



APAS releases initial results of COVID-19 Farm Survey

Saskatchewan farmers report COVID-19-related disruptions to their operations this spring

April 6, 2020 (Regina, SK) – Farmers are speaking up about the impacts of COVID-19 on Saskatchewan agriculture through a weekly survey launched by the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS). The results, which include data collected from March 24 to April 5 from over 250 Saskatchewan farmers, show that COVID-19 is affecting producers at the farm gate. Survey results can be viewed at apas.ca/survey, and will be shared with government and industry to help develop responses to issues faced by the agricultural sector.

APAS is paying particular attention to the number of producers that are anticipating – or are already experiencing – financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. Over 70% of survey respondents said they expected the crisis to result in reduced commodity prices, lower revenue, and reduced cash flow; and close to half expect they may not be able to pay their bills. Additionally, 53% of respondents indicated that cash flow was an immediate financial need for their operation.

“Farmers need cash to be able to get their crop in the ground this spring, and after the brutal last couple of years we’ve dealt with, reduced cash flow could really break people,” says farmer and APAS President Todd Lewis. “So far, the government’s COVID-19 support to farmers has been to increase our access to loans, but going into even more debt isn’t the answer. Just look south of the border, where agriculture has received huge subsidies for years. Canadian farmers can’t compete with that, especially not during a global crisis like this. If agriculture is essential for the Canadian economy, it’s time for governments to directly invest in our farmers.”

“We’re hearing from farmers that their access to farm inputs like fuel, fertilizer, veterinary services, and seed are already being disrupted,” continues Lewis. “Nearly half of those that responded to the survey also indicated that they’re experiencing delays with being able to sell or deliver what they produce on the farm. It’s early days, but these are things we need to keep a close eye on.”

Lewis acknowledges that the situation continues to evolve quickly, and that more data is needed. “We want to collect real-time data from farmers that we can share directly with the government on an ongoing basis,” he explains. “We’ve updated the survey with new questions and will continue to do so weekly. We know that the situation is going to change significantly over time, so we’re asking farmers to complete the survey every week.”

The new version of the survey will be available at apas.ca/survey from April 6 to 12 and includes a question about unharvested 2019 acres. “Many farmers were hoping to harvest and sell overwintered crops to pay outstanding bills from 2019,” explains Lewis. “It’s unclear how many still haven’t been able to get their crop in.”

Other new questions explore disruptions to internet/cell service and difficulties dealing with meat processing facilities. Farmers are also encouraged to highlight emerging issues not identified in the survey.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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Background: APAS is Saskatchewan’s general farm organization – formed to provide farmers and ranchers with a democratically elected, grassroots, non-partisan, producer-run organization based on rural municipal boundaries. As the united voice of thousands of agricultural producers and ranchers in Saskatchewan, APAS strives to represent the views of a wide variety of agricultural stakeholders in order to form comprehensive policies that can benefit all sectors of society. APAS is a member of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.