

# CAAR COMMUNICATOR

PUBLISHED BY THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF AGRI-RETAILERS

## OMNI-CHANNEL STRATEGY

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Photo: iStock.com/kwangmoosaa

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# Listening Actively and Taking Action



Theresa Bolton  
Board Chair

One of the many things I have learned through my years in recruitment is the art and skill of active listening.

When we actively listen to what people are saying, we are making a conscious effort to not just hear the words, but to also understand the complete conversation.

It may also seem simple enough, but one of the best ways to get the most out of a conversation is to make sure the other person knows you are listening. We've all had those conversation where you just get the feeling the other party isn't really listening to what you are saying.

Here at CAAR, I think we are a little guilty of both – not listening as well as we should and not letting you know we are listening as well as we could. We're making changing that a priority this year.

At CAAR, we realize as the industry changes and evolves, so do the needs of our members.

As part of a program of concerted member and non-member outreach by CAAR leadership and the board of directors, we want to hear from you and learn what's important to your business. We want to know what we are doing well, what we could be doing better, what we should be doing again and what we can do that we've never done before.

We will be launching a few projects this year that will be focused on gathering your feedback and upgrading the technology we use to manage our relationships with our members. These projects are in various states of planning, but in brief:

- Conducting a membership study to solicit your thoughts on the areas CAAR should focus on and what we can do to serve you better;
- Developing a more robust social media strategy that takes advantage of the opportunities this

medium allows us to follow and participate in the conversations you, and the public, are having about our industry;

- Revising our website so the things that are important to you are only a click away (well, maybe two);
- Implementing a membership relationship management system so we can manage our relationship with you more efficiently and effectively.



Over the next several months, you'll also see more communications focused on CAAR, delivering the message of who we are, what our mandate is and details about what services and resources we provide our members.

This outreach is officially launched with this issue of the *CAAR Communicator*, with this note from me and the new "Get to Know Your Board" department now being permanent additions to the magazine.

Last, but far from least, planning is well underway and exciting changes are in the works for the 2021 CAAR Conference, hosted in Edmonton, AB. It will be an event you don't want to miss!

We've got a lot of new things in the works, all of which we are asking you to help us shape over the next few months. Unfortunately, it won't be possible for us to speak to every member, but you don't need to wait for our call to let us know what you think. I encourage you to give us a call anytime at (204) 989-9300, email us at [info@caar.org](mailto:info@caar.org) or send a tweet to [@CdnAgRetail](https://twitter.com/CdnAgRetail).

Until we speak again, I wish you a safe and bountiful harvest! 🍷

Sincerely,

Theresa Bolton  
Board Chair

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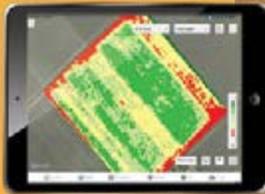
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# Agriculture Can Lead

Supporting agriculture will stimulate Canada's economic recovery.



*Mitch Rezanoff*  
Executive Director

Agriculture will lead the Canadian economic recovery.

At the time of writing this note, Manitoba's provincial health officials have included opening up non-essential travel between Western Canadian provinces as part of its "Restoring Public Services: Phase 3" plan. This decision between western provincial governments is good news for half of the country, while significant challenges remain for Eastern Canada.

Fortunately, provincial and federal leadership had the foresight to deem agriculture production and supporting industries as essential early on in their pandemic response plans.

The livestock processing industry experienced setbacks due to the nature of the work requiring close contact of operating staff, but luckily the crop production industry progressed with few incidences. The success of managing COVID-19 in businesses throughout the agriculture supply chain can be attributed to organizations quickly adapting with the permission and opportunity to continue operating.

The benefits of this combination of quick-thinking and policy is beginning to bear fruit. Canadian rail companies CN and CP are both reporting above average car spots and grain movement from elevators to port. Grain elevators and farmer deliverers continue to function. Farm grain movement that could not occur last fall and winter due to the rail strike and protest disruptions is now well underway.

I would like to thank the provincial and federal government agencies for recognizing before the ask came, that the agriculture industry is essential. Our ask now is for the recognition of agriculture's essential contributions to Canada's economic recovery at the provincial and federal levels.

It is a known truth that a healthy agriculture industry stimulates the Canadian economy. Will it be allowed to do so, is the greater question.

Keeping Canada's food supply chain intact and meeting export contracts will provide an economic stimulus in rural and urban Canada alike, as stable farm income drives all manner of expenditures. The demand will increase for

Canada's agriculture products as we demonstrate high quality consistently, and more important, have a reputation as a reliable supplier.

Farmers, dock workers, processors, crop input ag retailers, manufacturers and distributors have all made sacrifices and placed themselves at personal risk to support planting of the 2020 crop.

The industry needs the resources required for successful operations to be available in a timely manner. This includes personal protection equipment (PPE), which is currently in short supply due to health care worker prioritization. I agree with this strategy, but at the same time, many agriculture industry employees require similar PPE for different health risks than COVID-19, and access to this crucial equipment is required now.

CAAR has a role to play in maintaining a healthy uninterrupted Canadian ag industry, and I call on our members to renew your commitment to CAAR by renewing your membership if you have not already done so. I thank the retailers, manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and consultants that have renewed their CAAR membership.

To continue our support of Canadian ag retailers, we require your support today. 🌱

Thank you,

Mitch Rezanoff  
Executive Director, CAAR





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# CAAR News

The latest news, views, issues and events from your association.

## 2020-21 Membership Renewal is Underway

CAAR has a new membership fee structure for 2020-21, recognizing affiliations and associations some retailers enjoy. This new structure's goal is to increase the number of retail locations that CAAR represents and recognizes the changing landscape in the Canadian ag retail industry.

If you have already paid your membership fees for 2020-21, thank you! If you haven't yet renewed your membership, payment can be made online or by cheque, sent to the CAAR office. We look forward to your commitment and thank you in advance for your continued support. For more details about CAAR membership, please contact the CAAR office at [info@caar.org](mailto:info@caar.org) or 204-989-9300.

## Join a CAAR Committee

Take advantage of the numerous opportunities to support the Canadian ag retail industry and support your company and fellow CAAR members by joining a CAAR committee! CAAR has five committees that work with the board and executive council to drive the activities of the association. Contact Mitch Rezansoff at [mitch@caar.org](mailto:mitch@caar.org) to learn more about joining a CAAR committee.

## CAAR Conference Exhibitor Registration is Now Open!

With over seven hours of dedicated tradeshow time and additional networking events hosted on the tradeshow floor, exhibiting at the 2021 CAAR Conference, hosted in Edmonton, AB., from Feb. 9-11 is the perfect opportunity to connect with ag retailers, suppliers and industry representatives from across Canada.

Exhibitor space sold out last year, so register early to secure your space! For more information about exhibiting at the 2021 CAAR Conference, go to [caar.org/caar-conference/exhibitors](http://caar.org/caar-conference/exhibitors).

## Be a Conference Sponsor

CAAR Conference sponsorship opportunities are designed for you to connect with the agriculture industry and bring maximum exposure to your brand. To become a sponsor and/or donate products or services to the CAAR Pro-Ag Investments Auction, please contact Lisa Defoort at [lisa@caar.org](mailto:lisa@caar.org) or 204-989-9313. Learn more at [caar.org/caar-conference/conference-sponsorship](http://caar.org/caar-conference/conference-sponsorship).

## Training Opportunities for Retailers

CAAR offers exclusive online training programs for ag retailers:

- Anhydrous Ammonia: Retailer Safe Handling and TDG Certification
- Anhydrous Ammonia: Safety & The Farmer – TDG Certification
- TDG Fundamentals: Retailer TDG Certification
- WHMIS 2015 Complete
- Nurse Tank Safety Program
- Investing in Certified Seed
- CCA Examiner

Onsite training is available upon request. For inquiries about the onsite and online training courses offered by CAAR, go to [caar.org/training](http://caar.org/training) or contact the CAAR office. 🍀



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# CAAR CONFERENCE

FEB 9-11, 2021 | EDMONTON, AB | #CAARcon



## **The 2021 CAAR Conference focuses on the business of ag retail and connecting the agriculture industry.**

Hosted from February 9 - 11, 2021 at the Westin Edmonton and Fairmont Hotel Macdonald in Edmonton, AB, the 2021 CAAR Conference offers exceptional value for all ag retailers through a program developed around their needs.

The 2021 CAAR Conference features engaging keynote speakers, informative concurrent sessions, relevant industry updates and valuable opportunities to connect with retailers, exhibitors, and industry representatives from the Canadian agriculture industry, making this an event you don't want to miss!

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**Check out [caar.org/caar-conference](http://caar.org/caar-conference) for more information**

# Get to Know the CAAR Board:

## Martin Kiefer

The CAAR Communicator sits down for a Q&A with board member Martin Kiefer, past board chair and communications committee chair.



**Q: What is your current role in the ag retail sector, and can you give us a little background on your ag retail journey?**

**A:** I am the eastern sales manager at Agrico Canada, a supplier of bulk fertilizer products to ag retailers. Along with my account manager, I work with ag retailers in Ontario, Quebec, New York State and Vermont. A graduate in agriculture from University of Guelph, I have had a diverse career working in many sectors of the industry – with farmers, in government and in private enterprise.

**Q: What does working in the agriculture sector mean to you personally?**

**A:** It's very fulfilling. I love the cycle of agriculture and people who are passionate about it – from the farmers to the retailers that serve them – and the whole infrastructure that supports both. This is a career that asks you to be fully engaged.

**Q: If you had the power to change one thing about agriculture in Canada, no questions asked, what would it be?**

**A:** One thing only? That's an impossible request! Our industry is such an important element in the fabric of Canadian society and yet it is just that – an element. We are reliant upon the people we grow the food for and they on us. We both have a huge responsibility to listen and respond to each other and yet too often we talk instead of listen.

So, what's my one change? It's that all Canadians recognize that agriculture has a critical role in the evolution of our society and that we need engaged people on all sides to help lead us through that process. We have the skills and the passion to grow plentiful, safe food for Canadians and we recognize they are partners, no more or less important, in that process.

**Q: From your perspective, what is the role of CAAR in today's agriculture environment?**

**A:** CAAR is the thread that connects ag retailers to the fabric that we co-exist within. Ag retailers each have their strengths and CAAR's role is to gather those together and communicate them out to the broader society we live in.

“

Our industry is such an important element in the fabric of Canadian society and yet it is just that – an element. We are reliant upon the people we grow the food for and they on us.

”

–Martin Kiefer

But also, critically, CAAR needs to communicate back and challenge its members to consider not only their immediate business needs but those of the broader sector who don't necessarily understand the work that we do but benefit from it immensely.

**Q: Why did you join the CAAR board and how do you apply your industry expertise to the work you do with the board and committees?**

**A:** I joined the CAAR board in 2014 to grow my understanding of the Canadian ag retail sector and to give back to the industry that has provided me a great career. As an Eastern Canadian member of the board, I hope that I bring a different perspective and balance for CAAR's members.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish with your role on the board?**

**A:** To lead CAAR forward in its ambition to be the voice for Canadian ag retail, with the help and guidance of my fellow board members.

**Q: Outside of your work in agriculture, what are you passionate about?**

**A:** Good food, great wine and experiencing parts of our country and world I have never seen before with my wife and partner of 35 years, Joanne.

**Q: Do you have any other personal details you'd like to share with your fellow members – family, fun facts, etc.?**

**A:** I have two great kids and their partners that I am very proud of and two wonderful grandsons!!!

**Q: Any final thoughts you'd like to share with CAAR members?**

**A:** Stay engaged, challenge CAAR and yourself to be the best at what we do. Don't be afraid to tell people that, either. ✨



Get involved!

Positions are open for retailers on the CAAR Board of Directors. Contact [mitch@caar.org](mailto:mitch@caar.org) for more information.



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# A HEALTHY AGRICULTURE SUPPLY CHAIN IS THE KEY TO CANADA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN THE COMING MONTHS

Fertilizer Canada is proactively working with all levels of government on key issues impacting Canada's fertilizer industry to ensure we remain an essential service, especially during this challenging period as we continue to grapple with the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Making sure that products move freely between the Canada-U.S. border and to other export markets, that our industry is not faced with onerous regulations, and that our supply chain remains disruption-free, are the association's priority.

During this spring planting and growing seasons, Canadian farmers were working harder than ever to ensure that agriculture production continues as normal. Deemed an essential service by federal and provincial governments earlier in the year, the fertilizer supply chain has proven that if equipped, it can meet growers' needs at any given time. As Canadians all grapple with the challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the fertilizer industry will continue to play a leading role in global food production.

"Once COVID-19 contingency plans were established at facilities from the start of the pandemic period and in conjunction with being declared an essential service, there was minimal disruption allowing businesses to operate at a normal capacity," said Garth Whyte, President & CEO of Fertilizer Canada. "Fertilizer manufacturers, distributors and agri-retailers did everything they could to keep their customers, suppliers and employees healthy and safe."

In a survey conducted by Fertilizer Canada, 90 per cent of member company respondents said that they had enough product on-hand or

on the way to get fertilizer to their farmer customers in time for the planting season.

"The fertilizer industry takes our role in feeding the world seriously, and know that farmers rely on fertilizer in the spring to ensure a successful harvest in the fall," said Whyte. "By investing in the use of fertilizer today, farmers are growing hope for tomorrow."

In the last year alone, Canada's fertilizer industry has had to navigate everything from rail disruptions and blockades, a ministerial order, and a global pandemic. But in the midst of it all, it has proven its adaptability in challenging situations to meet not only the needs of customers, but any employee along the supply chain.

As the fertilizer industry enters harvest season, it will be focused on supporting the agriculture sector in any which way it can. Canada depends on us to support 76,000 jobs and sustainable food supply chains. Canadian fertilizer production today ensures future harvests will feed our recovering world. Fertilizer Canada knows that stronger, more productive harvests count on Canadian fertilizer to ensure the world's food supply is maintained when it's needed most.

Over 75 countries around the world rely on Canada's dependable food production, which is critical to global food security. Canadian fertilizer also provides \$24 billion annually for our economy and last year alone, 12 percent of the global food supply depended on Canadian fertilizers. So, as we begin to bounce back from such a challenging period, know that farmers and producers are playing a leading role in the country's economic recovery. ♻️

# GOING OMNI-CHANNEL

Omni-channel business tactics are increasingly prevalent in ag retail.

By Laura Wiens

Ag retailers, along with suppliers and co-operative partners are increasingly using digital platforms to do business with farm customers. Using a mix of digital tools to complement traditional business channels is what Taylor Wildeman, director of operations with WinField United Canada (WinField United), calls an “omni-channel business strategy.”

“Omni-channel is connecting in all the places a customer wants to go,” he says. “Omni-channel is the broad strategy; having both a physical presence and a digital presence.”

Wildeman says North American agri-businesses have been going omni-channel for several years, as farmers continue demanding more flexibility from their retailers.

“Ag retail is like many other industries: resources are tight, time is tight and you have to find the best way to deliver your message and connect with your customer,” he says.

Retailers in Western Canada typically have the face-to-face part of business down pat and it is the digital, or e-business, aspects of an omni-channel strategy which require the most development.

“I consider e-business smaller in scope, really focusing on the digital transformation of the retail experience,” he says. “At WinField United we are learning throughout this process too as we look at what the grower wants, what the retailer wants and what technology exists. So, that means in some cases, we’re building the road 10 feet in front of us.”

## Getting Started with New Channels

Co-operatives like WinField United, which has retail owners across Western Canada, and GROWMARK Inc., headquartered in Illinois and serving over 20 member companies in the United States and Ontario, work with their retailers on e-business tools and processes.

Jordan Kuhns, agronomy portfolio manager with GROWMARK, says he supports their corporate level IT systems and helps member companies get the most value from everyday systems, such as their agronomy software.

Kuhns says the particular channels leveraged in an omni-channel strategy varies among retailers, but can include any interactive



Read more about e-business in the October 2019 issue of the *CAAR Communicator*.

platform allowing customers to take actions such as placing orders, requesting quotes or entering other information.

“It’s going to vary from company to company. But, from our perspective, the way that omni-channel starts to show itself is that ability to do business how your customers want to do business with you,” says Kuhns. “If you had the capabilities to do that across a variety of platforms and means, that’s probably a good indicator that you’re on the right track.”

When evaluating new tools, both Wildeman and Kuhns say it is necessary to meet with the retailer and ask questions to establish goals and clarity from the outset, as mapping an omni-channel strategy includes many moving parts. Customer-facing technologies, supporting internal processes and systems, and human resources are all necessary to make the strategy come to life.

“It goes back to the core of how you would look at any project. Really, the first thing is making sure that the retailer is clear on their vision so we can help support them with some of the tools that may be available,” says Wildeman.

Once those key goals are established, the partner company can help the retailers set some key landmarks along the road and then begin working on the right tools to carry the retailer forward. This may come in the form of building, buying or partnering on software and technology.

“If you’re looking at building versus buying versus partnering, I recommend taking a survey of the resources in your internal IT division,” says Kuhns. “Or, if you’re in a cooperative, in the co-op’s IT division to assess the time and effort it would take to build something yourself.”

## Your Human Resources

Wildeman stresses that planning for e-business isn’t just about technology, but must also include human resources. This includes evaluating your team’s skillsets, implementing new or updated training programs, education requirements and potentially a change management strategy to help staff adjust to their new roles.

“Generally speaking, embracing e-business will affect every aspect of that retail,” says Wildeman. “You will ask

“ Omni-channel is the broad strategy; it’s about having both a physical presence as well as a digital presence.

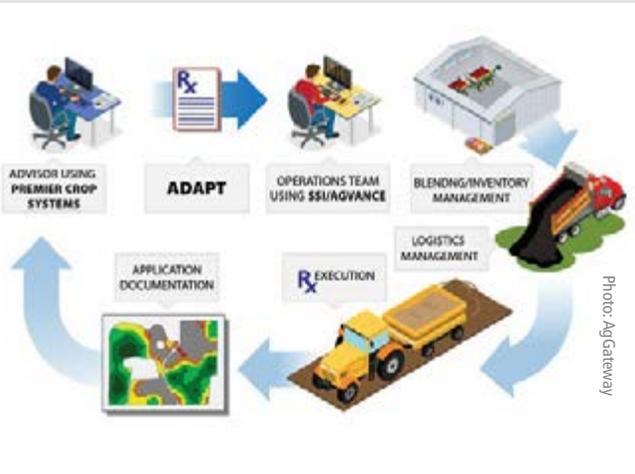
”

—Taylor Wildeman



Photo: G-Mac's AgTeam

## BUILDING E-CONNECTIVITY INTO AN OMNI-CHANNEL STRATEGY



Kuhns says many companies are entering the digital ag sphere boasting “game-changing” technologies for ag retailers. When vetting potential technology partners, he says it’s good to start by assessing how well that company’s solutions can integrate with their existing software.

He says a natural starting place for this assessment is AgGateway, a non-profit organization working to improve e-connectivity throughout the supply chain by supporting industry standards for e-connectivity and open-sourced software solutions.

“If there are existing AgGateway standards in place, that makes the legwork a lot easier, it’s a great place to start,” he says.

According to AgGateway Executive Vice-President and COO Brent Kemp, who moderated the e-Connectivity Panel Discussion at the 2020 CAAR Conference, every level of the supply chain, including ag retailers can benefit from improved e-connectivity.

“For retailers to provide maximum service to growers, they need to consider their investments in interoperability and data management,” says Kemp. “The more retailers adopt standard processes – and insist that their service providers support them – the more effective they will be at growing the customer relationship.”

One of the many tools AgGateway provides to support eConnectivity at the retail level is the ADAPT Toolkit, designed to simplify the transfer of precision ag data between different hardware and software systems.

ADAPT has an open-source license which means it is free for ag retailers to use and modify, and it features a combination of open sources and proprietary data conversion plug-ins, allowing software to convert data to different file formats.

“Any retailer with agronomy services as part of its businesses model should be aware of ADAPT, where there are multiple systems and the retailer wants interoperability,” says Kemp. “I encourage retailers to look into the ADAPT toolkit, determine if it addresses an interoperability challenge for them, and incorporate it into their systems and processes.”

Graphic depicting how Minnesota retailer Central Farm Service customized the modules of the ADAPT Toolkit to suit its specific needs. Download the case study at [aggateway.org](http://aggateway.org).

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your administrative and office staff to work a certain way, you will ask your sales team to work in a certain function, your warehouse staff will need to make sure that product they are supplying or loading is then being entered into the system correctly.”

Reid McBride, manager, procurement, logistics, & marketing with G-Mac's AgTeam (G-Mac's) can attest to this firsthand. G-Mac's is an independent retailer and WinField United owner company, with 10 locations in Western Saskatchewan. McBride works with the company's head office team in Kindersley, SK.

With support from Winfield United, G-Mac's is executing a three-phase e-business plan. They are currently in phase two and working on elements of phase three. McBride says he has seen that not only does e-business impact all staff, but e-business is better when it impacts all staff.

“The more people involved, the better. Agronomists who are actually in the fields and account managers who are actually talking to customers are feeding us ideas, information and asking us questions,” he says. “To be successful, we need to have the whole company involved.”

**Laying the Foundation**

McBride says G-Mac's unknowingly began laying the groundwork for omni-channel about five years ago, when the company set up social media profiles and launched a new website. Company leadership also created a new position – ag innovation manager – dedicated to implementing new tools. The company then approached their digital strategy more formally after meeting with WinField United about two years ago.

“Doing these things that we saw as part of our business was actually moving us to a place where we sat down and thought about this in earnest,” says McBride. “The meeting two years ago is when the leadership team really evaluated what this would mean to our company.”

Since then, McBride says that digital undertakings have complemented, not replaced, traditional ways of interacting with customers. “The traditional retail channel remains as important as ever.

A large group of customers still want to interact this way,” he says. “Our ultimate goal is to digitally recreate what makes us successful as an independent retail and enhance that traditional retail experience.”

**Meeting Milestones**

Without resources from WinField United, McBride does not think this undertaking would have been possible for G-Mac's.

“I think it would be very difficult for any independent retailer in North America, for sure in Western Canada, to do this alone,” he says. “We have an omni-channel business account manager at WinField United who helps us with everything: marketing campaigns, strategies, platform upgrades, really organizing the process from start to end.”

G-Mac's is working to upgrade their online customer experience. Right now, McBride says customers can log on to a Grower Central portal, powered by fellow CAAR member Tronia Systems, which allows customers to view invoices and financial information. The portal will soon be integrated into a larger dashboard called ATLAS, which will be adaptable, showing relevant components to specific accounts. McBride says the ATLAS dashboard will also be interactive, with the functionality for customers to communicate with their agronomist and account manager right from the dashboard.

“The experience for one customer may look very different than what it will be for another,” he says. “And that's how it's supposed to be.”

McBride says the goal is to have a group of customers using ATLAS by the end of this calendar year, but lots of groundwork still needs to be done to get there. Internal IT upgrades and investments in digital fiber connections (no small feat for a rural business) are two significant boxes the company must check off.

“By the end of the year, if we bring some of our customers into the fold and bring in manufacturing and distribution partners, we will have met a significant milestone,” he says. “There is always a new milestone. This is continuously evolving, and one day we will be working toward milestones we are not even thinking about right now.”



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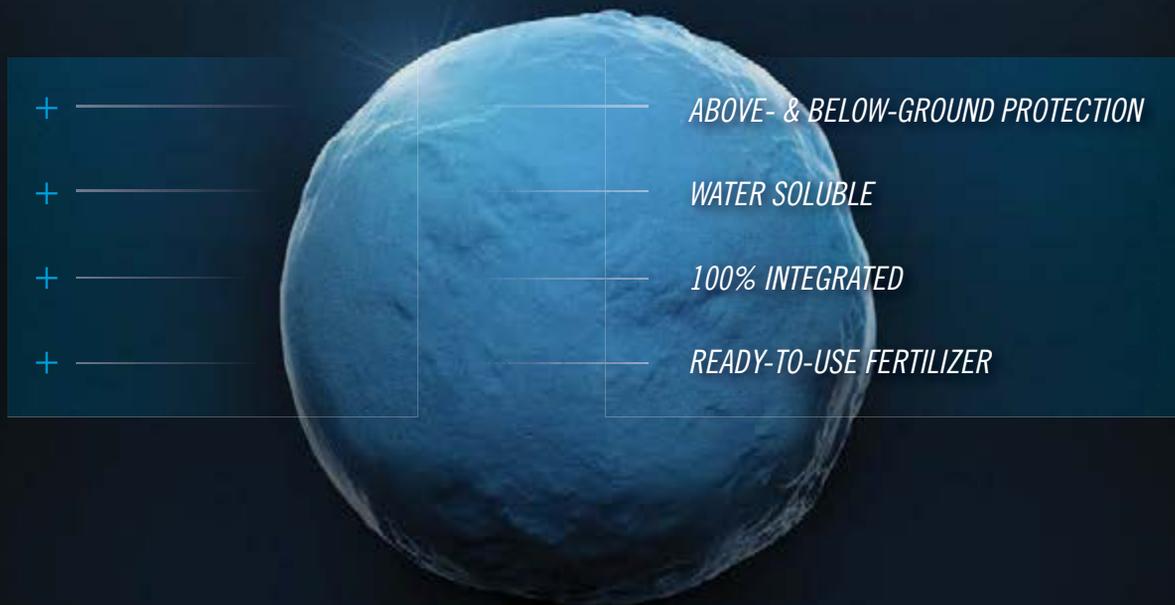
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# EMPOWERING FARMERS

## to Build Public Trust | Retailers are finding new ways to help farmers share their story.

By Rebecca Hadfield

According to research done in 2019 by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI), public trust in Canada's food supply is dropping and, if we want to gain it back, farmers are the ones to deliver the message.

The CCFI is a not-for-profit charitable organization whose members and partners represent the diversity of today's food system – from farmers and food companies to universities, restaurants and retailers. As an independent affiliate of The Centre for Food Integrity based in the U.S., the CCFI follows a research-based consumer trust model introduced by its American counterpart.

Research conducted by the CCFI tracks consumer concerns and attitudes on topics ranging from food safety and animal welfare to attitudes about farming and trusted sources of information. This research allows agricultural stakeholders to evaluate the next steps in building public trust, including where to invest and how to approach.

Results from CCFI's research in 2019 indicate that only one in three Canadian consumers believe Canada's food system is headed in the right direction and 91 per cent know little to nothing about modern farming practices. On the plus side, 60 per cent are interested in knowing more about how their food is produced, and, when it comes to who consumers trust and hold responsible for providing information on how food is grown, the research consistently points to farmers.

### Empowering Farmers

Kirsten Pears, administrative manager at Olds Fertilizers & Agri Services Ltd., thinks all retailers should be concerned about the misinformation that is being spread through social media and in the news – especially when it comes to the products and services they supply.

“Our businesses are impacted by what happens and what the public perceives,” she says. “If the farmers don't speak up and tell their story and the community decides to ban some of these tools that are very necessary in Western Canadian agriculture, that effects our business.”

Recognizing the role that farmers play in countering the misconceptions held by the public, Olds, an independent retail in central Alberta, is offering their customers a unique program from Know Ideas Media.

The program, which was conceived to help equip farmers with tools to better tell their story, centers around “communications care packages” put together by Know Ideas Media founder and CEO, Nick Saik. Each “care package” release includes one of Saik's films, along with guidance to help communicate key messages, sample answers to common questions and tips to help new users navigate social media.

Saik, a filmmaker and educator, started creating films 10 years ago with the intention of dispelling some of the myths and misinformation surrounding modern farming. Through his films on topics such as GMOs and glyphosate use, he aims to present science-based information in an easily digestible and understandable format.

“Every farmer is going to have a different story; they're going to find different things that resonate with the public.”

–Nick Saik

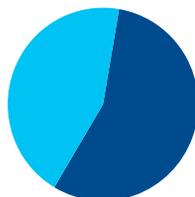
## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM 2019 PUBLIC TRUST RESEARCH

**THREE IN FIVE** CANADIANS VIEW AGRICULTURE IN CANADA POSITIVELY.



HOW MANY CANADIANS WANT TO **LEARN MORE** ABOUT **MODERN FARMING PRACTICES**?

60% WANT TO KNOW MORE



**ONE IN THREE** CANADIAN CONSUMERS BELIEVE CANADA'S FOOD SYSTEM IS HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.



HOW MUCH DO CANADIANS **KNOW ABOUT MODERN FARMING PRACTICES**?



“We wanted to create a resource where we could take the video content we've been making, offer it to farmers to watch and pass around, and then offer them some guidance on how to effectively communicate about that issue,” explains Saik.

“We break all of the facts and statistics out of the video so that they're easily shareable, but I think the most important part is that we take our five years of experience arguing with the public about these issues and we distill it down into tactics and strategy to increase the number of successful outcomes.”

Saik says his goal is to have as many retailers as possible offer his program to their customers to help ensure that farmers are well-equipped to deliver a strong, cohesive message to consumers.

### **Making it Easy**

From an administrative point of view, the process is relatively hands-off for the retailer, says Pears. Once subscribed to the program, the retailer simply shares a link to a custom-branded portal with their customers. Farmers who visit the site can access existing content and have the option to subscribe for automatic updates whenever new videos are posted. Olds currently has around 140 customers subscribed to the service.

Although the care packages offer examples of how to communicate facts and respond to arguments or misinformation,

Saik encourages farmers who share the messages to do so in their own words for authenticity. He adds that although some farmers have become expert content creators, it is unrealistic to think that most will. Instead, he thinks the industry should teach farmers to amplify existing, credible messages and relate them to their own experiences.

“Every farmer is going to have a different story; they're going to find different things that resonate with the public,” he says. “I tell farmers to go with feelings over facts because facts generally don't change minds.”

It's good to have facts to back up your story – you do need to know what you're talking about – but you're not giving a PowerPoint presentation. It's you and it's your farm lifestyle and only you can speak with authority about it.”

Pears says the customer feedback she's received about the content has been very positive, and says the analytic data Olds has measured tells a positive story as well. Pears says the high click rate to the portal and the average time spent on the page tells her that the content is resonating well with farmers who are subscribed. She is not surprised by this, as she says the videos are valuable for their clear, concise messaging, applicable to numerous types of communications.

“The videos are very well done. They're an easy watch – they're quick, decisive and credible,” she says. “So, whether (farmers) are sharing the videos through social media or not, ultimately they can use the information to build trust when having conversations in person and offline.”



To find out more about Know Ideas Media Communications Care Packages, visit [knowideasmedia.ca](http://knowideasmedia.ca).



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### Amplifying the Message

Helping farmers build trust through social media is the aim of Farm Credit Canada's Ag More Than Ever program, which has been operating for 12 years – just two years shy of Twitter itself – and was originally focused on creating content to tell the story of ag on behalf of farmers. But, because consumers want to hear directly from the people who grow their food, Isaac LeClair, the program's manager and social media consultant, says that the program now encourages farmers to tell their own story and uses its impressive social media presence to amplify their message.

"We asked ourselves how Ag More Than Ever can serve Canadian agriculture online," says LeClair. "Our purpose is to make people feel confident, to feel proud, and our goal is to mobilize farmers to be more vocal on social media."

LeClair's advice to farmers echoes that of Saik and Pears – be authentic and share your own story. He says that retailers and organizations can help by being cheerleaders and supporting farmers' efforts any way they can, even if it is just to provide a little encouragement. "When we see a farmer doing a good job of sharing their story, we will send them a quick message to say 'You're doing great! Keep up the good work,'" he says.

The program, which touts itself as "Agriculture's Biggest Fan," currently boasts close to 70,000 followers between

“

If the farmers don't speak up and tell their story and the community decides to ban some of these tools that are very necessary in Western Canadian agriculture, that effects our business.

”

–Kirsten Pears

its Twitter and Facebook pages and has become a powerful force in helping Canadian ag find its voice. LeClair says one of the best examples of that is Ag More Than Ever's annual Canada's Ag Day celebration.

Held annually in February, Canada's Ag Day is a way for the entire industry to come together online and in person to show their pride, engaging urban Canadians and food enthusiasts in the process. LeClair says the four-year-old event, which does not rely on any hashtag promotion to increase its reach, has consistently exceeded its targets each year.

"This year, the #CdnAgDay hashtag was used in over 10,000 tweets and trended on Twitter for over 11 hours – it was awesome," says LeClair. "It goes to show you that farmers across Canada have done such a good job of building their own brand and people really want to be engaged with what they do."

When it comes to building public trust in Canadian agriculture, we are all in it together, say Pears, Saik and LeClair. Encouraging farmers to share their story, and backing them up when they do, will go a long way in building up public trust, which, in turn, will allow the industry to continue to use the tools and methods they need to feed an ever-growing population into the future. ♣

The advertisement features a red and white color scheme. At the top left is the logo for HITECH INSTALLATIONS, MAINTENANCE & CONSTRUCTION, with logos for Doyle, COR, CWB, and Ranco below it. The main headline reads "Specializing in Fertilizer Storage from 1,600 to 60,000 mt". Below this is a collage of images showing various fertilizer storage facilities, including large white silos, metal structures, and buildings. The slogan "When CRAFTSMANSHIP Counts!" is prominently displayed in white text on a red background. Contact information is provided at the bottom left.

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# A New Reality

Retailers comment on policies and procedures shaped by COVID-19.

By Rebecca Hadfield

This spring, as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of the country, provincial governments issued strict social distancing orders that forced companies to shut down or drastically alter the way they do business in an effort to “flatten the curve” and limit the spread of the disease. However, even at the height of stay-home orders and economic uncertainty, Canadian ag retailers and farmers carried on with the spring planting season without major setbacks.

Chris Schuh, manager of Top Gro Agro Ltd. in Mallaig, AB., said his company made multiple adjustments to its operations to protect staff, customers, suppliers and families from the spread of COVID-19. While some of the changes may be done away with once things start getting back to normal, he says there are a few policies and procedures that the company may permanently keep.

“I don’t know that we are out of the woods yet regarding COVID-19 so it’s hard to comment on what will stick moving forward and what will not,” says Schuh. “Some of the adjustments were major, some were more minor. Some changes will be permanent, and some were an extreme standard set at the start of the pandemic that may or may not fade as government health officials loosen protocols and we all continue to learn more about the disease.”

## Retailer Q & A

The *CAAR Communicator* reached out to several retailers, including Schuh, as well as manufacturers and suppliers to see if they would be keeping any of the new policies and procedures that they put in place for COVID-19.

### Q: Have you made any adjustments to the way you work (due to COVID-19) that you plan to permanently incorporate into your operations going forward?

**A:** “It’s too early to tell what could be permanently incorporated but we have seen some benefits with how we have been hosting and attending meetings as well as conducting some employee training. Employees and customers have adapted very well and continue to practice social distancing while staying aware of their surroundings, so this has been positive. We have seen a positive uptick in our secure online customer portal through [richardsonpioneer.ca](http://richardsonpioneer.ca) where customers have the ability to see their grain and crop input transactions in a very customer friendly and accessible way.” —*Russ Reich, vice-president of crop inputs, Richardson Pioneer*

**A:** “Would I incorporate anything permanently? No, absolutely not.” —*Harlene Simmonds, owner, AgriTeam Services Inc.*

“

Many of our customers and suppliers finally experienced the full digital capabilities of our facility that we have invested in over the past couple years but were not fully utilizing.

”

—Chris Schuh

**A:** “I believe most growers and perhaps some of our staff felt we went a little too far with our COVID-19 policies but most also understood the reasoning and the importance of our business staying healthy and open. I also believe a lot of good came out of the protocols including some increased efficiency. Many of our customers and suppliers finally experienced the full digital capabilities of our facility that we have invested in over the past couple years but were not fully utilizing. For example, farms that previously refused electronic load outs and invoices are now enjoying their convenience. We had fewer mistakes on our end because now many orders and farm directions for deliveries were texted in rather than relaying phone messages. There were also significantly fewer distractions inside the office as we were not allowing in any visitors.” —*Chris Schuh, manager, Top Gro Agro Ltd.*

**A:** “There are certainly a number of measures around hygiene, sanitizing and the like, that will be permanent fixtures going into the future. We have put in hand sanitizing stations and issued handwashing protocol notices and personal hand sanitizer for all staff. We will be checking with our customers about the possibility of keeping virtual sign-in to worksites (on a permanent basis), so that we can limit contact. The other reality is that a number of our employees are functioning reasonably well working from home and we could see more of that going into the future as a great work/life balancer.” —*Craig Senchuk, president & CEO, Hi Tech Installations Ltd.*

## CAAR'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

On April 1, CAAR staff, along with the board of directors, hosted a webinar to provide details of CAAR’s response to the pandemic. The webinar included details of CAAR’s outreach and advocacy activities, including communications with federal and provincial governments that encouraged all jurisdictions to identify the agriculture supply chain as an essential service.

As well, CAAR created a COVID-19 support section on [caar.org](http://caar.org) to provide useful and timely information to retailers. The section contains dozens of articles and resources to help retailers navigate some of the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic and is updated as more relevant information is released.

You can find CAAR’s COVID-19 resources, including a copy of the COVID-19 Activities & Response webinar, letters to government and a Q & A, at [caar.org/resources/agri-retailer-support](http://caar.org/resources/agri-retailer-support).

# Making a Clean Sweep

Regular cleaning key to stopping spread of soil-borne threats.

By Jim Timlick

We're all in this together. It's a phrase Canadians from coast to coast have been using to show solidarity during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. It also sums up the approach many agricultural experts say growers and ag retailers need to take when it comes to limiting the spread of soil-borne pests.

Two of the most insidious threats to a growing number of Canadian producers are clubroot and the soybean cyst nematode (SCN). Clubroot is a soil-borne fungus that infects canola, causing roots to become deformed and making it difficult for the plant to absorb water and nutrients properly.

SCN has been present in North America since the 1950s and began spreading into Eastern Canada in the late 1980s. It is often referred to as the "hidden yield robber" and costs growers in Canada and the U.S. an estimated \$1 billion each year.

While the threat of clubroot and SCN will likely never be completely eliminated, one agronomist says their impact can be significantly reduced by taking a united approach.

"Seed companies and life sciences companies are breeding resistant varieties. They're really doing their part. What they always ask is that we use this in conjunction with other good management practices," says Dan Orchard, an agronomy specialist with the Canola Council of Canada.

"We need to take an integrated approach to be successful. We say you need to take a 'recipe' approach. If you leave something out of your recipe you don't get the desired final product," he says. "Similarly, leaving out one of the management approaches may not control things to the level you are looking for."

Although clubroot can be spread by wind and wildlife, experts say the most common form of transmission is via equipment moving from between fields, or even provinces. In one recent example, demo equipment from Alberta was directly linked to clubroot in at least one field in Saskatchewan.

Orchard's advice to retailers and their customers is to guard against complacency: just because clubroot hasn't been an issue on a farm in the past, don't think it can't be present now.

Biosecurity boot covers are a good measure for anyone visiting a field with potential soil-borne threats.

“

We need to take an integrated approach to be successful.

”

—Dan Orchard



How is your retail limiting the spread of soil-borne pests? Tell us at [editor@suckerpunch.ca](mailto:editor@suckerpunch.ca).



Photos: Canola Council of Canada

## Clean it before you move it.

One of the most likely scenarios when it comes to spreading clubroot is when a piece of equipment is brought in from an area of high or unknown risk. In those cases, Orchard says it needs to be completely disinfected and properly sanitized.

There are generally three stages of sanitation. The first is a rough clean that essentially involves kicking off any loose soil that may be attached to the machine or its wheels. "Level one can mitigate 90 or 95 percent of the problem because you can remove 90 or 95 percent of the soil by hand reasonably quickly," Orchard says.

Stage two involves using compressed air or high-pressure water to remove whatever material you can't by hand. The third stage is the use of a disinfectant such as bleach or a commercial cleaner, and is generally reserved for extreme situations where there is a very high likelihood of clubroot.



Equipment should be sanitized with bleach or commercial cleaner if there is very high risk of clubroot.

Such products are misted onto the equipment and allowed to saturate for 15 to 20 minutes.

Albert Tenuta, a field crop pathologist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, says that like clubroot, cleaning equipment between jobs remains the quickest and most effective way to limit the spread of the SCN, adding retailers and growers should pay particular attention to cleaning the wheels and undercarriage of any vehicles they use in the field.

Another consideration is the use of personal biosecurity measures. One such measure is wearing protective boot covers, which Orchard recommends when walking in a field where soil-borne threats may be present.

If boot covers aren't an option, placing boots in a boot bath with bleach or other disinfectant will remove any spores or soil after a walk in the field. Any hand-held tools such as trowels, shovels or soil samplers should likewise be wiped clean or washed after they are used.

Carl Veikle, owner of Veikle Agro Inc. in Cut Knife, Sask., says clubroot has become

a major concern for many of his customers in Northwestern Saskatchewan over the past three years. To help alleviate those concerns, his employees manually remove earth and disinfect the wheels on equipment before it is moved from one job site to another.

Still, Veikle says growers understand there is only so much that can be done to limit the spread of clubroot since there is a limited supply of time and resources. He says the best approach is to use common sense. "It's just about being a little cleaner operation," he says.

While cleanliness can go a long way in limited the spread of soil-borne pests and pathogens, Tenuta stresses that it's also important for ag retailers and their customers to focus on early detection, which is one of the best ways to limit potential for spreading.

"You can't put a wall around your field and keep soybean cyst nematodes or other things from coming in. What you can do is prepare for it. It starts with scouting and being able to know what to look for, whether it's through digging up plants and looking at roots or taking a simple soil test," he says. ♣

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# Working Together to **Keep it Clean**

CAAR helps distribute a new toolkit, developed specifically for retailers.

By Rebecca Hadfield

**K**eepest Clean, a joint initiative of the Canola Council of Canada, Pulse Canada, Cereals Canada, the Barley Council of Canada and the Prairie Oat Growers Association, has developed a new advisor toolkit for Canadian ag retailers. The toolkit, which was mailed to CAAR retailer members in May, contains printed resources to inform and guide conversations about growing market-ready canola, pulse and cereal crops.

Greg Bartley, director of crop protection and crop quality at Pulse Canada, says a series of farmer focus groups held by Keep it Clean over the winter months helped identify the need for an advisor toolkit.

“Farmers rely on their trusted advisors and buyers for information, so it only made sense to put together a toolkit just for them to get the Keep it Clean message out to farmers,” says Bartley. “We wanted to provide a resource that retailers could use as a “quick-hitter” – essentially, to get information about how to grow and maintain a market-ready crop out to their customers.”

## Striking a Partnership

To ensure that the toolkits would meet the specific needs of advisors, Keep it Clean reached out to several ag retailers to see which resources would be most useful. Based on their feedback, the kits were created and a partnership with CAAR was struck to help distribute the kits to its membership. Bartley says it was CAAR’s good relationship with retailers that made it an obvious choice for a collaboration.

Mitch Rezanoff, CAAR’s executive director, says it was important for CAAR to be involved in the distribution of the toolkits because they recognize the role that retailers play as trusted advisors, and because of the importance of the Keep it Clean program itself.

“Keep it Clean falls directly within CAAR’s values and, as the only national association representing Canada’s ag retailers, CAAR openly endorses the efforts of the program,” says Rezanoff. “Ag retailers and agronomists supporting the Keep it Clean message is in the best interest of farmers, processors and consumers, and it’s good for business.”

Based on retailer feedback, the toolkit contains information on products that could pose a market risk if applied to certain crops, Keep it Clean’s “5 Simple Tips” and a pre-harvest glyphosate staging guide.

One of the program’s most-requested items, the Keep it Clean Pre-Harvest Glyphosate Staging Guide provides information on pre-harvest glyphosate application and includes visual examples of canola, pulse and cereal crops at the correct stage to receive an application – less than

30 percent grain moisture. As this can often be challenging for growers to assess, retailers can use the double-sided handout as a visual reference and to support the advice they provide to growers.

“The toolkit is just a simple package that retailers and agronomists can use to help communicate these important messages to growers,” says Bartley. “We’ve created these handouts and laminated them to make them more easily available. You can keep a hard copy of the material in your truck and always have it available to have a conversation with farmers.”

## Online Resources for Retailers

Retailers are also granted access to a special advisor’s page at [keepingitclean.ca/advisors](http://keepingitclean.ca/advisors) where they can download PDFs of the toolkit resources, as well as sharable articles for their e-newsletters, blogs and social media channels on topics such as fusarium and blackleg management, pre-harvest glyphosate use and safe storage.

“The online tools can easily be put into an email news blast to quickly get information out to growers,” says Bartley. “Whether it’s the 5 Simple Tips to keep crops ready for market, or the products of concern and MRL advisories, we hope that the resources are valuable to retailers and provide a good basis to have these conversations with farmers. We encourage retailers to check the page regularly for updates to share with their customers.”

## Playing an Important Role

Both Bartley and Rezanoff emphasize the need to take a value-chain approach to ensuring farmers are producing crops that are acceptable to both domestic and export customers.

Rezanoff’s advice to retailers is to make sure all staff are utilizing the resources provided by Keep it Clean in their day-to-day dealings with growers. By doing so, they can help their grower customers protect their investments and help uphold Canada’s reputation as a supplier of high-quality canola, pulses and cereals.

“Retailers, and in particular agronomists, are our front-line of messaging to farmers to ensure products, rates and timing are within label and consumer safety recommendations,” says Rezanoff, adding that maintaining consistent information is vital. “Misapplication of products can have lasting impacts to Canada’s reputation of providing safe, high-quality food. We need a consistent message across the entire ag industry in Canada and we all have a role to play.”



“Ag retailers and agronomists supporting the Keep it Clean message is in the best interest of farmers, processors and consumers, and it’s good for business.”

”

—Mitch Rezanoff



Download Keep it Clean toolkit materials at [keepingitclean.ca/advisors](http://keepingitclean.ca/advisors).

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