



# Investing in agriculture

## Government announcements bring funds to industry

By Heather Hudson

**T**he Government of Canada knows a smart investment when it sees one. At least that's the case when it comes to our thriving agriculture industry.

Back in the spring, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice Bob Dechert announced an investment of more than \$200,000 to help the Ontario Cereal Industry Research Council expand the market for whole wheat and wheat-based foods. This kind of leg up got us to thinking: how else is the government investing in agriculture lately?

Here's a round up of some of this year's government funding announcements:

### Funding for agriculture demonstration projects

This summer, \$473,000 is going toward 69 producer-led projects that evaluate and demonstrate new agricultural practices and technologies in Saskatchewan. Farmers and ranchers are able to view these new agricultural advancements firsthand to assess whether they want to adopt them into their individual operations.

Approved projects include demonstrating and evaluating various seeding and nitrogen rates for malt barley; new corn varieties for grazing and silage use; the optimum development stage for cutting oats and barley for greenfeed; various pasture rejuvenation techniques; the effectiveness of pod sealants for reducing shattering losses in canola; chemical options for control of leafy spurge; new grass and alfalfa varieties with greater salt tolerance; and different options for cherry planting and pruning.

### Pulse producers benefit from new research and market development

Pulse Canada will receive \$257,766 and the Canadian Special Crops Association (CSCA) will receive \$35,450 to help reach out to buyers at key international food shows and develop marketing materials to promote the industry.

"The AgriMarketing Program has been a cornerstone of putting the Canadian pulse and special crops industry on the map in

markets around the world," said Gordon Bacon, CEO of Pulse Canada and the CSCA.

Earlier in the year, it was announced that Pulse Canada will receive up to \$8.3 million for research, innovation and market development to build an even more profitable and competitive pulse industry by supporting two projects:

- \$7 million will fund research to develop ways to improve productivity, nutrition and improve the rotational benefits to other crops, including identifying new and innovative ways of processing and using pulses that will grow new market opportunities.
- \$1.3 million will support Pulse Canada in developing a targeted market development strategy to build and support new demand for pulses around the world.

### Funding for flax and oilseed industries

The Flax Council of Canada will receive up to \$5.9 million to help create new flax varieties and develop an improved method for flax seed testing.

Four million dollars from the Developing Innovative Agri-Products program will help the Flax Council of Canada produce new herbicide-tolerant Canadian flax to improve performance. This increased genetic diversity will give flax growers another sustainable oilseed crop option, increasing crop yield for export to world markets.

The Flax Council of Canada will use up to \$1.9 million to develop sampling and testing methods to identify the presence of genetically modified flaxseed in Canadian flax exports. Results will be used to assure global flax markets that Canada knows its crop and is in control of the quality of the flax delivered.

In addition, up to \$19 million will be in the Canola Council of Canada to lead research in partnership with the Flax Council of Canada, industry scientists and universities.

An investment of \$14.5 million will bring together the best scientific expertise for the Canola Cluster to focus research and innovation on three areas: oil nutrition, meal nutrition



and production, to enable the industry to expand the profile of canola oils as a healthy oil while increasing the value of the meal. Industry partnership is an important element of this initiative and the Canola Council of Canada will invest another \$5 million to help them reach growth targets they have set for 2015.

**British Columbia's organic farming sector gets a boost**

The government of Canada has invested up to \$900,000 to help the Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) implement a new market development strategy for the organics industry.

The funds are expected to help organic farmers stay innovative, improve industry best practices and make sure farmers can respond to increasing consumer demands for top quality organically grown food. It will involve creating a resource directory for growers, developing research proposals, designing an environmental assessment instrument to be used in the certification process, and educational materials and workshops to encourage farmers to transition to organics.

**Saskatchewan livestock producers get funding for traceability**

The governments of Canada and Saskatchewan are providing more than \$1 million to the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) to help Saskatchewan livestock producers with age verification and other traceability initiatives. The funding helped CCIA open a new satellite office in Saskatoon and employ three producer support representatives across the province. They are networking with producers, auction markets, industry groups and governments to ensure CCIA services are available.



“A strong traceability system will help Canadian producers get the premium prices their top quality products deserve around the world,” said Saskatoon-Humboldt MP Brad Trost, who made the announcement on behalf of federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz.

Look for new announcements this fall by checking [www.agr.gc.ca](http://www.agr.gc.ca). ♦

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# Start Your Search Engine

## You've got the website, now how do you get the traffic?

By Heather Hudson

### If you build it, he will come.

Sorry, that old chestnut does not apply to getting traffic to your website. Nope, if you want people flocking to your site, you've got to do a whole lot more than "build" it.

We talked to Jody Dundas, creative director at Suckerpunch Creative in Winnipeg, Manitoba about the dos and don'ts of getting traffic to your website.

### Build a good, basic website

Before you can even think of employing search engine optimization (SEO) – making your website come up frequently in Google and other search engines – you've got to have a functional website.

"One of the most important things you have to do is put yourself in the shoes of the person you most want to come to your website: nine times out of 10 that would be a customer. Look at your website as your storefront that is open 24/7 to the world.

"Shooting off fireworks as soon as you come to the website to announce your business is here – that might not be useful to 99 percent of your customers," said Dundas.

You can make your content easily "crawlable" (picked up by search engines) by keeping flashiness to a minimum. Dundas says good old-fashioned text on the screen is most easily indexed by search engines.

### Keep content simple

If you want people searching for the products or services you offer, the word choices you make are crucial.

Information should be simple, easy to find and targeted to the questions customers might be asking. Dundas recommends making a list of 20 terms a customer might use to search for your company, or one like it. Make sure those words are included in the content of your web pages in order of most to least important.

### Learn your search engines

If you make your website simple and easily crawlable, there's a possibility it will naturally rise to the top. But most need a little help.

There's a plethora of information on the web about SEO, it just takes a little time to seek it out. Dundas says go straight to the source – the search engines themselves.

"Search engines themselves tell you what you need to do to get ranked with them. Go to Google – it tells you how to optimize your page for them to index it. Go to other search engines you want to be on; some of the information is harder to find, but they do tell you what to do and you stand a pretty good chance of being indexed by them if you follow their directions."

**Get noticed with links**

Once you've discovered how to optimize your site with your search engines of choice, you've got to get word out that your site exists.

"Go to the associations you belong to and see if they have a link exchange and start building incoming traffic from other sites to your sites. Consider paying for listings in industry-related directories. This is a sound investment because these are most targeted to your audience."

**Have a strategy**

If you're not sure you want to put the time into figuring out SEO yourself, forget about paying an SEO company to get your company's name at the top of Google or Yahoo's list. Dundas says these quick fixes are fleeting. A more realistic goal would be to always be hovering near the top and that requires a long-term communications strategy.

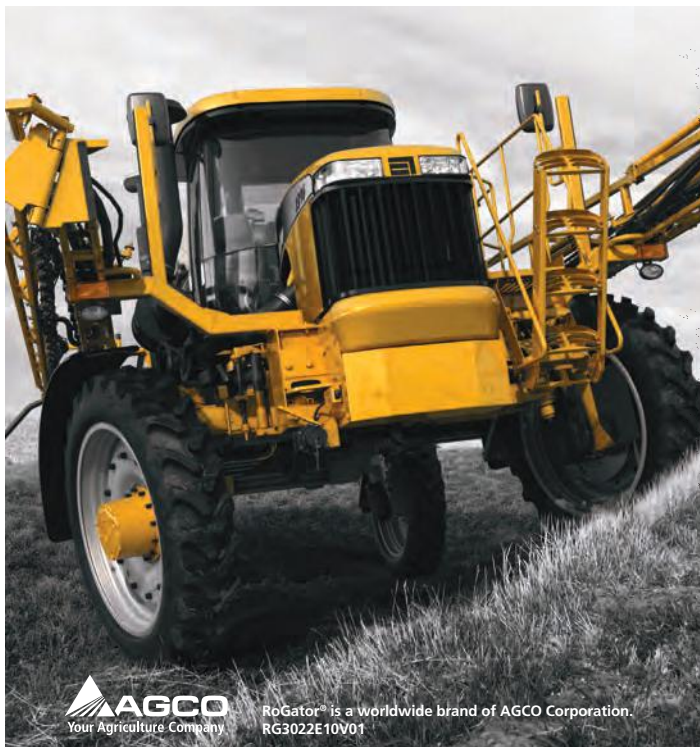
"A good communications company will work with you to identify key phrases, discuss the way information will be

arranged, how a customer is going to find you and together come up with a plan to do that and roll it out."

When you do your homework before slapping up a website, "they" will surely come. ♦

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Jody Dundas, Creative Director, Suckerpunch Creative



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