

YOU WANT ANSWERS – AND SO DO WE!

Our strategy to invest in flax agronomy and long-term breeding

Erwin Hanley | Board Chair



SaskFlax



Flax agronomy questions are always the hardest and frustrating ones to answer.

For example, what can a producer do to maximize the potential out of a variety? For crop production decisions, do you factor in fertilizer, seeding rate and date? Or do you stick to what has always been simple and works? No cropping decision is made without these and many other considerations, which means that lots of additional work is required before the crop is planted, and flax is certainly not immune. Every effort should be made to produce the best possible crop, because under the right conditions, your flax crop can be a money producer on your farm.

As an industry we have identified that flax agronomy is most important going forward. Directing research dollars towards flax agronomy will provide a strong knowledge base so that agronomy recommendations can be made with confidence. We started working towards this through Growing Forward 2 (GF2), which is set to be completed in the next year.

The final results that come out of GF2 will help us determine the best strategic direction for investment. The federal government's next Agriculture Policy Framework (an agreement that outlines policy and program priorities for federal and provincial governments) will also form a base to continue flax agronomy research.

Our overall goal is getting to a place where an agronomist can provide answers when a producer calls with questions. We have already started developing a plan with our industry partners to achieve this, and are narrowing down the key factors that need to be addressed for research once the new Policy Framework is in place. By doing this we are positioning ourselves to be the first out of the block to get started on this work.

Flax breeding continues to be a key point of consideration. Our Board has been trying to determine the best long-term solution to help fund the Crop Development Centre's (CDC) flax breeding program. This is a challenge, as breeding is a long process and new varieties do not happen

"OUR OVERALL GOAL IS GETTING TO A PLACE WHERE AN AGRONOMIST CAN PROVIDE ANSWERS WHEN A PRODUCER CALLS WITH QUESTIONS."

overnight. In the past year we have had many discussions on how we can appropriately allocate significant funds to the CDC to ensure that, going forward, producers have flax varieties that will compete in their rotations and provide a decent return on investment. Other commodity groups have negotiated core agreements with the CDC and this will likely be the path forward for flax as well. It may also provide an opportunity to leverage funds from other sources that can contribute to the development of a complete package of breeding with strong, complementary agronomic research. This initiative is still in initial stages.

This fall and winter will again be busy with meetings. In the past year, we took an active role in travelling the world to start understanding global markets and telling our story. When opportunities arise we will continue to be proactive and, along with our industry partners, target existing and new markets. We think this is valuable not only for the producer but for the companies that collect the levy and market our flax.

With another production year coming to a close, I hope you had a successful flax season and gained new knowledge about our crop.

As always if you have any comments, questions or concerns please contact our office or any of our Directors.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SASKFLAX AGM | January 9, 2017 | Hall A, Breakout 2, Prairieland Park

SaskFlax's 2017 annual general meeting (AGM) will take place Monday, January 9, 2017 from 3-4:30PM in Hall A, Breakout 2, Prairieland Park. Registration starts at 2:30PM.

CROSPHERE 2017 | January 10-11, 2017 | Prairieland Park, Saskatoon

The fourth annual CropSphere agricultural conference will be held in Saskatoon January 10-11, 2017, with host group AGMs taking place Monday January 9.

New this year, the event will take place at Prairieland Park, in conjunction with the Western Canadian Crop Production Show.

Hosted by SaskFlax, SaskBarley, Sask Wheat, SaskOats, SaskPulse and SaskCanola, CropSphere features sessions on grain marketing, research and agronomy, as well as more general topics related to agriculture. Various breakout sessions ensure attendees can pick and choose a program that best supports their business operations. Networking opportunities throughout the day make it possible for attendees to connect.

For more information on registration, agenda and more, visit cropsphere.com

IDEAS, INNOVATION,
AND KNOWLEDGE

Located in Hall A at Prairieland Park in Saskatoon
Hosted by: SaskBarley, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers,
SaskFlax, SaskCanola, SaskOats, Sask Wheat

CropSphere
Ideas, Innovation, and Knowledge

CropSphere 2017 – January 10 & 11
Registration opens November 1, 2016

 @CropSphere

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: CROSPHERE.COM

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NOVEMBER 14 THE LEGION HALL WEYBURN, SK	NOVEMBER 16 WILDLIFE FEDERATION PRINCE ALBERT, SK	NOVEMBER 18 LIVING SKY CASINO SWIFT CURRENT, SK	

Oilseed partners invite you to attend a producer meeting in your area. Featuring sprayer specialist, Tom Wolf, market analyst, Chuck Penner, and agronomy information. For full agenda and to pre-register, please visit: www.saskcanola.com or call 1-877-241-7044.

  

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SASKFLAX DIRECTOR ELECTIONS TO PROCEED THIS FALL

Four candidates running to fill three Director positions

The Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission (SaskFlax) will hold elections this fall to fill three Director positions on its Board. Elections will take place from November 4-30, 2016.

This year, voters will have the option to vote online (at www.saskflaxvotes.com) or by paper ballot. Registered producers (any producer who has sold flax in either of the 2014/15 or 2015/16 crop years and has not requested a levy refund for the sales in the 2015/16 crop year) will receive an election package the week of November 4, containing instructions on these two options and how to vote by their preferred option.

THE DEADLINE FOR VOTING, BOTH ONLINE AND BY PAPER BALLOT, IS NOON ON NOVEMBER 30, 2016.

The results of the election will be announced mid-December and at SaskFlax's Annual General Meeting on January 9, 2017, held in conjunction with the CropSphere conference.

The Returning Officer will be:

Ann Smith

Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan
Box 21038
Saskatoon SK, S7H 5N9

For more information about these elections, please contact us:

Wayne Thompson, Executive Director

wayne@saskflax.com
306-664-1901



FALL 2016 ELECTION CANDIDATES



Nancy Johns Zelma, SK



Patricia Lung Humboldt, SK



Shane Stokke Watrous, SK



Greg Sundquist Watrous, SK

For complete profiles of these candidates, please visit www.saskflax.com

RESEARCHER PASSIONATE ABOUT FIGHTING FLAX DISEASE

Khalid Rashid looks back over his 30-year career with the AAFC
Delaney Seiferling

Khalid Rashid has spent nearly 30 years studying flax in his role as a Research Scientist at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Morden Research and Development Centre.

At this stage of his career, he is still focused on making as many improvements to Canadian flax varieties as possible before he's done.

His main focus at the moment is improving genetic resistance to pasmo, the most common disease found in Canadian flax crops, by sourcing resistant genes to breed into new varieties.

"We have found some resistance to specific pathotypes but not to general pathogen populations on the prairies," he says. "We are trying desperately to find some genetic resistance."

So far some progress has been made, he says.

"We have identified so many genes for resistance from all over the world and we also are able to use the gene bank in Saskatoon. We use all the accessions from there and screen them on a continual basis."

At the same time, Rashid and his team are testing fungicides that may help protect flax crops from the disease in the shorter term, as developing resistance is a longer term goal.

"The producers need answers, so we work on short and long term projects," he says.

Over the span of his career with the AAFC, which began in 1987, he has led the industry in developing flax varieties that are resistant to rust, once a common disease problem for flax growers in Canada.

"We managed to build a very good package of disease resistance in the

Canadian cultivars, that covers the disease immunity to rust," he says, adding that now rust on flax is virtually impossible to find in the prairies. "I do surveys every year in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and some years Alberta, and I haven't seen flax rust in producers' fields, not even one leaf, for the past 30 years."

Rashid estimates that this immunity to rust has saved Canadian producers millions of dollars.

Resistance to other common flax diseases such as fusarium wilt has been improved over his tenure at the AAFC as well.

"With fusarium wilt we have brought in introductions from outside Canada and we have improved on resistance – most cultivars have moderate resistance or better-than-moderate resistance," he says.

Powdery mildew is another disease that Rashid's team tackled as soon as it began appearing in Canadian crops in 1997.

"We started right away screening projects to identify resistance and we were lucky to find we have one gene for resistance in some of our cultivars. On top of that we found some resistant genes in some European cultivars and we integrated those into the breeding material with AAFC and eventually into the commercial cultivars," he says.

Currently all the flax varieties in Canada are required to be immune to rust, and have moderate resistance to fusarium wilt. As of 2017 they will also be required to have moderate resistance to powdery mildew.

These are some of the achievements Rashid will take with him when his time at the AAFC is up, at which point the future of the flax program in Morden – and in Canada -- is unclear.

Previously Rashid's work had supported

three flax breeding programs in Canada, in terms of pathology, testing and evaluation, disease resistance research, and the development of multi-pathogens disease resistance. Currently only one of those programs -- the University of Saskatchewan's Crop Development Centre -- is still in operation. (In 2014 the AAFC suspended its flax breeding program at the Morden Research and Development Centre.)

However, Rashid hopes that this work will continue in the long-term, even after he's gone.

"We hope that they will keep the flax pathology program going in support of the Canadian flax industry," he says.

The AAFC flax pathology program at Morden is well supported and equipped to serve the flax industry, having established two fusarium wilt field nurseries with more than 60 years of experience and history testing flax of all potential breeding lines and cultivars for registration in Canada.

It also has a Plant Pathogen Containment Facility, which enables research with virulent races of rust and other pathogens to pyramid genes for resistance to several pathogens. This is done without jeopardizing the flax crops with contamination by virulent races.

Because of all the work that has been done and the potential that has been uncovered for flax in Canada, Rashid sees a bright future for the crop from a pathology perspective.

"Flax is a crop that can fit very nicely on the crop rotation system," he says. "It's not affected by the major diseases that affect the other major crops such as cereals, pulses, canola and soybean, so it fits well to avoid the diseases that affect the other crops."



Rashid's current focus is on improving genetic resistance to pasmo, pictured here on leaves.



Over Rashid's 30 years with the AAFC, flax resistance to fusarium wilt has improved.



Powdery mildew in susceptible and resistant flax varieties, side by side.

CANCELLATION NOTICE

Three flax varieties to be deregistered as of next year

Delaney Seiferling



Earlier this year, the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) announced that the registration for three flaxseed varieties will be cancelled as of August 1, 2017.

These varieties include CDC Arras, Flanders and Somme.

After August 1, 2017, they will be eligible only for the lowest grade

Although the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is officially in charge of cancelling the registration of varieties (as well as registering grain varieties), it is ultimately the responsibility of the variety's owner to request that registration be removed. In this case, all three varieties are owned by the University of Saskatchewan, where the varieties were developed by retired Flax Breeder Professor Gordon Rowland. (Currently, the Flax Breeder at the University of Saskatchewan is Dr. Helen Booker.)

Cancelling varieties is done to help ensure growers only have the best and most relevant flax varieties available to them, Booker says

"After the incidence of CDC Triffid in some breeder seed lots, the developer requested cancellation of these registered cultivars by CFIA," she says. "This was done to reduce the number of CDC cultivars commercially available to those that were either popularly grown, such as CDC Bethune & CDC Sorrel, or to newer our genetics with commercial potential."

Prior to making such a request, the registrant is required to check the variety's pedigreed seed availability, and/or develop a disposal plan acceptable to seed growers in possession of pedigreed seed of the variety.

In this case, Booker says the cancellations will not have an impact on Saskatchewan flax farmers.

"THE CULTIVARS THAT WERE CANCELLED WERE NOT WIDELY GROWN BY FLAX PRODUCERS."

"The cultivars that were cancelled were not widely grown by flax producers," she says.

In other cases, the CGC can cancel the registration of a variety if: it has been altered or converted into a variety registered under another name; it is deemed indistinguishable from another existing variety; it is of a crop kind or species no longer subject to the variety registration requirements; or upon the request of the registrant, with the written permission of the breeder.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT

Please help SaskFlax by taking this short survey about agronomic information

Last year we asked you to provide your input to help us understand the issues that were most important to Saskatchewan flax producers. This information was extremely valuable in helping us make decisions about the direction of our strategic initiatives.

This is why we have decided to do another survey regarding agronomic information. Your input in this area will be used to build our agronomy and research strategy going forward and help us provide you with information that is most relevant and useful to your farming operations.

The survey below can be either filled out and returned to the SaskFlax office by fax, email or mail (see instructions below) or filled out online (to fill out an online version please visit www.saskflax.com).

1. WHAT AGRONOMIC INFORMATION IS MOST IMPORTANT TO HELP YOU PRODUCE A BETTER FLAX CROP?

rank the following, with 1 = least important and 5 = most important

	1	2	3	4	5
Fertilizer recommendations:					
Nitrogen	1	2	3	4	5
Phosphorus	1	2	3	4	5
Potassium	1	2	3	4	5
Sulphur	1	2	3	4	5
Weed control	1	2	3	4	5
Disease control	1	2	3	4	5
Seeding date	1	2	3	4	5
Seeding rate	1	2	3	4	5
Crop rotation	1	2	3	4	5
Pest/disease monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
Product testing (i.e. seed treatment)	1	2	3	4	5
Effectiveness of pre-harvest weed control	1	2	3	4	5

2. DOES THE CURRENT AGRONOMIC RESEARCH FIT YOUR AREA/CLIMATE CONDITIONS?

Yes

No

Not sure

3. WHAT IS YOUR CLOSEST TOWN?

4. WHICH SEED TREATMENTS HAVE YOU USED ON YOUR FLAX & WHAT ARE YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT THESE TREATMENTS?

5. ANY FURTHER COMMENTS?

THANK YOU! YOUR INPUT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!

MAILING INSTRUCTIONS:

Please fill out the form above, tear it out, and mail it back to the SaskFlax office:
Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission
A5A – 116 – 103rd Street East,
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan,
Canada, S7N 1Y7

FAX INSTRUCTIONS:

Please fill out the form above, tear it out, and fax it to 306-664-4404.

EMAIL INSTRUCTIONS:

Please fill out the form above, scan it, and email it to saskflax@saskflax.com.

GROWING DEMAND

Members of the Canadian flax industry visit Mexico to learn more about its expanding flax demand

Delaney Seiferling



In January of this year, Saskatchewan Trade and Export (STEP) hosted a trade mission in Mexico, to help promote Western Canada as a premium supplier of agriculture products.

Attending the mission were several members of the Western Canadian agriculture industry, representing a number of crops including barley, canola, pulses, flax and more.

Shane Stokke, Vice-Chair of the SaskFlax Board, was amongst these representatives.

His second STEP trade mission in Mexico, Stokke believes these tours are a great opportunity to make personal connections and drive demand in a country with a growing need for these types of crops.

"Networking was very useful," he says, adding that the group met with local food companies, gave presentations at seminars, attended one-on-one meetings, and toured processing and research facilities. "It was really interesting that I could talk to these companies about how flax is grown, what we do up here to make sure quality is what they need, and why they should be buying flax from Canada."

"It was quite interesting that I could speak to them about what we're looking for, how we're processing it, why you're getting product that looks like this," he says. "I was able to talk to them quite in depth and help them out."

Nancy Johns, another SaskFlax Board member who attended the tour, agrees that the one-on-one connections that come out of a tour like this are impactful.

"Even in this electronic age, everyone wants to see who they're dealing with," she says.

Johns recalls one stop in particular, meeting with the Mexican Government's Ministry of Education. Through a quick conversation with them, she was able to heighten their awareness of the benefits of ground flax versus whole flax.

"They already use whole flax but I talked about how much more is available if you grind it," she says. "This is part of the impact when you make these connections people – you can help them understand how to utilize a product."

Both Stokke and Johns were also struck by the amount of interest they observed amongst Mexican food and feed companies around creating nutritional products to meet growing health concerns amongst Mexican consumers and government. The country has seen major growth in obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular levels in recent decades and experts predict these numbers will only continue to rise.

"Mexico is starting to become a health conscious country," Stokke says. "And they're starting to realize that flax can help them in that area. It has a long way to go yet – they don't know enough about the health benefits – but there's a lot of work that can be done to enhance that level of knowledge."

Stokke has also witnessed an increased amount of attention being paid to the benefits of flax as feed since his first trip there.

"EVEN IN THIS ELECTRONIC AGE, EVERYONE WANTS TO SEE WHO THEY'RE DEALING WITH."

"There's not a lot of flax being used in the country for animal feed so this was a stepping stone to get them thinking about what flax can do for them in their feed rations. That has huge potential in Mexico."

At one meeting with an animal nutrition institute, 23 of country's feed companies were in attendance, including six of the biggest ones, Johns recalls.

"They had lots of questions about using omega-3 in their rations for their animals," she says. "They know that California and Arizona are using a lot of flax for fertility in dairy and in eggs, and they are seeing a specific segment of people spending their money on these types of food, so they are really interested in incorporating this into their products."

Beyond highlighting the potential for increased flax exports to Mexico though, Johns says the trip was a good personal reminder of the global marketplace we live in.

"Seeing them making products using our crops, for me that hit home," she says. "We are a global community; our products are going global. At home we just sell to the elevators, but going there and actually seeing how they're using our Canadian products and how much volume they bring in – it's amazing."

Stokke agrees that the trip drove home the idea that flax crops have growing potential for food markets, and he warns producers to be mindful of that.

"There are two markets out there: the industrial market for oil crush, but there's also a huge food market and producers need to treat their flax as a food product if they want to sell it into that market," he says. "As a whole the flax producer is doing a good job of that but they should keep it in the back of their mind that flax is now a food product. The market demand is growing on that."



SaskFlax

SaskFlax was established in 1996 and represents 6,600 registered flax producers in Saskatchewan. Directed by flax producers, SaskFlax operates via a mandatory but refundable producer levy on flaxseed and straw. These dollars are leveraged whenever possible to execute programs ultimately geared to increase net returns to its producers members and advance Saskatchewan's flax industry.

SASKATCHEWAN FLAX DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

A5A -116 -103rd Street East,
Saskatoon, SK S7N 1Y7

Phone: 1.306.664.1901
Fax: 1.306.664.4404
Email: saskflax@saskflax.com
Web: www.saskflax.com
Twitter: @SaskFlax



FLAX COUNCIL OF CANADA

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465 -167 Lombard Avenue,
Winnipeg, MB R3B 0T6

Phone: 1.204.982.2115
Fax: 1.204.982.2128
Email: flax@flaxcouncil.ca
Web: www.flaxcouncil.ca



MANITOBA FLAX GROWERS ASSOCIATION

465-167 Lombard Avenue,
Winnipeg, MB R3B 0T6

Phone: 1.204.982.3990
Fax: 1.204.982.2128
Email: mfga@mymts.net
Web: www.mfga.ca

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