

CAAR COMMUNICATOR

PUBLISHED BY THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF AGRI-RETAILERS



THE 2021 VIRTUAL CAAR CONFERENCE

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Redefining Value



Theresa Bolton
Board Chair

Even in this age of automation, virtual reality and real-time technology there is one thing that has not changed, and that is the expectation of value. “Value” is as unique and individualized as the person perceiving it, and the endeavor to deliver value is often a moving target that requires a customized approach to successfully reach.

People naturally seek value in their personal and professional lives. As I get older, I find myself analyzing the value I give and receive in my personal relationships. Am I a good friend who is there when someone needs me? If being a good friend means being there for the bad times, the good times, and the in-between times, I want to make sure I am doing that. And just as importantly, is my friend there for me? Oftentimes there is an inequality between the value given and the value received in relationships between people.

These personal relationship values similarly hold true in business; your customer needs to see and understand the value they are receiving from your company. A value proposition based solely on price may not be as strong as one that is based on customer service and trust. It is up to you, the retailer, to know your customer, to understand their needs and to provide value to them. You cannot rely on a customer to value your business simply because you give them a good price, there needs to be more.

Let’s not forget – this works both ways. Take the cliché “we value your business” – what does this mean? If a customer asked you why you value their business, your response should ideally go beyond the fact that they spend money with you. Just like your customers expect value from you, you should expect value from your customers. A valuable customer may support you, promote your brand, respect you and your employees, respect your business challenges and push you to stay competitive.

As a professional recruiter, I see value being crucial in the workforce, and like a customer-vendor relationship, it works both ways. The employer

should see value in the employee’s performance beyond the employee meeting the minimum requirement of the job duties.

From the employee’s perspective, what kind of value does your company provide? At one time, the value was simple – you do the work, your employer pays you. Nowadays, there are so many expectations for both the employee and the employer.

Employers want employees who go the extra mile, take pride in what they do, and represent the business in the best light possible. Employees also have expectations based on value. They want an employer that cares about them as much as they care about their employer. They don’t want to be a number or to simply collect a pay cheque. Employees want to be respected, challenged, recognized and rewarded. They want more than a pay cheque, and they should!

In agriculture, even more so than in any other industry, there is a shortage of talented employees. If you are providing value to your employees based on wages, it is like providing value to your customers based on price. It simply is not enough, and it is not sustainable. If you are not providing the value your employees are looking for, another employer will. No different than selling strictly on price, you cannot attract and retain employees simply on wages.

Every day in our lives, we want to make sure what we put in, we get out. We look at quality, return on investment, peace of mind – all things that add up to value. When I evaluate the value of something, I ask myself – what would it be like if I did not have this person, this vendor, this service, this job, or whatever the variable, in my life? Challenge yourself to do the same and consider if things would be better, worse, or if there would be no impact. ♦

Sincerely,

Theresa Bolton
Board Chair

“
Every day in our lives, we want to make sure what we put in, we get out.

”

–Theresa Bolton

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Regulatory and Business Updates for Canadian Ag in 2021



Mitch Rezansoff
Executive Director

The past 10 months have focused heavily on the COVID-19 virus and its impact on the Canadian and global economies. What you may not be aware of are the numerous federal regulations that have been updated or in the process of being updated that directly impact the business of Canadian agriculture.

The Clean Fuel Standard (CFS) aims to reduce yearly greenhouse gas emissions by 30 million tonnes. CFS includes all fossil fuels with separate requirements for liquid, gaseous, and solid fuels with fertilizer production falling under the gaseous fuel stream. The fertilizer industry is one of Canada's most energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries within a highly sensitive global pricing market.

These costs could potentially burden the internal and external export markets, further impacting Canadian farmers and international sales markets. CFS currently does not exempt fertilizer production nor carbon sequestration activities of farmers through crop production (4R and others). There are future plans to discuss these regulations. For mid-2021, CFS proposed regulations for gaseous and solid fuel classes, as published in Canada Gazette, Part I, followed by consultations on the proposal with a final regulation planned for 2022, to be enforced beginning Jan. 1, 2023.

Canadian Fertilizers Regulations Amendments were approved in Parliament on Oct. 22, 2020, and posted to the Canada Gazette, Part II, Nov. 11, 2020. I commend Fertilizer Canada, CFIA and other industry partners for staying the course after eight years in development and regulation reform and not delaying due to COVID-19. Without going into intimate detail, the regulation update provides many positive, burden-lessening examples such as Transition of 'Schedule II' to a 'List of Materials' incorporated by reference, aligning oversight with risk profiles, streamlining and extending the registration process. Canadian manufacturers, distributors, retailers and farmers will feel the impact of these regulations, including relief from regulatory cost burdens affecting both current and future products.

Transportation of Dangerous Goods Regulations (TDG Regulations) were updated by Transport Canada, namely regulations **CSA B620:20, CSA B622:20, TC 51 and CSA B620:20** in association to high-pressure vessels. These vessels impact the agriculture industry's access to ammonia and propane highway tanks and TC portable tanks. General changes relating to CSA B620:20 include updates to the ASME code (referencing the latest edition), new pressure gauge selection and calibration requirements for pressure and leak tests, clarified thickness

testing requirements, revised pressure testing requirements, revised inspection and test reporting requirements, revised tank securement requirements for all tanks, updated tank inspector and tank tester training and qualification requirements and new training organization and registration for the qualification of tank inspectors and tank testers. Updates to regulation CSA B620:20, including the other TDG Regulations mentioned above, come into effect when published with a mandatory compliance six months after publication.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) proposed an integrated management approach to plastic products to prevent waste and pollution. In late fall 2020, ECCC began stakeholder engagement webinars with the objective to create a more resource-efficient and life-cycle approach to plastics stewardship, on land and sea. Agriculture is not part of the current public consultations. Canadian agriculture plastic packaging recovery began 30 years ago and continues to evolve and expand thanks to industry foresight and leadership of Cleanfarms. Current and pending initiatives include seed, inoculant and grain bags, pesticide and fertilizer jugs, drums and totes, and finally, bale wrap and poly twine. The initiatives are commendable thanks to the support of ag retailers and farmers. There remain significant opportunities to advance agriculture plastics lifecycle management.

Many ag industry organizations have dedicated significant time and effort, including CAAR, to ensure the business of Canadian agriculture remains viable and competitive. CAAR will continue to monitor, participate, update and train ag retailers as the regulations are updated. It is what we do. ♣

Thank you,

Mitch Rezansoff
Executive Director, CAAR



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CAAR News

The latest news, views, issues and events from your Canadian agri-retail association.

October Board Meeting Strategy Plans

In October 2020, the CAAR Board met virtually to review strategy and activities for the next 12 months. The association focused on how to continue support for CAAR members while limiting risk of virus exposure, including:

- Confirmation to host 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference and postpone the in-person event to Feb. 2022 in Edmonton, AB
- Focusing on required advocacy efforts as a result of COVID-19
- Training and certification processes impacted by COVID-19 restrictions
- Bylaw updates required due to COVID-19 restrictions
- Review recommendations for funding available under provincial and federal COVID-19 support programs
- Upgrades and requirements to move CAAR to digital and virtual

CAAR is seeking nominations for Board of Directors (BOD)

CAAR requires the following BOD positions filled:

- Retail SK
- Retail MB
- Retail ON
- Retail PQ / Maritimes

CAAR Annual General Meeting Update

CAAR bylaws currently do not allow our AGM to be held virtually. According to Corporations Canada, “if the corporation’s bylaws prohibit virtual meetings or are silent on holding them, the board of directors may change the bylaws with the change effective until the next meeting of members.”

The Board intends to make the necessary changes to the bylaws so we can hold an Annual General Meeting and election of directors virtually.

Thank you for participating in the CAAR Member Survey

CAAR would like to thank everyone who participated in the online and phone surveys. The survey was an opportunity for us to connect with members in an in-depth way and we value your feedback.

See **pg. 20** for more information about the survey results.

2021 Virtual CAAR Conference

Featuring educational keynote and concurrent sessions, the 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference offers valuable opportunities to engage with retailers, exhibitors, industry reps and resources for ag retailers to evolve and provide the best service for their customers.

See **pg. 10** for more 2021 CAAR Conference information.

Auction Donation Request

The Pro-Ag Investments Auction contributes up to 10 percent of the association’s annual revenue. Proceeds from the auction directly support CAAR’s advocacy activities, industry initiatives, agricultural scholarships, upgrades to existing programs and services and the development of new ones.

Fifty percent SRP of your auction donation counts towards sponsorship recognition and increases your company’s benefits and exposure!

See **pg. 11** for more information about the auction and how to donate.



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 <p>RIGHT PLACE Keeps nutrients where crops can use them.</p>	 <p>RIGHT SOURCE Matches fertilizer type to crop needs.</p>

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4 nutrient stewardship

Quarterly At-A-Glance (July - September 2020)

CAAR's quarterly update highlighting our activities and participation in the ag industry, providing value to our members.

By Lisa Defoort

Membership

We would like to thank our members who renewed their CAAR membership for the 2020/21 year and continued their investment with us. Without the loyalty and support of our members, we would not be able to continuously produce valuable programs and services as well as advocate on behalf of Canada's ag retailers.

- 568 CAAR Members
- 351 Retailers
- 156 Suppliers
- 10 Consultants
- 1 Media
- 50 Affiliates
- 5 New Members
- 51 New Member Locations

Advocacy & Industry Participation

CAAR's active participation in industry groups, committees and meetings ensure that Canadian ag retailers are represented consistently.

In 2020/21 Q1, CAAR was engaged in:

- Online webinar hosted by the Canadian Plant Technology Agency (CPTA) outlining the pilot program implemented to test how the Seed Variety Use Agreement (SVUA) will work in the real world.
- Cereals MRL Assessment Committee to review two products, Pydiflumetofen (Miravis Ace) for use on wheat and Trinexapac (Moddus) for use on wheat and barley.
- Online webinar hosted by the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) presenting highlights of their newest CAST Commentary "The Importance of Communicating Empirically Based Science for Society". This was a good companion piece for our article titled "Empowering Farmers to Build Public Trust" in the August 2020 *CAAR Communicator*.
- Numerous Fertilizer Canada Committee meetings representing the interest and needs of Canadian retailers and stakeholders.
- 4R MB Memorandum of Understanding and 4R Communications Working Group.



- Retailers
- Suppliers
- Consultants
- Media
- Affiliates

568 CAAR members

5 new members recruited

93% member retention

- The COVID-19 Information Sharing Stakeholder conference calls hosted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) in conjunction with Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). CAAR continues to monitor and share details of programs and issues addressed within the calls.
- Transport Canada's Client Identification Database (CID), focuses on sites handling transport-related activities of Dangerous Goods (DG).
- The Prairie Climate Centre (PPC) at the University of Winnipeg works closely with farmers, ranchers and other industry stakeholders with a mandate to provide agricultural relevant climate services within the Prairie region. The Stakeholder Input focus group requested CAAR participate and provide perspective of Canadian ag retailers supporting agriculture production.

The 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference: Educate. Engage. Evolve.

In light of the on-going developments with COVID-19, CAAR has chosen to host the 2021 CAAR Conference virtually from February 9 - 11, 2021.

The CAAR Conference committee has been working hard to build an event that focuses on the needs of ag retailers. We've teamed up with SwapCard to facilitate the 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference, enabling attendees and exhibitors to engage through a virtual platform.

Pro-Ag Investments Auction

The Pro-Ag Investments Auction will be hosted online from Feb. 9 – 11, 2021. Last year we raised over \$80,000. We hope to have another successful auction!

To facilitate the online auction, we have teamed up with CharityAuctionsToday, making it easier for you to bid on auction products from the comfort of your home or office.

Proceeds from the auction directly support CAAR's advocacy activities, support of industry initiatives, agricultural scholarships, upgrades to existing programs and services and the development of new ones.

Training

CAAR saves you time and money with exclusive training programs, specifically catering to the needs of the ag retailer.

In Q1, the Safety and the Farmer online training had tremendous success with a 265 percent increase in participation from trainees.

Q1 - Online Trainees: 3,046

- 545 – Anhydrous Ammonia: Retailer Safe Handling and TDG Certification
- 1786 – Anhydrous Ammonia: Safety & The Farmer - TDG Certification
- 315 – TDG Fundamentals: Retailer TDG Certification
- 367 – WHMIS 2015
- 24 – Nurse Tank Safety Program
- 9 – Others

Q1 - In Person Trainees: 66

- 66 – Anhydrous Ammonia: Retailer Safe Handling and TDG Certification

Retailers & Recycling

Ag retailers play an integral role in container collection programs across Canada.

Data provided by Cleanfarms

Ag retailers have been at the forefront of participating in and promoting sustainability initiatives in agriculture

Container Collection

CAAR members were early adopters of the Cleanfarms program, with many retailers participating as designated drop-off locations for used pesticide containers. ♦

As the Cleanfarms program expands into more provinces and the types of materials it collects, ag retailers will continue to play a key roll in facilitating that expansion.



Container Collection by the Numbers

YEAR	SMALL CONTAINERS (>23L)		BULK CONTAINERS (<23L)	
	Sum of Containers Collected	Collection Rate (3 year avg)	Sum of Containers Collected	Collection Rate (3 year avg)
2010	4,405,286.30	64%	-	-
2011	4,255,070.38	69%	-	-
2012	4,441,430.51	67%	-	-
2013	5,031,808.65	66%	-	-
2014	4,232,763.15	61%	-	-
2015	4,598,573.84	62%	6,500	-
2016	5,044,776.46	61%	36,167	-
2017	4,932,614.11	61%	42,732	-
2018	5,603,718.71	64%	44,417	48%
2019	5,464,479.54	71%	55,369	50%
Grand Total	48,010,521.65		185,185	

Over 48 million small pesticide containers have been collected by the Cleanfarms program in the past ten years, with many of those containers collected at ag retail locations.

Container Collection Participation by Province

Province	Bags: Seed, Inoculant, Pesticides (0-1,000 kg)	Pesticide and Fertilizer Plastic Jugs	Drums and Totes (non-deposit): Pesticide and Fertilizer	Grain Bags, Bale Wrap, Poly Twine
BC	N/A (future)	Retail	N/A	Pilots starting 2021 (municipal)
AB	55 retails, S of Red Deer for 2021 pilot	Municipal	Retail	Pilot (municipal)
SK	Retail	Retail	Retail	Grain bags (municipal) Twine: pilot starting 2021 (municipal)
MB	Retail	Municipal	Retail	Pilot (municipal)
ON	Retail	Retail	Retail	Bale wrap: pilots starting 2021 (municipal)
QC	Retail (includes fertilizer totes)	Retail	Retail	Bale wrap: pilot (municipal)
Maritimes	Retail	Retail	Retail	Pilot (municipal)

Ag retailers provide the majority of collection locations across Canada, and their participation in pilot programs are critical to their eventual adoption.



4R Spotlight: Cargill – CAAR 4R Agri-Retailer of the Year

Fertilizer is an important input for farmers to provide nutrients to plants that are not readily available in the soil, helping farmers to foster plant growth and increase yields. Farmers also understand the importance balancing sustainable agricultural practices with environmental solutions. That is why programs like 4R Nutrient Stewardship (Right Source @ the Right Rate, Right Time, and Right Place ®) which helps crop-producers minimize environmental concerns related to agriculture, while maximizing its economic benefits, are critically important to the continued success of the Canadian agriculture industry. Fertilizer Canada recently had an opportunity to interview one of its member companies, Cargill, to find out exactly how their growers are benefitting from applying 4R Nutrient Stewardship right now.

The 4R Designation program was introduced to Cargill's agronomy team three years ago. Since that time, the team has devoted professional development hours to understanding the 4R program through courses offered by Fertilizer Canada's eLearning. In addition to educating staff on 4Rs, Cargill developed an internal program, that has since been shared amongst their grower customers and continues to gain momentum. In the last year, the program has truly taken off, accounting for many 4R Designated acres and has helped Cargill elevate its platform to educate growers on sustainable nutrient management, particularly in Western Canada.

"Our goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions produced by our supply chain by 30 per cent per ton of product by 2030 and 4R Nutrient Stewardship plays a big part in that plan," said Simon North, Agronomy Technical Lead at Cargill. "We recognize that no single company

or sector can solve all the environmental challenges we are being faced with in this day and age, but with the growing demand in global food production, we would encourage every company and every sector to play a role in this if they can."

Implementing the 4Rs have been hugely beneficial for Cargill. Not only is the company leading the way in sustainable agriculture in Western Canada, Mr. North explains that applying 4R Nutrient Stewardship has allowed the company to better engage in dialogue with their farmers, agronomists, and sales staff how to keep farms and soils healthy for generations to come.

Sustainable farming is the future and in many cases, that future is already underway. Mr. North adds that while there are sometimes challenges in convincing farmers of the benefits of applying 4R Nutrient Stewardship, better education undoubtedly yields better results. What it boils down to is that it's not only good for the environment, but for the community and their bottom line.

4R Nutrient Stewardship research provides crop producers with science-based information and advice on how to use best management practices to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and address other environmental impacts when they apply fertilizer. Companies like Cargill, who were recipients of the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Agri-Retailer award at the 2019 CAAR Awards, for their leadership in this respect.

For more information about the 4R Designation, visit Fertilizer Canada's website at www.fertilizercanada.ca/4RME

"Our goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions produced by our supply chain by 30 per cent per ton of product by 2030 and 4R Nutrient Stewardship plays a big part in that plan."



THE 2021 VIRTUAL CAAR CONFERENCE: EDUCATE. ENGAGE. EVOLVE.

Up-to-date info on the 2021 CAAR Conference sessions, exhibitors and resources.

The CAAR Conference is an annual three-day event, focusing on the business of ag retail and connecting the agriculture industry. In light of the on-going developments with COVID-19, CAAR has chosen to host the 2021 CAAR Conference virtually from Feb. 9 – 11, 2021.

The 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference features educational keynote speakers and concurrent sessions, and valuable opportunities to connect and engage with retailers, exhibitors and representatives from the agriculture industry. The conference will also offer resources for ag retailers to evolve and provide the best service for their customers.

EDUCATE

Ag retailers need to stay on top of the latest industry updates and technologies that help them serve their customers. The 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference features over 20 live and on-demand presentations hosted by industry speakers that include a variety of sessions:

- Understanding your customer's journey
- Effective communications with your staff, customers and the public
- Impact of current global trends on the ag industry
- Regulation and industry updates
- Investing in technology
- Workplace safety and best practices

ENGAGE

We understand networking is an important component of the CAAR Conference. This year, CAAR is working with SwapCard to facilitate the 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference, enabling attendees and exhibitors to engage through a virtual platform.

ATTENDEES

The 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference is an interactive, online experience, providing ag retailers an opportunity to engage in educational sessions and group discussions, interact with exhibitors through 1:1 meetings and video calls. Introduce yourself to new connections through a matchmaking algorithm that identifies the best matches and suggests who to meet, all from the comfort of your office or home.

EXHIBITORS

The 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference is a great platform to host your virtual booth and engage with a wider audience to showcase products, services and help drive your business forward.

Your virtual booth allows for real-time interaction with attendees and options to customize your booth with your branding, including videos and downloadable resources, host 1:1 meetings and live chat with attendees, pre-record or live-stream demos and much more.

EVOLVE

The business of agriculture is evolving. Successful ag retailers are continuously evaluating how to best deliver products, services and solutions to their customers in order to maintain a competitive edge. Meanwhile, organizations that fail to monitor, identify lessons learned and adjust their competitive offerings will be left behind.

The 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference provides ag retailers the resources to learn about the latest in industry best practices and technologies, the impact of global trends and regulation updates so you can provide the best value to your customers and “out retail” the competition.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES

We've simplified the registration fees for the 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference by only offering attendee passes and virtual booths. For more information about registration details, go to caar.org/caar-conference.

	Member	Non-Member
Attendee Pass:	\$125	\$155
Virtual Booth:	\$795	\$995

Plus applicable taxes. Virtual booths include four attendee passes and each attendee will be linked to your booth under your staff contacts.

2021 CAAR CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Sponsorship of the 2021 Virtual CAAR Conference is designed for you to connect with the agriculture industry to promote your company's products and services and bring maximum exposure to your brand.

Sponsorship through the CAAR Conference includes print and digital advertising, complimentary virtual conference passes, and logo recognition in our various communications channels – extending your investment both before and after the event. The earlier you confirm your sponsorship, the higher the benefits and ROI your company receives.

SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT

Full conference agenda will be available on caar.org/caar-conference.



NAVIGATING THE FUTURE David Parker, FLM Harvest

In times of constant change, individuals and organizations will never be absolutely certain about the correct path. The only certainty is that you must establish and execute a clear vision of future success. Change will continue to impact our industry – how will you respond? Parker’s presentation outlines the abilities, capabilities and focus required to navigate our exciting future.



THE DECISION-MAKING DYNAMICS OF MULTI-GENERATIONAL FARMS Justin Funk, AgriStudies

The past decade has seen a significant shift in decision-making on Canadian farming operations as transition occurs from one generation to the next. This change presents suppliers with many challenges, but also opportunities as they look at new ways to

appeal to the up-and-coming generation while continuing to satisfy the needs of the current generation of decision makers.

In 2016, Funk partnered with Scott Downey (Purdue University) to conduct the Multi-Generational Farm Study to identify the differences that exist between generations with respect to:

- Decision making responsibilities
- Motivations and decision-making criteria
- Preferred sources of information
- Attitudes towards technology
- Perspectives on the retailer relationship

Funk will highlight some of the key findings from this study as they relate to the customer journey and discuss the implications to Canadian ag retailers.



THE EVOLVING CUSTOMER JOURNEY Scott Downey, Purdue University

Canadian farmers are more educated today than at any point in history. As a result of this, retail salespeople are moving from product and solution selling to predictive sales approaches.

In this session, Downey will discuss how the sales process has evolved and what that means for retailers and how understanding the customer’s journey can help identify ways to deepen relationships with customers.



DISENTANGLING THE DISINFORMATION LANDSCAPE Cami Ryan, Bayer CropScience

Disinformation is not new to agriculture. The nature of how it is created, shared and disseminated on social media platforms is new. This brave new world of mass information has created opportunities and challenges for businesses and societies alike. For product

brands, ideas or campaigns to gain traction on social media platforms, they need to capture attention. This is often accomplished by creating and disseminating compelling information – even disinformation. The problem is that the drivers of this “attention economy” are often not visible.

In this presentation, Ryan will provide insights into the “disinformation landscape” and what this means for the agriculture industry and for societies. Raising awareness about how the landscape is structured and incentivized may provide a way forward as we continue to face challenges in the industry.

CAAR PRO-AG INVESTMENTS AUCTION

With the 2021 CAAR Conference going virtual due to COVID-19, the Pro-Ag Investments Auction will be hosted online over three days from Feb. 9-11, 2021, making it easier for you to bid on auction products through online and mobile bidding, all from the comfort of your home or office.

CAAR is working with CharityAuctionsToday to facilitate the online auction, items are available to preview now and bidding will open on Feb. 9, 10:00 a.m. CST and close on Feb. 11, 5:00 p.m. CST.

New for 2021 – You don’t need to attend the CAAR Conference to bid on auction items, just pre-register on the auction website and you’re ready to start viewing and bidding on items.

FEATURES OF THE ONLINE AUCTION ARE:

View Donated Products: Auction items are available to view online ahead of the event including images, product description and donor information.

Complimentary Registration: Pre-register to setup your bidding account so you’re ready to view and bid on items when the auction launches on Feb. 9, 2021.

Bidding Options: Conveniently bid on items from the comfort of your home or office through online and mobile bidding.

Outbid Notifications: You can receive notifications by text and email when you’re outbid so you can rebid.

Fast Checkout: Once you’ve been determined as the highest bidder, you can pay with a credit card or by invoice. **restrictions apply.*

For more information about the auction and how to donate and/or bid on items, go to caar.org/caar-conference/auction or contact Scott Van Alstyne at scott@caar.org or 204-989-9305. ♣

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DIFFERENTIATING YOUR AG RETAIL BUSINESS

How to differentiate your ag business in a competitive selling environment.

By Alyssa Gallano

Canadian ag retailers are adapting to a changing sales environment that has traditionally depended on in-person relationship building as a primary means of connecting with customers. Embracing technology at the retail level and developing sales strategies that are focused on giving the customer what they want, when they want it, will be key to both customer retention, and maintaining staff satisfaction.

Justin Funk is a managing partner at AgriStudies Inc. in Ontario and a keynote session speaker for the 2021 CAAR Conference. He says in his years of developing market research for ag businesses, his clients consistently placed honest employees with the capacity to learn the intricacies of their business at the top of their list of importance. Funk believes competent and knowledgeable salespeople motivated by helping the customer can help strengthen the retailer-customer relationship and maintain sales.

According to Funk, implementing strong sales management and competitive sales strategies to an ag retailer's business may be the key qualifications businesses need to retain their staff and stay competitive in an ever-evolving market.

"If a salesperson's motivation is to help a customer, then they're going to still get the sale, but they're probably going to be much more well rewarded for doing it in the right way," says Funk. "This has implications to the overall company's strategy as well, because the salespeople, in many cases to the customer, is the company."

Some sales managers may believe that competition is a good motivator, but instead, it changes the corporate culture for the worse, says Funk. Salespeople need guidance from sales managers with good leadership skills to maintain the company's consistent messaging throughout all customer touchpoints, says Funk.

"In addition to having salespeople that are well-matched to the customer, you also must have leadership that is sending the correct and consistent company message to their team," says Funk.

The Importance of a Good Corporate Culture

Scott Downey, professor at Purdue University's Department of Agricultural Economics in Indiana and a keynote session speaker for the 2021 CAAR Conference, says that in the last

Above: Scott Downey teaches several courses in the Department of Agricultural Economics department at Purdue University including sales and marketing.

15 years, retirements and poaching of employees have become the two biggest challenges in employee retention. Although retirements are beyond an employer's control, he says developing a strong corporate culture could help curve poaching and make the decision to stay in a company easier for employees to make.

"Maybe we can avoid poaching by prioritizing job satisfaction and addressing pay issues, but it's only one issue," says Downey. "Ultimately, it's important that we take care of people."

Downey says instead of treating others the way we would like to be treated or the "golden rule," retailers should start implementing the "platinum rule," to treat people the way they would like to be treated. The "platinum rule" method takes more work and understanding, but Downey says it is not much different from a sales perspective.

"We must take time to figure out how our employees would like to be treated," says Downey. "Isn't that what we do from a sales perspective? Find out what customers want and try to help them?"

Maintaining Strong Retailer-Customer Relationships

Downey says ag retailers should consider the farmer's unique pain points depending on their farm's size and create new services to mitigate them. Large farms have more acres and more employees with specialized skills on their staff, reducing the need for a retailer's expert advice. They may not need product knowledge as much as they need efficient and convenient product delivery. Small farms have fewer acres and fewer employees, usually comprised of the farm owner and their family members.

"Twenty years ago, most farms were about the same size," says Downey. "Today, we have some really big farms, but we still have some smaller traditional farms, and their needs are really different."

For example, owners of large farms may have difficulty finding employees to assist in daily operations, says Downey. To help mitigate their problem, a retailer could create an employee network to introduce farmers to people looking for farm work. These additional services could generate more value in the retailer-customer relationship.

"If labour is the number one issue that large farms deal with, retailers need to ask themselves, 'what is my role in helping farmers deal with labour?'" says Downey. "Retailers should find ways to help farmers with that problem and find a way to get paid to do that – you can't just do it because it's nice to do."

The direct-to-farm sales market could potentially change the ag retail environment, with more emphasis on



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Differentiation has to start at the top. It has to be communicated, understood and then properly executed by everybody within the organization, not just salespeople.

”

–Justin Funk

sales and less on the retailer-customer relationship building. Funk believes it will take time for the ag industry to understand the effects of direct-to-farm sales as it's still new, but it does show which customers value their relationship with their retailer.

"Having alternative channels does a good job of identifying customers who value the retailer relationship versus those that don't," says Funk. "People state their preference through their actions and their behaviour. It wouldn't surprise me one bit if a farmer decides to dabble in online to try it out."

Even with the rise of e-commerce, Funk believes most farmers will want to maintain a strong relationship with their retailer while leveraging the ability to buy online. Funk says ag retailers could position themselves as an e-commerce portal or platform, which provides convenient buying and selling options while re-inventing their relationship with their customer.

By understanding how their customers buy products and why, retailers could enhance their services to what they need now. Join Justin Funk for his 2021 CAAR Conference session, The Decision-Making Dynamics of Multi-Generational Farms, on Thursday, Feb. 11.

Keeping Your Ag Business Competitive

Business trends and best practices change quickly in the ag industry. Downey says it is important to learn from other industries like food retail and manufacturing and to continue to learn new ways to keep ag businesses competitive.

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Photo: Purdue University

Downey speaking to his students during a lecture at Purdue University.

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Ag retailers need to differentiate, to be knowledgeable, to help the customer accomplish their goals, not just helping them buy products.

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—Scott Downey

“I think we sometimes insulate ourselves with ‘ag is different,’ and it truly is, but it doesn’t mean we can’t learn from other industries,” says Downey.

One way ag retailers can maintain their competitive edge is through differentiation, starting from the top rung, its sales manager. Sales affect every level of the company, says Funk. By implementing an ag business’s sales management and direction from the top-down, every employee from the operations team to administration has first-hand knowledge on how to interact with customers.

“Differentiation has to start at the top,” says Funk. “It has to be communicated, understood and then properly executed by everybody within the organization, not just salespeople.”

Downey believes all employees should be involved in the company’s differentiation. What makes the company stand out should be top of mind for every employee – this affects hiring, creating value for customers, and how retailers deliver value.

“Ag retailers need to differentiate, to be knowledgeable, to help the customer accomplish their goals, not just helping them buy products,” says Downey.

Ag retailers should develop their understanding of sales management and competitive sales strategies to better differentiate their ag business. Join Scott Downey for his 2021 CAAR Conference session on The Evolving Customer Journey on Thursday, Feb. 11. 🍀



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Building Digital Efficiencies

By Laura Wiens

If you had a dollar for every time you've heard the word "disruption" in regard to Canadian ag retail in the past three years, how much richer would you be?

In recent years, Canadian ag retail has experienced significant disruptions to its traditional business practices, including new digital players entering the market and bringing new technologies and considerations for ag retailers with them.

In September 2020, a new digital startup called Agro.Club Canada entered the Canadian ag industry with a web-based platform aiming to make it easier for farmers to order crop inputs, including seed and crop protection products online.

Agro.Club initially launched in Russia, and within two years of operations had attracted over 10,000 farmers representing two million acres, 4,000 grain and food companies and 200 retailers and distributors to their service. In Canada, Winnipeg-based seed distributor CANTERRA SEEDS is the first inputs manufacturer to sign on as a partner.

Disrupting Inefficiency

According to Neil Arbuckle, managing director with Agro.Club Canada, the vision is a "digital ecosystem" where all companies in the current channel can participate. Agro.Club says its key objective is to connect the full agriculture value chain, including ag retailers.

"Our intent is not to disrupt the channel, but rather to disrupt inefficiency itself," he says. "Our motto is 'together for success' and we're inclusive of the channel players."

In its first company launch, Arbuckle says their team focused on solving a pain point impacting retailers regarding manufacturer rebate programs. When farmers order products through Agro.Club, program incentives and rewards are automatically calculated, saving retail staff the task of manually calculating this information per customer. In the case of CANTERRA SEEDS, the purchase details are still finalized between farmer and retailer.

An Ecosystem for all Players

In addition to manufacturer portal that connects to retailers, Agro.Club Canada is currently working with a group of retailers in Western Canada to develop the digital and data services they need for their own businesses.

After Agro.Club Canada builds its inputs platform, Arbuckle says the company will expand to other areas of ag

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Our intent is not to disrupt the channel, but rather to disrupt inefficiency itself.

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—Neil Arbuckle

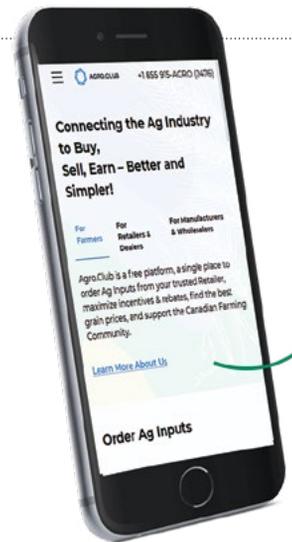
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Digital strategy is about more than e-commerce; it's about enhancing your staff and asset efficiencies along with the understanding of your business and your customers.

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—Shane Thomas

New marketplace platform aims to create efficiency and value at all levels of ag value chain.



such as grain, equipment, financial services or the livestock sector. Farmers use the platform for free – it's manufacturers, retailers and other partners that pay a service fee when they use the platform to offer products or services and to gather their campaign data.

"The service fee applies to the businesses, because in terms of our model, we're appealing to retailers and manufacturers first off, and trying to deliver value to them," he says.

Starting with retailers and manufacturers differentiates Agro.Club Canada's model from direct-to-farm platforms like Farmers Business Network (FBN), or AgraCity, both of which remove levels from the value chain.

Shane Thomas, who writes a blog about the Canadian Ag retail channel called UpStream Ag, has recently joined the company as a digital business strategist.

"The Agro.Club model reinforces that digital strategy is about more than e-commerce; it's about enhancing your staff and asset efficiencies along with the understanding of your business and your customers," says Thomas.

Retailers Embracing Innovation

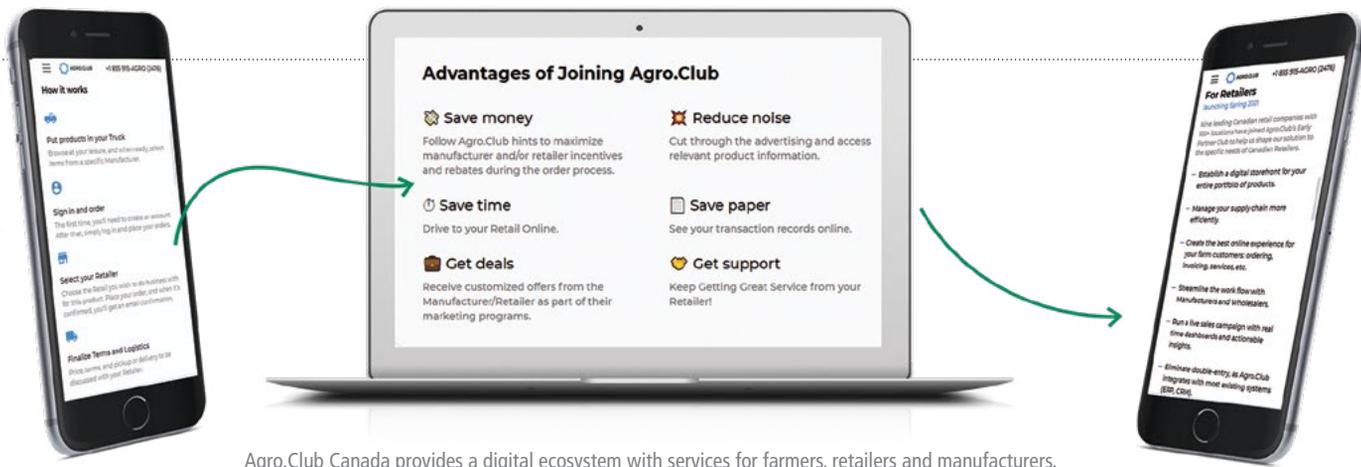
Unlike many other platforms, Agro.Club Canada is making its North American debut in Canada, rather than in the United States. Arbuckle says this is due to the Canadian ag industry's proven interest in adopting new innovations and technology, further demonstrated by uptake from retailers on Agro.Club's "Early Partners Club" of Retailers.

"The Early Partners Club gives those retailers input into how we develop the service. We can ask those ag retailers for some feedback to adjust some of the things that we're doing to make our platform even more responsive to how they will use it to get through some of the challenges that they see in their own business," says Arbuckle.

Many inefficiencies that retailers encounter day-to-day were based in data management, wasting significant time extracting, analyzing and monitoring business data, like sales, margin, and accounts receivable, as examples.

"That reduces the time that ag retail is actually selling product, or developing strategy and tactics, because they are creating spreadsheets," says Thomas.

To that end, Thomas says the Agro.Club Retail Cloud IQ software will provide retail partners with customized dashboards to automatically provide much of this data in a more efficient format for retail employees to view, analyze and act on.



Agro.Club Canada provides a digital ecosystem with services for farmers, retailers and manufacturers. When farmers order inputs online and select their preferred retailer, that retailer will then receive customized dashboards that automatically update, making it easier to monitor customer details.

“If there is a business platform that can help automate and digitize those tasks and save a retail employee 75-85 percent of the time, it’s a great opportunity to add value to retail,” he says.

Complementing Partnerships

Agro.Club has encountered a bit of a misconception since they have launched in Canada on the functionality of the service. Arbuttle says Agro.Club is not strictly an e-commerce platform and that e-commerce is just one of the numerous solutions Agro.Club can provide to its partners.

“We know that retailers are faced with the choice of building IT solutions on their own, taking something off

the shelf or waiting to be forced to adopt new solutions. With our platform, a retailer can plug into their existing IT systems without having to make a full switch or invest in an expensive upgrade,” says Arbuttle.

Because of this flexibility, he sees great opportunities for Agro.Club to complement a retail’s existing digital agriculture strategies.

“If a company is delivering digital agronomy solutions to the ag retail, we can be very complementary to that,” says Thomas. “Our goal is to really work with retailers to establish their goals in terms of an e-business journey in agriculture and help guide them toward the right solutions for their business needs.”



Visit canada.agro.club to learn more about upcoming functionality and opportunities for ag retailers.

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Journey of a Lifetime

A unique school program is exposing youth to global sustainability issues and opportunities.

By Rebecca Hadfield



Journey 2050 is a one-of-a-kind program that is receiving rave reviews from teachers and supporters who say it is having a profound effect on students, opening their eyes to everything from food security to new career options.

The program's founder and major sponsor, Nutrien, developed Journey 2050 along with community partners, including Alberta Canola and the Calgary Stampede, to teach students about the importance of agriculture and help them understand how agriculture is inextricably connected to broader sustainable development challenges, both locally and globally.

"Nutrien and the Calgary Stampede have collaborated for decades on youth education programs largely geared to elementary students," says Rose Lecky, senior manager of community relations & investment at Nutrien. "In 2012, Nutrien and the Calgary Stampede formed a steering committee to brainstorm a junior/senior high education program that would engage youth in agriculture in a way that's never been done before."

What followed that early brainstorming was two years of planning and development that brought together a diverse group of agriculture industry specialists, educators and professional game developers by

combining curriculum-linked and science-based materials while featuring real farm families alongside a virtual farm simulation game. They created a program like no other.

To ensure the program would engage its target audience, the committee engaged youth and teachers, including Lecky's own family, to test-drive the materials along the way. Lecky says continuous feedback has allowed the program, which was originally conceived as a field trip to the Nutrien Western Event Centre at the Calgary Stampede, to grow and evolve to meet the needs of students and teachers, and reflect current industry practices. The program's delivery model continues to encompass the field trip in Calgary but has expanded to include guest speaker opportunities across North America, and online lesson plans for teachers around the world to deliver the program.

Through these various applications, Journey 2050 has been delivered in-person to over 55,000 students in 933 classrooms. Nearly 10,000 teachers, parents and industry professionals have signed up to access the online curriculum to share with their students. In 2020 alone, the Journey 2050 app has had over 100,000 active users with even more accessing the program online.

The Journey has Already Begun

The "2050" in Journey 2050 refers to the year 2050, the halfway point of this century when the global population is estimated to reach 10 billion. A steadily increasing world population counter on the Journey 2050 homepage drives home this point. Beside it, a second counter soberly keeps track of arable land that is being lost – roughly one hectare every seven seconds.

"We have an incredible challenge ahead of us," says Lecky. "We will require at least 60 percent more food and it will have to be produced on the same amount or even less land than today. We will all need to work together to meet this challenge and it starts with education."

Using the gaming aspect to draw students in, Journey 2050 engages participants with an inquiry-based discussion about sustainable agriculture and wraps up with support for teachers and students to take on their own project. Lecky says inspiring youth to take action can be as simple as launching a food waste campaign or building a school garden. The intention of the program, she says, isn't to get students interested in starting their own farms, it's to develop an appreciation for growers and inspire them to join the industry in finding solutions.

“

The material is presented in a way that the kids can understand, and they love the technology.

”

—Curtis Prescesky



Zach Fellows teaches middle-school students the importance of agriculture and its effects in a global and international market.

Journey to Success

Lecky, who was on the original team that brainstormed the project and brought it to fruition, says that it's incredibly fulfilling to hear success stories like Prescesky's. Ultimately, she says, the win for Journey 2050 is to have informed decision makers who are supportive of sustainable agriculture.

"Every action we take now to find sustainable solutions will impact our future," she says. "The next generation is our future consumers, decision makers and employees. It's vital they understand the important role sustainable agriculture contributes to feeding the world."

Start Your Journey, Anywhere

Journey 2050 was offered online before the COVID-19 pandemic, but online resources have become more important than ever. To help support teachers, parents, and students, Journey 2050 has created additional materials to support any school situation.

First, the Guest Speaker presentation option continues to be offered virtually to classrooms across North America.

To meet the needs of students home-schooling or learning remotely due to COVID-19, a special "at home" section has been added to the Journey 2050 website. J2050 At Home includes additional resources and guides to assist teachers, parents and students in accessing and understanding how to use the lessons and tools outside of the classroom.

Finally, the Student Experience page has been redesigned to incorporate an innovative e-learning model, created by NAITCO and the National Center for Agricultural Literacy. The model includes a student-led experience option, plus additional lesson resources and tools for delivering the program. Since launching in March 2020, the eLearning video lessons have received 45,000 views.

Teachers, parents and students are invited to visit journey2050.com to begin a journey that fits their current learning needs. ♦

"I believe it is imperative that everyone understands how our present-day decisions impact our future lives and to showcase the importance of agriculture," she says. "There are thousands of opportunities, a constant stream of new innovations and a network of people who will help us feed the world by 2050. Engaging and empowering the next generation in the discussion is more important than ever."

Although they are heavily involved in the development and sponsorship of Journey 2050, Nutrien itself doesn't deliver the program to classrooms. For that, they rely on agriculture experts and educators from non-profit organizations such as Agriculture in the Classroom Canada (AITC), National Ag in the Classroom (NAITCO), Nutrients for Life (Canada and USA) and the Calgary Stampede.

Journey in the Classroom

Middle-school teacher Curtis Prescesky has welcomed Zach Fellows, AITC Saskatchewan's sustainability program coordinator, to his classroom three times to deliver the Journey 2050 program to his grade six students. Prescesky says the combination of Fellows energetic presentation style and the technology aspect of the program engages the kids in a way that he says is rare.

"The kids are engaged for the whole amount of time that (Fellows) is there," he says. "The material is presented in a way that the kids can understand, and they love the technology. That game really entices them – they love it."

Prescesky says it's a highlight for him to see his students learning and engaging with the material in such a meaningful way. In addition to getting his students thinking about things on a global level, he sees the concepts learned in Journey 2050, like population growth and water conservation, spilling over into other assignments and conversations. He says that the program has also opened their eyes – Prescesky's included – to the many diverse opportunities that agriculture offers, especially where technology is involved.

"Learning about the different avenues for future jobs in agriculture was a little bit of a surprise even for me, and for sure for the kids," he says. "I think when a lot of urban kids think about ag, its maybe not something they see as a future career. But, when they see all the different areas that they could explore, and it includes something that they're interested in, like technology, I think that's pretty interesting to them."

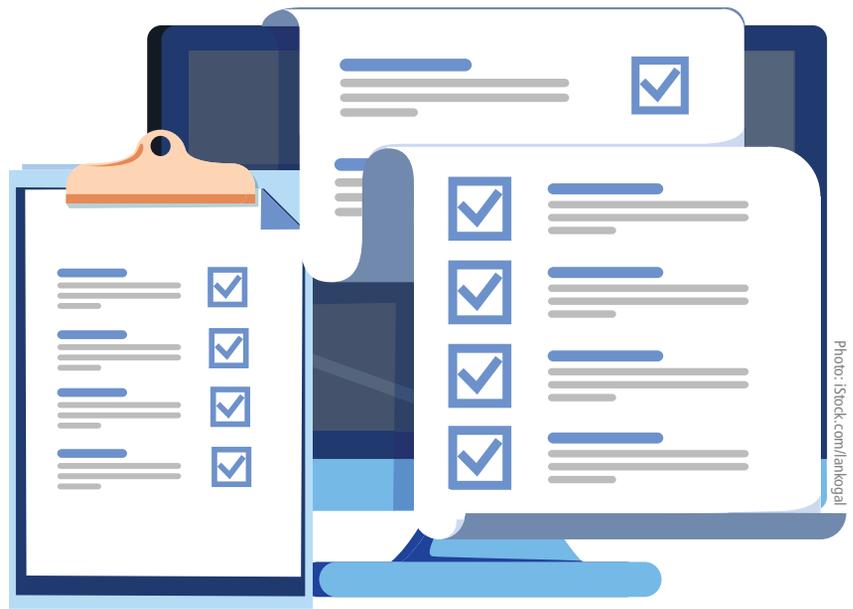
““ Every action we take now to find sustainable solutions will impact our future.

”
–Rose Lecky

Gathering Retailer Members' Input

CAAR extends the Retailer Member Survey to Jan. 15, 2021.

By Alyssa Gallano



Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers (CAAR) has extended its Retailer Member Survey to Jan. 15, 2021, giving members additional time to express their opinions on how CAAR can improve the services it offers and identify the most important issues members would like the association to work on.

CAAR introduced the member survey in October 2020 in hopes of opening a dialogue on how to shape CAAR into an association that better fits retailer members' current needs. While CAAR appreciates everyone who participated in the first round of the member survey, Mitch Rezanoff, executive director of CAAR, says they hope to capture a larger audience the second time around by extending the survey's open window to after the holidays.

"While we appreciate the opinions of members that have completed the survey back in October, we want to capture the opinions of as many retailers as possible," says Rezanoff. "It's extremely important for members to complete the survey as it gives CAAR the tools to better support the community we're so proud to be part of and serve every day."

Rezanoff says the survey is an opportunity for retailers to voice their opinions, helping CAAR staff to identify the most current issues and challenges facing Canadian ag retailers today. The responses also provide insight into how retail members perceive the association and how members assess the value of the services CAAR offered this year.

Extending the Retailer Member Survey

COVID-19 restrictions and government regulations quickly changed throughout the country, sometimes by the hour. Theresa Bolton, board chair of CAAR, says these changes, along with the wrap up of harvest, may have contributed to the small pool of completed surveys when it closed in late October.

"We realize that we ran the member survey at a time when retailers were busy adapting to changes affecting all of us," says Bolton. "We're really hoping to give everyone a chance to have their opinions heard."

The CAAR Retailer Member Survey covers all aspects of CAAR's operations, including advocacy and lobbying, communications,

the CAAR Conference and CAAR Training, along with questions on the current needs of ag retailers.

For example, survey questions like "In your opinion, what do you see as the mandate of CAAR?" can help CAAR assess their current mandate and how to improve it. The survey has a variety of multiple choice, yes or no and long-form response questions and takes less than five minutes to complete.

"It's important for us to continue to grow and learn with our members," says Bolton. "We believe the CAAR Member Survey will help us maintain CAAR members' values while strengthening their voice in all ag industry affairs."

Shaping the Future of CAAR

Members' feedback from the CAAR Retailer Member Survey can help update CAAR's current mandate, training sessions, services and address retailer's current needs, all of which can better serve CAAR members in the long run says Rezanoff.

"Our staff and board are continuing to build our relationship with CAAR members," says Rezanoff. "Their feedback in the CAAR Retailer Member Survey will help us reach our goal of providing programs and services relevant and valuable for the evolving needs of Canadian ag retail businesses."

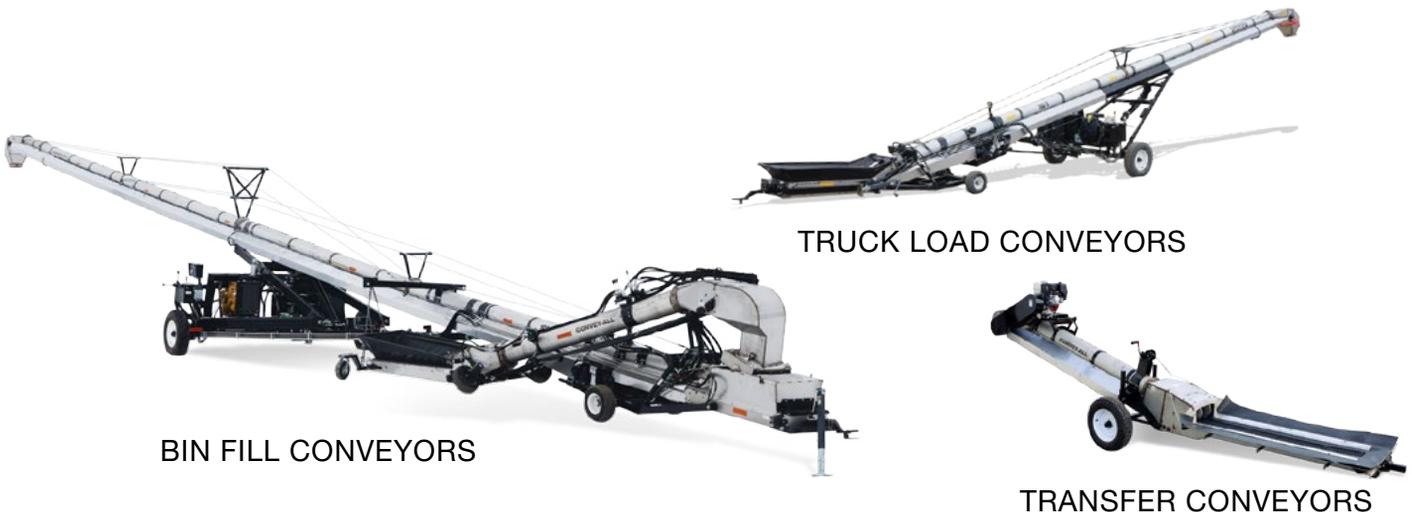
All responses from the CAAR Retailer Member Survey will be reviewed during CAAR's strategic planning session as a part of the February 2021 board meeting. ♡



Visit caar.org/to/retail-survey to take the CAAR Retailer Member Survey today! Survey will be open until Jan. 15, 2021.

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