



COVID-19 making a bad situation worse for farmers

Unharvested acres, cash flow, and poor internet, among farmers' main concerns heading into spring

April 14, 2020 (Regina, SK) – It's the middle of April, but nearly 40% of respondents to the Agricultural Producer's Association of Saskatchewan's (APAS) most recent farm survey still have unharvested crop left in the field from last year. The weekly survey tracks the ongoing situation for the province's farmers as they cope with a spring that is even more stressful than usual.

Cold weather and recent precipitation in many parts of the province have left farmers unable to get into their fields to complete the 2019 harvest. "It means double the work in a spring when stress is already high in the farm community," says farmer and APAS President Todd Lewis. "Not only are folks unable to finish their harvest and start seeding, but we're hearing more and more about how the impacts of COVID-19 are making the situation more difficult."

A full one third of survey respondents indicated that they are experiencing COVID-19-related disruptions to the purchase and delivery of farm inputs, as well as to the sale and delivery of their farm production. A number of respondents also reported concerns with recent declines in the cattle market. "I was wanting to sell some feeder cattle, but markets have canceled some sales and the prices have been so uncertain," wrote one producer, echoing the experience of others who are also grappling with falling prices and difficult marketing decisions.

The impact of poor and unreliable telecommunications was another theme that came out loud and clear in this week's results. Fifty-one percent of respondents reported higher than average disruptions to cell and internet service, a trend that shines light on a long-standing problem.

Respondents to this week's survey are continuing to report significant cash flow challenges and financial pressure, problems that APAS would like to see addressed through government policy at a time when agriculture is so crucial. "Just like people in every industry across the country, cash flow is a huge problem for Saskatchewan farmers right now," says Lewis, noting that of the 37% of respondents who indicated that they are experiencing immediate financial need as a result of COVID-19, an overwhelming 94% identified cash flow as a primary concern. "If you can't pay your bills and buy your supplies, it's going to be hard to keep your business afloat. Whether you're a farmer or not, most everyone can relate to that."

In an effort to collect and communicate the most up-to-date data related to COVID-19 and agriculture, APAS is asking Saskatchewan producers to complete updated online surveys at apas.ca/survey every week during the pandemic. This week's survey, open April 13-20, includes follow up questions related to the 2019 harvest. Last week's results will be communicated directly to government officials and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and can be viewed at apas.ca/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.