but you still have to make a profit and run it like any other business,” said Wiebe. “It’s not only about how to ride the tractor all day, but you learn how your decisions are going to make your business more profitable and more efficient.”

Keenan’s already learned that adaptability is key to farming, and part of that often means diversifying crops and keeping a close eye on returns on investments.

“With a lot of our other crops — like canola, soybeans and wheat — if one field doesn’t perform the way we want, the other acres kind of make up for it,” Keenan explained. “With corn, if we’re going to start out with it, we aren’t going to go big right away, but just have a field or two. So if they don’t work out, then you have other acres to make up for those lost acres of corn if you screw them up.”

In the case of growing flax and canary seed, Keenan said it quickly became clear those crops had to go, based on financial returns. “We couldn’t get the yields, and couldn’t keep the fields as clean, so you’re getting a lot less return on your acres than with other crops,” he explained. “You gotta keep making money, so you’ve got to grow the crops that can do that.”

In addition to having a good business sense, the young farmer also sees potential gains amidst possible changes in climate and other varying circumstances.

“It’s just a matter of how we change with it, how we adapt,”
“We might be losing certain parts of an operation but we also might be gaining in other areas. For example, investments are being made in developing new corn varieties for our region, so that might be a new opportunity if the climate is changing, to get into newer crops and things like that.”

Staying calm may also be part of the Wiebe DNA, since Keenan said his whole family are a pretty serene bunch in general.

“I think overall farming can be pretty stressful, but say if it hails, you get your insurance and you go from there,” Keenan said. “I know there are some people if they don’t have insurance they don’t sleep when they know hail is coming — but there are ways around that.

“I mean you can’t control the weather, so there’s not really a lot of point in stressing about it. You plant the grain and after that there’s not much you can do except take what you’re given, and I think we’re pretty good at that and just going with the flow.”

Understanding the importance of working together, the young farmer also keeps a close watch on what his neighbours are up to, networking by way of social media and by farming support groups.

In terms of social media, Keenan said he doesn’t do much in the way of posting and tweeting, but is eager to scope out ideas other farmers might be trying.

“I just kind of creep on Twitter,” he laughed. “If they’re doing ideas that can work, why not?”

One of the results of his networking efforts is the installation of solar panels on the farm, which will happen sometime this summer — a move that Keenan said is part of adapting to the changes that may lie ahead.

“A bunch of our neighbours have done solar through a hydro rebate program, depending on their annual usage. Basically, you can build a system for that amount. Anything we produce above what we use will go back onto the grid, so we neutralize our power consumption,” Keenan explained.

Keenan is not only a KAP District 3 board member, but is also a member of KAP’s Young Farmers Committee. The committee provides learning and networking opportunities, and also supports the interests of farmers under 40. Keenan encourages other young people to join, as their unified voices provide KAP with input that can then be used to advocate for young farmers regarding farmland ownership, financial lending and taxation.

“It’s also really good for meeting farmers in other areas and to get ideas of what other neighbours are doing that we aren’t,” Keenan said, noting how grateful he is to KAP in general for all the help the organization provides.

“It’s great for meeting people, and there are lots of opportunities to hear speakers and get new ideas,” he explained. “Whether it be on new tax laws, climate change forecasting, new agronomic practices, you can learn a lot at those meetings, so it’s been great,” he said.

Keenan’s dad is eternally grateful his sons are carrying the farming torch, just as he did for his father.

“My mom thanks me all the time,” said Dave. “‘I’m so glad you’re farming, she says. I don’t know what your dad would do if you weren’t farming. He’d be dead years ago.’ Carol says that about me too. ‘Good thing the boys are farming, or you’d die,’” laughed Dave, with Keenan laughing by his side.
Reduce, reuse and recycle. It’s a phrase that has become well-known as people try to protect the environment. In tandem with this movement is the increased demand for agricultural commodities and the resulting increased waste from agricultural practices.

That’s where Cleanfarms comes in. Since 1989, it has offered recycling services to farmers across Canada. A non-profit environmental stewardship organization, Cleanfarms partners with industry and government to develop programs that contribute to a healthy environment and sustainable future.

Cleanfarms currently offers three recycling programs in Manitoba — the permanent pesticide and fertilizer container recycling program, a rotational three-year obsolete product collection program, and a pilot project for the recycling of agricultural plastic films, twine and grain bags.

The pesticide and fertilizer container recycling program provides 110 municipal collection sites in the province where farmers can drop off empty, rinsed containers that are 23 litres or less — at no charge — instead of burning them. Large drums can be dropped off at retailers, and Cleanfarms will pick them up and transport them for recycling.

“We do ask producers to triple-rinse their containers and remove the paper booklet and the cap from the container,” says Shane Hederson, western region business manager for Cleanfarms. “This helps streamline the process, and ensures that the product will be recycled.”

Last year alone, more than 577,000 empty pesticide and fertilizer containers were collected in Manitoba. Containers from across the country are recycled in North America into farm drainage tile, Hederson says.

A grain bag recycling project in the province is still in the pilot stage, in partnership with Manitoba Sustainable Development. It started in 2013 with only three collection sites, and now there are 16 available in Manitoba. Hederson says that Cleanfarms is looking to expand even further.

Grain bags are made from a different type of plastic, a low-density polyethylene, he says, which is currently being exported to Asia for recycling. Several different products — including blown plastic bags and tarps — are made from it. Unfortunately, the polyethylene of the original grain bag cannot presently be recycled back into grain bags, he notes.

“Farmers can only use the best plastic to protect their products,” Hederson says. “This is why they are currently made using only non-recycled material. We are hoping to see this technology developed as an option in the future.”

Saskatchewan implemented a pilot program for grain bag collection five years ago. Cleanfarms, says Hederson, took over the operations when it became a permanent, industry-funded program at the beginning of 2018. This year will function as a transition year for the program, with an environmental handling fee implemented in 2019 when a grain bag is purchased.

“This is similar to how you would pay when you buy a television, tires or anything that would need recycling or safe disposal after its use,” he says.

This money goes back to Cleanfarms so it can continue running the program. Hederson says the money is used to reimburse the municipalities for collecting the materials, the transporters to move the materials, and other people to bale the recycled material and roll the grain bags.
“We’re hoping that within the next couple of years Manitoba will move to the same model as Saskatchewan,” he says. “It’ll become a permanent program, and it’ll be something that can be expanded to all areas of the province for all farmers.”

Also part of Manitoba’s pilot program is the recycling of twine, agricultural plastic film products such as bale and silage wrap, which Cleanfarms hopes will prevent burning of these products.

“We provide collection bags that farmers can pick up free of charge from their local collection sites,” says Hedderson. “We’re actively looking to expand the number of these collection sites in certain areas where we feel we might be under-serving.”

He stresses: “Film plastic needs to be with film, and baler twine with baler twine; otherwise they cannot be recycled. If they are mixed it is considered to be contamination, as they are recycled differently.”

The next plan Cleanfarms has for Manitoba is to develop a recycling method for net wrap. Hedderson says that it is harder to recycle because it is usually heavily contaminated. Cleanfarms is currently searching for the right recycling method and hopes to offer net wrap recycling to farmers in the near future.

In fall 2019, Cleanfarms will once again be offering a one-day collection service program in Manitoba for obsolete pesticides and animal health medications. The last time it was available in the province was in 2016.

“Year to year, farmers generally use all the product that they buy,” says Hedderson. “They don’t have a lot of material to get rid of every single year. It’s an expensive program to run, so in order to keep it free for farmers, we settled on this three-year cycle.”

Hedderson says that they have received a lot of positive feedback from this program and the three-year cycle method.

Details for fall 2019 will be available on the Cleanfarms website by spring 2019. Those who are interested can also sign up for a mailing list to receive this information as soon as it becomes available.

The Manitoba page of the Cleanfarms website can be found at cleanfarms.ca/programs/programs-by-location/.
Technology is constantly changing and almost everything needs to be updated on a regular basis in order to stay relevant. That’s why the University of Manitoba will be making some changes to its agriculture diploma program beginning this fall.

The program has become a well-known staple in the agriculture industry since its early days as the first offering of the Manitoba Agricultural College in 1906. It has undergone several changes over the last century, and has been slowly shifting its focus from technical training toward new scientific principles that will propel modern farming production and current agribusiness practices into the future and beyond.

The two-year program received its last major update in 2000. But come September, the newest 85 agriculture diploma students will be the first to experience the latest changes made to the program. Michele Rogalsky, director of the School of Agriculture, discussed some of the biggest changes to the program, and how students will benefit from them.

“Technology is changing,” she says. “Students and farmers need to respond to it and recognize it. Things are changing quickly, so there’s no use teaching current technology. We have to prepare the students for assessing the changes in the future so that they can respond and adjust their management practices.”

As in the current program, students in the new program can choose to target their education toward business management, livestock management, crop management or general agriculture. This format was created to give students an education that is tailored for their goals in the industry, whether they decide to pursue careers in the agricultural and food service and/or value-added sectors, or take over the family farm.

Under the new program, some of the core aspects such as the management planning project will be maintained. This course allows students to apply the practical skills they have learned toward a real-life situation.

In their first year, students partner with a farm manager, have access to farm records and are able to analyze the
In their second year, they put on the manager’s hat, develop a comprehensive plan for the farm, put it in to action and defend all of their decisions, says Rogalsky.

“The biggest change to this part of the program is the expansion of the core courses so that students are well-prepared with the skills needed to serve the industry now and in the future. All students in first year will have a common program with an increased emphasis on farm management.

In terms of technology, a new precision agriculture course is being introduced and will focus on technological skills. Students will learn about precision agriculture tools used in livestock, agronomy and business management. They will also learn how to use the technology, the data it provides, how to analyze it, the cost of using the technology and how to complete a cost-benefit analysis.

The course will aid in developing their decision-making skills, a big focus in the program, and how they can apply these technologies to their own operations, Rogalsky says.

There will also be other new required courses that have a big focus on decision making and practical applications. Two second year core courses have been added — one on current agricultural issues and the other on agri-food systems. Rogalsky says the program continues to strive toward helping students become more aware of how their farms and the agriculture industry are impacted by external influences such as consumers and international agriculture policies.

“We are making sure students have a solid understanding of the chain of the agri-food sector — from the farm field or barn, through processing, to the consumers, and the impact on health, as well,” she says.

She wants students to leave with a solid knowledge of the industry as a whole, combined with decision-making, communication and leadership skills.

There will also be changes to the production courses, mainly in plant science and soil science. They will no longer focus on all the specific production techniques of all the current and most popular crops, she says. Instead, they will focus on production techniques for a particular crop category such as cereals.

They’ll learn how they can apply this to make production management decisions for their farm — how to determine seeding rates, what variety to use, risk factors in relation to crop insurance, and where to find this information.

“They’ll be able to adjust to change because they’ll be getting the tools to determine what the ‘new’ crop is going to be,” Rogalsky says. “For example, we didn’t cover soybeans in our core courses five years ago, and now it is a mainstream crop in Manitoba. These students will be deciding what the next one will be.”

The academic teaching staff in this program are committed to the industry and to agriculture students, says Rogalsky. Five staff members also manage their own farms full-time and teach the core courses in farm management.

“Keeping the industry in mind, the program will remain accommodating toward staff and students with farming obligations. It begins in mid–September and ends in early April.

The majority of students in the program continue to come from rural areas in Manitoba, and are usually coming straight from high school. The program provides a strong sense of community for each year’s fresh crop of students, Rogalsky says. In their first year, they spend much of their time together in classes, labs, collaborating on projects, and on field trips.

“They really do become a community of learners. We stress that in the program. It’s not just about learning the production or the management skills. We’re also developing leaders, and we’re strongly committed to making sure that the program supports students. We have a positive community.”

This support helps the students with the challenges of relocating from a rural setting to an urban one, and the transition from being a high school student to a post-secondary student.

The program is also hands-on, says Rogalsky, and aims to give students not only classroom training, but also experience in the field so they can apply their knowledge and learn from their experiences alongside industry professionals.

“It’s touching. It’s feeling. It’s being out in the field,” she says. “The students go to Ag Days and they participate in the Keystone Agricultural Producers annual meeting, where they have the opportunity to participate as ag leaders.”

Rogalsky hopes that there will be more opportunities in the future to increase experiential learning with more independent studies, practicums and more involvement with producers and industry organizations such as KAP.

With one program revision under its belt, the University of Manitoba will be looking at updating the four-year agriculture degree program next.
Storing canola has gotten a whole lot more difficult, and Manitoba’s applied research, development and testing facility is looking for ways to remedy this.

“There has been a great increase in the size and scale of farms and farm equipment,” says Lorne Grieger, assistant vice-president at the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute in Portage la Prairie.

“Producers are having to invest in larger bins to store their grain. For small seeds such as canola, this can pose a problem.”

Grieger is heading a research project that may enable farmers to more successfully store canola in these larger bins.

As canola growers know, the crop should be put on aeration immediately after harvest to cool and condition it for...
safer long-term storage. However, because of the small size of the canola seed, compaction becomes an issue as the bin size increases, says Grieger, and this causes air circulation problems.

The air pockets surrounding the seed are also small, compounding the problem. Both factors cause a high back pressure, meaning that aeration fans sometimes cannot push air through the stored seed. When a fan stalls from the high back pressure, the risk of spoilage increases.

PAMI research has shown, however, that using more than one fan in a large bin does not aid in solving the issue. PAMI looked at a two-fan aeration method compared to single-fan aeration, but results showed that implementing a second fan increased airflow and back pressure dramatically. Using two fans caused the fans to stall sooner compared to a single fan in a 25,000-bushel bin.

Therefore, fan size becomes important, says Grieger.

“With larger bins, you’ll need more air to push through, requiring a higher-powered fan. One of the issues many producers have is that they are limited to single-phase power, which limits the motors size to 10 horsepower. One of the findings of this study was that a typical 10 horsepower centrifugal fan stalled with approximately 17,000 bushels of canola in the bin.”

If producers don’t have access to the power they need for larger fans, it may be advisable not to fill bins to capacity, says Grieger.

PAMI’s research is also looking at the way in which bins are filled to determine if airflow patterns are different and if compaction can be reduced. It compared the filling and conditioning performance between using a spreader or filling directly from an auger spout into a large 25,000-bushel bin containing 17,000 bushels.

PAMI used a gravity flow spreader for this study, as it doesn’t require electricity to function, says Grieger. It’s easy to install and comes at a lower cost for producers. This spreader utilizes the force of the falling grain against the chute’s curved design, which creates a slow even rotation to gently disperse the grain into four concentric rings away from the bin’s centre.

Preliminary results, says Grieger, showed that the spreader treatment created a more level grain surface in the bin, rather than the peaked surface created by direct filling from an auger. However, this method only provided a small decrease in airflow rate and no differences in the airflow uniformity. But results may differ for a full bin.

When it comes to damp or tough canola, PAMI has not yet quantified what fan requirements and spreading methods will be needed.

“Once we understand what happens with air flow rates using the spreader method with dry canola we’ll move on to tough canola and then hopefully on to wet,” says Grieger.

The findings of this project will provide producers with information that will allow them to have consistent air flow rates throughout their stored grain, and enable them to successfully store canola in large grain bins.

“It’s important for producers to understand what grain conditions they have, how long they want to store, what equipment they are operating, and the performance limits,” Grieger says.
I’VE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT Manitoba has some of the best farms in the coun-
try, but Statistics Canada’s recently released 2017 net farm income report
confirms it.

Last year farmers across Canada saw farm cash receipts rise by 1.8 per cent to $61.6 billion, but a 2.4 per cent increase in overall operating expenses resulted in a decline of net income by 2.5 per cent to $8.3 billion. But in Manitoba, the data paints a more positive and interesting picture.

In 2017, Manitoba farmers grossed $6.5 billion and netted approximately $1.3 billion after depreciation and inventory changes were taken into account.

A good year for farmers by historic standards is a 40 per cent higher income than the five-year average. So last year not only did we do better than the national average but we performed much better than Saskatchewan, which saw 2017 net incomes decline by 10 per cent in their five-year average.

Two per cent of this difference can be attributed to the growth of Manitoba’s hog sector, which is one of the notable differences between our ag economies. But the most compelling explanation for the difference has been painfully obvious to the farmers I’ve discussed the report with. It all comes down to water — in 2017 Manitoba had enough and Saskatchewan didn’t.

We went into the growing season with some of the highest soil moisture levels we’ve ever seen and there was lots of worry over spring flooding. We stayed dry for a good portion of the sea-
son and the crops dug deep to draw from our water reserves. Saskatchewan farmers weren’t as fortunate; drought conditions throughout the growing sea-
son resulted in significant lost yield potential.

There is a point to this analysis beyond just prairie bragging rights. It’s to put numbers to a truth that again, is obvious to farmers. Farms sink or swim based on moisture.

If our province is serious about growing our ag economy, we need to take water management seriously. We can’t summon or banish rain clouds, but we can work towards building our capacity to manage the extremes in precipita-
tion. KAP’s climate initiative report, released in March and available on the KAP website, identified several key areas where we need to be working with government to build this capacity.

There are many groups coming to this same conclusion. The Manitoba Pulse and Soybean Growers, Manitoba Canola Growers, and Manitoba Wheat and Bar-
ley Growers Association have all agreed to explore collaborative research proj-
ects that bring together different disci-
plines — including agronomy, engi-
neering, data analysis, and genetics — to look at solutions to extreme moisture events.

The primary obstacle that we’ve encountered is that there is still consid-
erable disagreement about how a drain-
age offset system should be designed. KAP has been fighting for regulations that do not discourage farmers from undertaking innovative water manage-
ment projects such as constructed water retention systems with integrated tile drainage or irrigation. We need a system which is flexible and puts the onus on farmers to find the best way to manage the land and protect the environment at the lowest cost.

The success of agriculture and of the province as a whole is tied to our ability to effectively manage water on the landscape. We’re going to continue working on this issue for our members so that Manitoba farmers can continue to lead the country in growth.
FARMS CAN AND SHOULD BE SAFE WORKPLACES

All farms in Manitoba are subject to workplace safety and health legislation, just to varying degrees. However, many farmers still do not know it applies to them, how to become compliant, or where to start.

Recognizing the need for access to agriculture-specific safety expertise, KAP established the Farm Safety Program (FSP), as a cost-free advisory service for all farmers. FSP provides on and off farm training, safety walk-arounds, special project oversight and more on a completely confidential basis at no cost. Regardless of size or type - KAP member or not.

Your privacy is guaranteed. As a non-government agency we promise your information will never go in to any public database or be reported.

For questions, or to arrange a meeting call Morag Marjerison at (204) 570-3290

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