



Larry Weber's career in the grain industry began with Pioneer Grain Company (now James Richardson International). Later, as Director of Operations at the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange, he was responsible for the trading floor staff and the orderly conduct of trading on all futures. From Winnipeg, Larry moved to Central America to establish trading houses in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador as part of the CARCEP team.

Upon his return, Larry established Weber Commodities in 2000 here in Saskatoon. He is in daily contact with the grain industry from producers to importers and exporters to processors and academia, compiling and interpreting information for Canadian farmers. Larry is well positioned to deliver high quality marketing support information for Saskatchewan Flax Growers.

2009: Out with the old, in with the new ...but faster, please

I probably should have been a farmer. I worry as much as one. I check the weather the first thing when I get up from April to October (well November this year). I don't sleep when farmers can't get in their fields or when it doesn't rain or rains too much. I watch the weather channel continuously when there is a frost warning in the growing season. So this year more so than ever, I am anxious to turn the page on December 31 and start fresh on January 1. Especially with flax. Markets, like farmers do not react well to adversity or the unknown.

For the 2009-10 flax crop, adversity started early with frosts in May and June, a drought in June, abnormally cool weather in July and August but ended with a harvest that one can call as close to a miracle as you can get. But 2009/10 also had more positives. An amazing September allowed the crop to mature without frost damage and a November that will become known as the November of 2009 in coffee shops across western Canada for generations to come. Then to top it all off, yields came in so much better than expected, and



some farmers broke their own yield records for flax on their farms. From the production side, adversity turned into a positive result. We can hope that the marketing side is able to turn the same adversity into a similar result in 2010.

Farmers adapt. It is what they do best. However, it is difficult to adapt to the unforeseen circumstance that transpired on September 2, 2009 when the Flax Council announced for the first time that genetically modified flax may have been found in samples in Europe. The flax market collapsed. There was a period where very few flax bids were available anywhere in western Canada but as the event unfolded and was found to be accurate, an action plan was instituted and prices have come back.

In Europe, bids for Canadian flax delivered to a European port are actually higher today than they were at the same time last year. The spread between bids to farmers and the trading levels for Canadian seed in Europe is much wider than I would like to see, but in time will narrow back to more traditional levels.

Like farmers, the flax market will adapt to adversity. It too will be resilient. The health benefits of flax will ensure that it will not stay under this cloud for long and in the end it will still be the champion for uses in the grains and oilseeds complex.

It will take time and the cooperation of everyone involved from the farm to the end-user and for that more so than any other reason, I am anxious to turn the page on 2009 and look forward to 2010. After a stressful 2009, I imagine farmers feel the same way. 🌱



The average pencil is seven inches long, with just a half-inch eraser - in case you thought optimism was dead."

Robert Brault
- U.S. Journalist