

A photograph of Kelly Turkington, a man with a friendly smile, wearing a blue baseball cap with sunglasses perched on top. The sunglasses have 'Crossafe' and 'VICTORIA' written on them. He is wearing a dark jacket over a white t-shirt. He is standing in a field of tall green grass. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the subject.

Three Decades Fighting Barley Disease

The Career of Pathologist
Kelly Turkington



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Editor-in-Chief
Serra McSmytz

Creative Director
Garret Phenix

Contributing Writers
Geoff Geddes
Scott Hepworth
Mitchell Japp
Jill McDonald
Delaney Seiferling
Peter Watts

Publisher
SaskBarley

Printing & Distribution
JBeck Commercial Print

Cover Photo: Kelly Turkington as a guest of the Department of Primary Industries, Victoria, Horsham, VIC, Australia, barley field day October 2012.
Photo Credit: Kelly Turkington



Executive Director
Jillian McDonald
Tel. 306-370-7237
jmcdonald@saskbarley.com

General Inquiries
Tel.306-653-7232
info@saskbarley.com

225-415 Wellman Cres
Saskatoon, SK S7T 0J1



Board of Directors

Cody Glenn (Chair)

Tel. 306-293-7525
cglenn@saskbarley.com

Chad Ferguson (Vice-Chair)

Tel. 306-874-8168
cferguson@saskbarley.com

Maurice Berry

Tel. 306-452-7504
mberry@saskbarley.com

Zenneth Faye

Tel. 306-272-7080
zfaye@saskbarley.com

Bernie McClean

Tel. 306-342-7597
bmcclean@saskbarley.com

Gordon Moellenbeck

Tel. 306-287-7799
gmoellenbeck@saskbarley.com

Looking for information on disease, pest and weed management?

Check out our library of barley production resources at BarleyBin.ca or subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter!



As we head into the 2026 growing season, Saskatchewan barley producers are navigating a mix of evolving market conditions, agronomic decisions, and shifting weather patterns.



This issue of The BarleyBin brings together insights from across the industry to support those decisions. You'll find new results from our on-farm PGR trials, strategies for managing malt quality at harvest, and tips to help you navigate the feed market - should the season not go as planned.

Alongside this work, there are important developments at the national level. Recent staffing changes within Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) have created some uncertainty around public research capacity. For the barley sector, maintaining strong, coordinated research programs remains a priority.

SaskBarley is actively working with research partners, industry organizations, and government to understand the impacts and identify sensible paths forward. This includes continuing to invest in key research initiatives and supporting collaboration across the value chain to ensure producers maintain access to relevant, applied research.

At the same time, market development and advocacy efforts continue to create opportunities. From expanding market engagement

in Central and South America to representing producer priorities on Parliament Hill, these efforts are focused on strengthening the long-term competitiveness of Saskatchewan barley.

From expanding market engagement in Central and South America to representing producer priorities on Parliament Hill, these efforts are focused on strengthening the long-term competitiveness of Saskatchewan barley.

As always, producer input plays an important role in guiding this work. We encourage you to stay engaged and connected with SaskBarley and the broader industry as we move into the season ahead.

Cody Glenn, Chair



the **BarleyBin** 

Podcast
returns with
Season 3,
May 2026

Diving into one of the biggest challenges facing barley production: disease.

This season features a multi-episode arc exploring the past, present, and future of barley disease research, with insights from leading experts including Kelly Turkington (AAFC), James Tucker (AAFC), and Randy Kutcher (CDC). You'll also hear updates on current SaskBarley-funded research projects shaping disease management on the Prairies.

Beyond disease, Season 3 takes a broader look at the systems behind barley's success – from SaskBarley's strategic partnerships to the role of the Prairie Recommending Committee for Oats and Barley in bringing new varieties to market.

Whether you're in the field, the truck, or pretending to enjoy paperwork, Season 3 brings practical insight and behind-the-scenes perspective on the work driving barley forward.



Scan here
to check out the
BarleyBin Podcast

Three Decades Fighting Barley Disease

The Career of Pathologist Kelly Turkington

*Industry celebrates the career of a barley pathologist
who helped Prairie farmers stay ahead of disease.*

By Delaney Seiferling | *Freelance Writer*



Pathology group photo summer 2025, left to right (Jackie Busaan, AAFC Lacombe Plant Pathology Program Technician; Piper Liska, AAFC Lacombe Plant Pathology Program Summer Student; Hanna Brown, AAFC Lacombe Plant Pathology Program Summer Student; Sasha Chisholm, AAFC Lacombe Plant Pathology Program Technician; Kelly Turkington, AAFC Plant Pathology Program Research Scientist).

The Western Canadian barley industry is celebrating the career of one of its leading experts in barley disease pathology.

Dr. Kelly Turkington will leave his role as a research scientist and pathologist at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Lacombe Research Centre this spring after his position was eliminated as part of a round of mass layoffs that reduced scientific capacity, reorganized several research programs and stunned the agriculture industry.

Beyond the broader impact on the agriculture sector, Turkington's departure will be felt deeply within the barley industry. His work over the last 30 years has transformed how barley diseases are understood and managed in Western Canada, shaping everything from fungicide recommendations to variety development and integrated crop management practices.

Looking back over his career, he says he's grateful for the opportunities he was given to impact the industry.

"We've been able to address a lot of concerns over the last 30 years," he says, adding one of the aspects of the job he most enjoyed was collaborating with farmers.

"That flow of information from the field level through the farmers has been critical over the years for us. We've learned as much as we've passed on to producers, and hopefully what we've passed on has been useful."

He says another highlight of the job has been collaborating with fellow researchers, technical staff, crop consultants and other industry members.

"For me, the most valuable part of the work has been that interaction," he says. "I can't emphasize that enough. It definitely hasn't been a one person show."

As the industry celebrates the career to a trusted and valued partner in the fight against barley disease, here's a look at some of the most noteworthy changes that have come from the work of Turkington and his colleagues over the last 30 years in terms of barley disease management.



Kelly Turkington and Henry Hofer, Field Boss, Alix Colony, AARD/AAFC Lacombe Field Day (circa 2003).

"That flow of information from the field level through the farmers has been critical over the years for us. We've learned as much as we've passed on to producers, and hopefully what we've passed on has been useful."

Kelly Turkington

AAFC Plant Pathology Program Research Scientist

Understanding the Benefits of Direct Seeding

Early in his career, Turkington's work focused on the major leaf diseases affecting prairie barley, including scald, net form net blotch and spot form net blotch. Working closely with breeding programs, his team conducted large-scale screening nurseries to identify resistance and support the development of improved varieties.

But perhaps the biggest shift during the 1990s and early 2000s was the industry's transition to conservation tillage and direct seeding. Turkington and colleagues examined how these changes would affect disease pressure and crop productivity.

One key finding surprised many at the time: direct seeding reduced common root rot severity, likely due to a more active and diverse soil microbial community that suppressed the pathogen.

"We did some work looking at common root rot and barley and the impact on tillage and it was quite interesting in that direct seeding was actually a beneficial practice," he says.

"It reduced the severity of common root rot in barley. We attributed that to a more vibrant microbial environment in the soil under a direct seeding system,

Turkington's research over the years has also supported the idea that a single, well-timed fungicide application later in the season can control both leaf diseases and FHB while also reducing the risk of fungicide resistance.



Left to Right - Kelly Turkington, George Clayton, Research Agronomist, and Neil Harker, Weed Scientist, AAFC Lacombe (early 2000s).

CONT. FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

and that had a negative impact on the common root rot pathogen."

That work helped build confidence in direct seeding as both an environmental and disease-management tool - the adoption of which has had widespread impacts. Today, no-till or direct seeding is used on roughly 70 to 80 per cent of cropland in Western Canada, according to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Statistics Canada. This shift has also reduced soil erosion, improved soil organic carbon and helped cut fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions, making conservation seeding one of the region's most significant environmental success stories.

Managing Fusarium Head Blight in Barley

While Fusarium Head Blight (FHB) was once relatively limited in Western Canada, Turkington and collaborators began monitoring for the pathogen in the late 1990s as the disease intensified in Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan.

As it spread westward, the implications for malt barley became

clear. The disease not only affected yield but also grain quality through the production of deoxynivalenol (DON), a mycotoxin unacceptable to maltsters and brewers.

"In barley, there's a couple of main issues. First of all, Deoxynivalenol... the main mycotoxin that *Fusarium graminearum* produces, is not something that the maltsters want to see. Brewers are very, very cautious about that issue."

This emerging threat shifted research priorities toward understanding how management practices - particularly fungicide timing - could reduce both disease and DON risk.

Refining Fungicide Strategies for Disease Management

A great deal of Turkington and his colleagues' work focused on refining fungicide strategies for managing disease in barley in Western Canada, and not just FHB.

Their research on this topic, over the last several decades, has contributed to several findings that have informed on-farm practices and impacted farmers' profits and yields, including expanding the FHB spray window.

While earlier recommendations suggested a narrow application

window around head emergence, more recent research from Canada and the U.S. showed the effective window is wider than previously thought, giving farmers more flexibility when weather or logistics delay spraying.

Turkington was also involved in research evaluating the common practice of adding a reduced-rate fungicide to herbicide applications early in the season.

"It was cheaper product to put a half rate in with our herbicide and the assumption was that that was going to hold off disease," he says.

Results, however, showed this approach did not provide meaningful disease control and that, instead, the most effective timing is from flag leaf through shortly after head emergence, when protecting the upper canopy had the greatest impact on yield and quality.

Again, this knowledge has widely informed on-farm practices for Western Canadian barley farmers.

Finally, Turkington's research over the years has also supported the idea that a single, well-timed fungicide application later in the season can control both leaf diseases and FHB while also



Ministers Visit July 9 2013, AAFC Lacombe, Left to right: Kelly Turkington, AAFC Lacombe, John O'Donovan, AAFC Lacombe (Research Agronomist), the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture, Government of Canada, Jeff Stewart, AAFC Alberta Science Director, and Neil Harker, AAFC Lacombe, (Weed Scientist).

Threats and Opportunities Going Forward

Over Turkington's career, the disease landscape has continued to evolve. Research has documented increasing variation in net blotch populations and early signs of fungicide resistance to commonly used products. More recently, Turkington's team has shifted screening efforts toward emerging concerns such as bacterial leaf streak.

At the same time, climate variability and changing production practices are influencing which diseases dominate in a given year, reinforcing the need for ongoing monitoring and adaptive management.

Looking ahead, one area Turkington believes deserves more attention is root health.

"It's more of a challenge I would say, as it's out of sight, out of mind," he says, adding that because root diseases are harder to see and measure, their impact is often underestimated, even though they influence water and nutrient use efficiency.

He also hopes that barley disease research in western Canada will continue to lean more into collaboration - which has been such a cornerstone of his career - between not only scientists and farmers but also between traditional field skills and new molecular tools.

For him, the most promising path forward is one where researchers stay close to the field while embracing what genomics can offer.

"I think we need to recognize the importance of a combination of approaches" he says. "Marrying the two together and not maybe focusing one at the expense of the other, I think is important."



reducing the risk of fungicide resistance.

"If we look at the big picture in terms of fungicides, if we try to reduce our risk as much as possible so that we only have one single application post head emergence, that gives us the dual benefit of suppression of Fusarium head blight and DON," he says. "It also protects those upper canopy leaves in terms of negative effects from scald and the two types of net blotch and spot blotch."

Understanding the Benefits of Integrated Management

Since he began his career in the early 90s, Turkington has been interested in learning and understanding the benefits of an

integrated management approach for barley farmers.

"I've been able to look at barley disease management from a broad range of perspectives... from the breeding process and developing resistant varieties, looking at barley production and management of yield, quality and pest management," he says.

He believes his work in this area has reinforced the benefits of an integrated approach to barley disease management and shown that the most effective disease control comes from combining less susceptible varieties, crop rotations, targeted fungicide timing and appropriate seeding practices.

In light of all this, he believes farmers should view it as a foundational strategy in their disease management strategies.

Turkington hopes that barley disease research in western Canada will continue to lean more into collaboration - a cornerstone of his career - between not only scientists and farmers but also between traditional field skills and new molecular tools.

Look for Season 3 of The BarleyBin this May wherever you get your podcasts. We're diving deeper into the history of disease research on the Prairies.

Plant Growth Regulators: From Small Plots to Real Fields

What the BarleyBin Field Lab is Teaching us About Plant Growth Regulators.

Mitchell Japp | *Research & Extension Manager, SaskBarley*

The understanding we gain from small plot research is incredibly valuable. The uniform soils, small equipment, perfect timing, allow us to identify differences between very specific treatments – but that uniformity and perfection are rare on the farm.

That's why SaskBarley launched the BarleyBin Field Lab: to take promising research and test it under real farm conditions, using producer equipment, across real variability.

Since 2023, the program has expanded quickly, growing from a handful of sites to a province-wide network of trials. Among them, plant growth regulator (PGR) work has stood out as one of the most replicated – and most revealing – protocols to date.

A Tool, Not a Guarantee

Results from multiple site-years are pointing in a consistent direction: plant growth regulators, or PGRs, are not a guaranteed yield booster. They are a management tool to reduce the complications of lodging.

Across 2025 Field Lab sites, applications of trinexapac-ethyl (Moddus) reduced lodging and, in some cases, improved

yield. Grain quality impacts were minimal, though slight reductions in test weight and small increases in thin kernels were observed.

Where things diverge is in when those benefits show up.

At sites with high lodging pressure, the response was significant. In one case near Davidson, a late seeded barley crop resulting in significant lodging, and the PGR application reduced that lodging and led to yield gains approaching 19 bu/ac – driven largely by improved standability and harvestability.

In three other lower-risk environments, there were neither clear advantages nor disadvantages following a single, full-rate Moddus application. When combined across all four locations testing a single Moddus application, applying a PGR was positive for

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the BarleyBin Field Lab
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height and lodging reduction, and a yield increase.

One farm ran the test twice - 2024 and 2025, but included a split application, as well as the single application of Moddus. In both years, applying Moddus improved standability, harvestability and yield (up to 23 bu/ac increase with PGR), but in 2024 the single application was best, and in 2025 the split application was best.

Matching the Tool to the Conditions

The message coming out of the Field Lab research to date is fairly straightforward: PGRs are situational.

They tend to deliver the most value in:

- High-yield environments
- Fields with strong fertility programs
- Locations or seasonal growing conditions with higher moisture or lodging risk

Used in the right conditions, they can protect yield and improve harvest efficiency. If lodging pressure is not severe, the return is less certain.

Similar trends are happening in small plot research on PGR application in barley. Field scale research facilitates a smooth transition from small plot to the farm, and fine tunes the logistics of implementing new practices and technologies.

Research That Looks Like Your Farm

The strength of the BarleyBin Field Lab isn't just in the results, but in how those results are generated.

These are field-scale, replicated trials run by producers with the assistance of an agronomist and oversight from Western Applied Research Corporation (WARC). The protocols are set up within the producer's management system and data



BarleyBin Field Lab consists of field-scale, replicated trials run by producers with the assistance of an agronomist and oversight from Western Applied Research Corporation (WARC).

reflects real-world variability – not ideal conditions.

And barley isn't the only crop seeing this shift toward practical, on-farm research.

Across Saskatchewan, similar programs are helping producers test and validate management decisions:

- SaskOilseeds – Top Notch Farming
- SaskPulse – PROFIT (Pulse Replicated On-Farm Independent Trials)
- Sask Wheat – Wheat Wise

Each program is built around the same idea: better decisions come from local, field-scale data.

Building Better Decisions

As the BarleyBin Field Lab continues to grow, so does its value. More sites, more seasons, and more variation are helping paint a clearer picture of where tools like PGRs fit – and where they don't.

Because in the end, the most useful research is what works when the crop is leaning, the weather turns, and the combine is waiting.



Finding the Balance: Managing Protein in Malt Barley

Practical strategies to hit malt specs and reduce risk at harvest.

By Mitchell Japp

Research & Extension Manager, SaskBarley

Who would expect that in the highest yielding malt barley crop on record in Saskatchewan, anyone would get rejected for excess protein?

Normally, high yielding cereal crops result in reduced protein because starch dilutes the protein. But, as you may know, malt barley crops can be full of surprises.

In many ways, the growing season in 2025 was challenging. Early spring was dry and there were plenty of hot days. Fortunately, for most of the province, the rains did come, and some spectacular barley crops were harvested. Unfortunately, some conversations with producers last fall revealed barley crops that were rejected for malt due to their barley's protein concentration exceeding malt specifications. In these discussions, producers were unclear why their protein was not within the target range of 10 - 12.5%.

These examples (right) from the North Central and East Central regions highlight how protein can exceed specifications despite proactive nitrogen management.

2025 EXAMPLES

North central Saskatchewan

Variety: CDC Churchill malt barley (low enzyme, low protein variety)

Spring soil test N: 10 lbs/ac

Fertility applied: 60 lbs N/ac and 40 lbs P/ac

Sulphur: Applied as BioSul two years prior; soil reserves adequate

Seeding date: May 18

Yield: 85 bu/ac
(≈ 76 lbs N/ac removed)

Grain protein: 13.2-13.6%

East central Saskatchewan

Variety: AAC Connect malt barley (mid level enzyme, relatively low protein variety or genetics)

Seeding date: May 22

Fertility applied: 75 lbs N/ac, 30 lbs P/ac, and 12 lbs K/ac

Sulphur: Previous canola crop received sulphur fines

Yield: High yielding

Grain protein: 13.2-13.4%, approximately 0.25-0.5% higher than other malt barley varieties on the same farm

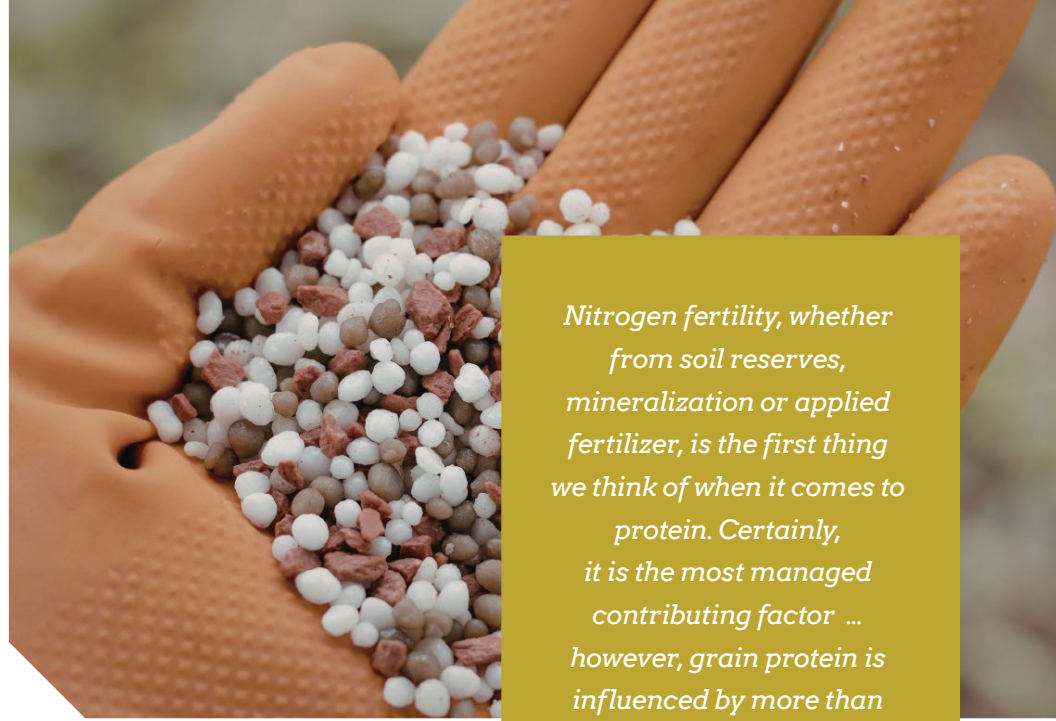


Why Protein Matters and What Influences It

Protein concentration is a critical specification for malt barley buyers. In the malting and brewing process, the enzymes within the protein are used to facilitate the transition of starch to sugars that are then fermented. Barley enzymes can be used in adjunct brewing to utilize other sources of starch, such as corn or rice (adjuncts). Protein is required for these processes to work, but excess protein reduces the extract yield of the barley, leading to tight specifications for purchasing malt barley. Typical targets are between 10% and 12.5%, while some export markets will accept up to 13% protein. All-malt brewing, adjunct brewing and distilling end-uses have different targets within that range.

Nitrogen fertility, whether from soil reserves, mineralization or applied fertilizer, is the first thing we think of when it comes to protein. Certainly, it is the most managed contributing factor in grain protein, and protein concentration directly reflects nitrogen content in the grain. However, grain protein is influenced by more than just nitrogen fertility.

Environment can be a factor in protein development, including precipitation amounts, timing and temperature during key stages of crop development. These differences could affect agronomic factors like nitrogen uptake, or lead to variation in different yield components (number of heads, kernels per head and kernel size). If yield is driven more by heads and kernels than kernel size, starch dilution would be less than anticipated for a high yielding crop. For dryland agriculture in Saskatchewan, there are no direct management options to control the environment, so our best management of it is to target crop development around expected environmental conditions.



Nitrogen fertility, whether from soil reserves, mineralization or applied fertilizer, is the first thing we think of when it comes to protein. Certainly, it is the most managed contributing factor ... however, grain protein is influenced by more than just nitrogen fertility.

Seeding date has been associated with higher protein concentration in barley, independent of yield reductions. Reduced yield also reduces the starch in the grain, and the protein concentration increases. Research on barley seeding dates suggests that delayed seeding in the northern prairies does not consistently cause reduced yields - compared to early seeding. And, at the same time, barley protein increased with later seeding dates. This may relate to the additional growing degree days at key crop developmental stages, or overall accumulation during growth.

Variety also plays an important role in determining grain protein, even when crops are grown under the same environmental and fertility conditions. The Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre generally reports that newer varieties like CDC Fraser, AAC Connect and CDC Churchill, and even AAC Synergy, tend to produce lower grain protein while supporting higher yield potential compared to former industry standards such as AC Metcalfe and CDC Copeland. These genetic improvements make variety selection a practical and cost effective tool for managing malt barley protein, particularly in less predictable seasons.

Sulphur can also influence grain protein, despite barley removing relatively small amounts in the grain. Adequate sulphur supports yield and starch accumulation, helping dilute protein, while insufficient sulphur can limit yield and result in elevated protein even at unchanged nitrogen rates. High yielding barley requires approximately 20 lbs/ac of sulphur uptake, making balanced sulphur nutrition another important factor in managing protein risk.

Nitrogen is where we start looking for yield and protein, but it is not the only contributing factor. When nitrogen does not account for what is observed in the field, it is worthwhile to look beyond. Environment, variety, seeding date, sulphur, and nitrogen are all factors that have an influence on grain yield and protein. When a malt barley crop is downgraded due to excess protein, it is worth taking a close look and making some adjustments for the future.

Learn more about malt barley specifications, when to seed barley, and the top reasons to soil test at barleybin.ca.



Beyond Malt: The Fundamentals of Marketing Barley for Feed

With malt acceptance uncertain and corn reshaping feed markets, farmers must understand the forces driving feed barley prices to capture the best returns.

By Delaney Seiferling | *Freelance Writer*

For many Saskatchewan farmers, barley has traditionally been a malt story.

However, in recent years, more and more may find themselves looking seriously at the feed market instead.

This is because the economics for marketing barley are changing, largely due to strong feed demand, tighter margins in livestock sectors and a narrower spread between malt and feed prices.

At the same time, weather and quality risks continue to make malt acceptance far from guaranteed. Malt barley may also need to be stored on farm for months; whereas feed barley can be sold in a more timely fashion, generating cash flow.

But while the feed market can offer competitive returns, quicker turnover and sometimes more price certainty than malt, it also operates differently than the malt market, with prices strongly influenced by factors beyond the farm.

This is why it's important for farmers looking to market feed barley this year to understand a few fundamentals about how the market operates, in order to capture the best prices possible and make the best choices for their operations.

Here are a few lessons from feed market experts [➔](#)



Price Discovery is Local – and Limited

There is no futures market for barley anymore, making price discovery more difficult, says Jay Crandall, Strategic Commodity Specialist with Monarch Ag Merchants, based in Strathmore, AB.

Since the Winnipeg feed barley futures market was discontinued in 2007, there has been no strong price discovery system for feed barley, leaving farmers to rely on fragmented information from brokers, local elevators and regional markets.

Further complicating things, export demand -- particularly from China -- is playing a larger role in recent years, says Crandall, who has spent 45 years working in the sector and will retire this spring.

Given all this, he says the best prices sometimes come through local elevators rather than traditional benchmarks like the Lethbridge market, making it essential for farmers to actively monitor local price signals.

"Without a really strong price discovery ability, you're really down to just what the local elevator is paying, what the Lethbridge market is paying, and comparing the two," he says.

In light of this, he advises farmers to gather their own data regularly.

"Even if it's once a month, get a price, because you can always reference back to it," he says.

U.S. Corn is the Biggest Competitor

Feed barley pricing is heavily influenced by the cost and availability of imported corn, says Crandall.

Since the 2021 drought, corn has become a much bigger competitor in Western Canadian feed markets,

Since the 2021 drought, corn has become a much bigger competitor in Western Canadian feed markets, especially in southern Alberta, where year-round supply, strong price transparency and the ability to purchase large volumes without moving the market have made it attractive to feedlots.

especially in southern Alberta, where year-round supply, strong price transparency and the ability to purchase large volumes without moving the market have made it attractive to feedlots.

"Any time of the day, you can figure out the price of corn. You can't do that very easily with barley," he says. "You cannot buy 5,000 tons of barley without causing the market to go higher."

Furthermore, when Western Canada relies on imported U.S. corn, the value of the Canadian dollar directly affects landed feed costs, says Brian Perillat, an Agricultural Economist and Agribusiness Specialist with More Than Just Feed, based in Strathmore, AB.

"If we're importing corn, as our dollar goes up, it drops the price of the landed corn price," he says.

When corn prices are similar to, or only slightly higher than barley, many buyers shift to corn, putting pressure on feed barley demand and forcing farmers to weigh whether barley makes sense in the rotation or not, Crandall says.

"From a grain grower's point of view, it becomes the economics -- does growing barley make sense or not?"

The graphic features a dark background with a large, stylized white arrow pointing upwards and to the right. At the top left is the 'keep it clean' logo, which includes a stylized sun and a leaf. Below the logo, the text 'Be Aware of Market Risks' is written in large, bold, white letters. Underneath this, it says 'Review the 2026 Keep it Clean Product Advisory if you plan to use the following products this season:'. A list of products follows, each with a small yellow icon: Chlormequat, Flonicamid, Fluopyram, Glufosinate ammonium, Glyphosate, Saflufenacil, and Tetraconazole. At the bottom left is a QR code. To its right, the text reads 'Help keep markets open for all. Review the 2026 Product Advisory today at KeepItClean.ca/ProductAdvisory'. The bottom of the graphic has a yellow background with a red maple leaf on the right and several logos on the left: Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, canolacouncil, PULSE CANADA, CEREALES CANADA, POGA, and Canada.

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Freight and Location Matter

Freight costs and farm location play a major role in the feed barley price a farmer actually receives, because local bids are typically based on the Lethbridge market and then adjusted for transportation, says Crandall.

"If Lethbridge is the price point because it's the largest user... all other prices are going to arbitrage."

"Where your farm is located to market, that's what's going to matter. Whether you're farming in Regina and your freight's \$50 a tonne... or you're farming in Olds and your freight is maybe 50 cents a bushel [ed. \$23/tonne], you're going to see those arbitrages geographically."

In most cases, prices across regions "arbitrage" back to that key demand centre, he says, but unusual demand patterns, such as aggressive export buying in certain areas, can disrupt normal relationships.

"This year we've seen the price of the elevator going to export being better ... and it's not even explainably better," he says.

In light of all this, it's critical for farmers to understand their freight disadvantage (or advantage), watch local elevator bids closely (especially when export demand is strong) and recognize that the strongest price may come from unexpected markets in a given year, Crandall says.

Marketing Discipline Matters - and Information is Everything

In a market with limited transparency, consistent information gathering and disciplined marketing matter as much as the price itself, in Crandall's opinion.

He advises farmers to actively gather their own market information, compare multiple buyers and market consistently rather than waiting until they're forced to move grain.

"You need to be diligent. You need to check your selling options: 'Where can I sell it? Who can I sell it to? And what is their price?'"

Gathering this type of information will help identify opportunities, avoid poor timing and make more informed decisions about risk, storage and market options, he says.

Know Your Grain and Your Storage Economics

Quality, risk and carry decisions directly affect value.

For these reasons, both Crandall and Perillat stress that strong barley marketing starts with knowing your product and your costs.



"Establish for your own farm what is the cost of carry," Crandall says. "Am I really gaining any extra money by waiting... or am I ahead or behind?"

Jay Crandall

Strategic Commodity Specialist
with Monarch Ag Merchants

"Canadian Tire knows exactly what's on their shelf for sale," Crandall says. "The farmer needs to know exactly what's in his bin for sale."

Beyond knowing the exact quality and condition of the grain in their bins, Crandall and Perillat advise farmers to also build market contacts to uncover pricing opportunities and calculate their storage, or "cost of carry," so they know whether holding grain for a later price actually improves returns.

"Establish for your own farm what is the cost of carry," Crandall says. "Am I really gaining any extra money by waiting... or am I ahead or behind?"

Without clear knowledge of grain quality and the true cost of storing it, farmers risk making marketing decisions that feel strategic but actually erode their margins.

Conclusion

The feed barley market may hold many opportunities for today's barley farmers, but it is also one of limited transparency and shifting demand. As such, feed barley returns depend as much on management as on the price itself. Given this, the onus is on farmers to do their due diligence, says Crandall.

The good news is, Saskatchewan farmers already have an advantage in this area. Throughout his career, he says he has observed how Saskatchewan farmers tend to market consistently and strategically.

"Over my time in this industry, I will say this: the Saskatchewan farmer has probably been the best marketer ... I always felt the Saskatchewan barley farmer was a much more consistent marketer of his crop."

And as long as farmers continue to pay attention, do their due diligence and have a basic understanding of how the markets work, they will be positioned to capture opportunities, he says.

"Not that you're going to predict a market's direction in advance [but] you're going to have a little better understanding where it's going to go."





Looking South: New Opportunities for Canadian Malting Barley

Canadian malting barley is gaining fresh momentum as shifting global supply chains open doors in Mexico, Colombia, and emerging Latin American markets.

By Peter Watts | *Managing Director, Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre (CMBTC)*

Global grain markets have changed quickly in recent years. Trade disruptions, shifting supply chains and increasing competition have reinforced a simple reality for export-dependent industries: markets cannot be taken for granted.

For Canada's barley sector, that reality is shaping a renewed focus on market diversification. Maintaining strong demand for Canadian malting barley means building relationships not only in established markets, but also in regions where brewing industries continue to expand.

Canadian malting barley has built a strong global reputation for quality and reliability. That reputation is supported by an industry that prioritizes transparency through rigorous crop quality reporting, analytical

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

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testing and technical collaboration with brewers and maltsters. These strengths have helped Canada develop long-standing relationships in major markets such as China, the United States and Japan.

Maintaining those relationships remains important, but global demand is evolving. The Canadian barley industry is increasingly focused on identifying new opportunities where growing brewing industries rely on imported barley and malt.

Mexico is one example.

Mexico is the fourth-largest beer producer in the world, producing roughly 142 million hectolitres annually. The industry is highly concentrated. Grupo Modelo

(AB InBev), Heineken Mexico and Constellation Brands together account for more than 95 per cent of national production.

Supplying that scale requires significant imports. Mexico purchases approximately 400,000 to 500,000 tonnes of malting barley each year and imports more than 570,000 tonnes of malt to supplement domestic production.

These supply requirements create opportunities for Canadian exporters.

In October, the Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre (CMBTC) travelled to Mexico with representatives from the Canadian barley value chain, including SaskBarley Chair, Cody Glenn. The delegation met with large commercial brewers and craft brewers to better understand their sourcing

In a global market where supply chains and trade relationships continue to evolve, this type of engagement plays an important role in strengthening relationships with brewers and positioning Canadian barley in emerging markets.

requirements and discuss opportunities for Canadian barley as production continues to expand.

Beyond North America, Latin America also presents opportunities for market growth.

Colombia, a country of more than 50 million people, has a brewing industry dominated by Bavaria, part of the AB InBev global brewing

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group. Across Colombia and neighbouring markets including Peru, Chile and Ecuador, these brewing operations collectively import roughly 300,000 tonnes of barley and another 125,000 tonnes of malt each year.

Canada has historically supplied malting barley to Colombia. Purchases slowed after corporate mergers altered brewing recipes and procurement processes, but technical engagement continued. The CMBTC has worked with brewing teams in Bogotá to share crop quality data, provide performance information on Canadian barley varieties and supply pilot-scale samples for evaluation.

Those efforts are beginning to show results. In 2025, two cargoes of Canadian malting barley were shipped to Colombia as competitive pricing and strong crop quality aligned with brewing requirements.

Building on that momentum, the CMBTC travelled to Colombia in March 2026 to meet directly with brewers and their technical teams. The mission focused on understanding brewing specifications, discussing supply opportunities and supporting the evaluation of Canadian barley varieties through pilot and commercial trials.

In a global market where supply chains and trade relationships continue to evolve, this type of engagement plays an important role in strengthening relationships with brewers and positioning Canadian barley in emerging markets.

For Prairie farmers, that work supports a broader goal: ensuring Canadian barley continues to find customers around the world.



Export, Report, Repeat: More Data for More Profits

A new study shows how timely export sales reporting could level the playing field for Canadian producers and strengthen the entire grain supply chain.

By Geoff Geddes | *Freelance Writer*

Unless you're in the shower, transparency is a good thing.

That's the position of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) and SaskCrops (consisting of SaskBarley, SaskOats, SaskOilseeds, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers and Sask Wheat). In late 2025, they called on the Federal Government to create an Export Sales Reporting Program that would provide timely sales and reporting data to Canadian farmers. As part of this effort, they commissioned a report on the impact of export sales data transparency.

Entitled "Supply Chain Impact of Export Sales Data: Transparency in Canada's Grain Industry", the report, by Mercantile Consulting Venture, investigated how greater access to export sales data could empower farmers with insights for better decision-making. In turn this could influence market dynamics, pricing structures and the overall competitiveness of Canadian grain in global markets. The report also tried to measure the monetary effect of better/more timely data on farming operations.

"We wanted to see if data actually helps people make decisions in areas like cropping, grain marketing strategies and sales timing," says Boersch. "We found that it does, and that it clearly impacts the bottom line."

Marlene Boersch

Mercantile Consulting Venture

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The study outlines three recommendations on reporting requirements for the grain industry aimed at enhancing export transparency for all members of the value chain: regular export sales reporting, weekly port loading export reports, and annual pipeline cost transparency data.

"We wanted to see if data actually helps people make decisions in areas like cropping, grain marketing strategies and sales timing," says Marlene Boersch, Mercantile Consulting Venture, who co-authored the report 'Supply Chain Impact of Export Sales Data Transparency in Canada's Grain Industry'. "We found that it does, and that it clearly impacts the bottom line."

At present, Canadian farmers look to be disadvantaged against those in the U.S. and EU, where more robust reporting and transparency requirements exist. According to the study, closing that information gap could enrich our grain farmers by up to \$56 million per year.

As well, "enhanced data transparency would improve demand forecasting, operational planning and logistical efficiency for grain companies, processors and transportation providers, making Canada's grain supply chain more resilient and making us a more reliable trading partner."

"Grain companies in Canada have a good read on who is selling how much to whom," says Boersch. "Farmers can observe bids move (price data), but have no information on what drives these bids, or what current sales volumes are. Without details on volume and when buyers are active in the market, how do you measure if China is currently present in the market with a certain



commodity, for example? You want buyers to compete for your product, so if you know it's in demand, that can strengthen your position. This speaks to having a transparent and open market. Grain companies can be quite territorial, so anything that induces them to compete for volume and product will be helpful."

For some, the benefit of an export sales reporting program is easy to define: more money.

"In agriculture, we're faced with a constant barrage of uncertainty around weather, government policy, trade and labour disruptions, and so on," says Bernie McClean, director with SaskBarley. "Revenue can be just as uncertain. As farmers, we all have different needs and times for sales, and export sales reporting is another tool in the sales toolbox."

As an example, McClean recently heard through a colleague that barley sales in 2026 have been strong thus far. Many have jumped on the opportunity to sell, but without knowing the full extent of activity via sales reporting, did those that took advantage of the rising market sell too soon?

"Hindsight is always 20/20. As producers, it is difficult for obvious reasons to adjust sales once they have been made. By implementing export sales reporting, producers could make decisions on whether to sell based on information available at the time."

While some cite a drawback to export sales reporting, McClean isn't buying it.

"I understand the argument that international buyers will have the information as well and could use it against us, but I think that's largely fear mongering. If you look at the U.S. or EU, do they feel the reports should be abolished because they give the buyer an advantage? Nobody likes guessing, and no one wants to be at the wrong end of a guess, even if it's an educated one."

Since Canadian farmers currently have no export sales reporting data to consult, they use American data to the best of their abilities, as many of our crops follow the U.S. markets. In McClean's view, this can often lead to trouble and the dreaded "a-word".

"Relying on U.S. data means we must extrapolate information, and, in the end, make some assumptions. Ever since my grade 12 teacher showed me that to assume is to make an 'ass' of 'u' and 'me', I have been very careful to avoid the practice."

As McClean sees it, more information is always better in making decisions, whether about selling grain, purchasing a piece of equipment or trying a new beer.

"Information is knowledge and strength, which both yield confidence and calm. In a world rife with chaos, I'm good with calm."



Public Research at a Crossroads: What AAFC Staffing Cuts Could Mean for Barley Growers

Saskatchewan barley growers could feel the impacts of recent federal decisions for years to come.

By Jill McDonald | Executive Director, SaskBarley



Staffing reductions at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), along with the closure of several research facilities, are creating real concern across Canada's barley sector.

For those of us working closely with producers and researchers, the issue is not abstract. It goes directly to the strength of the research system that underpins productivity, quality, and long-term profitability on farm.

At SaskBarley, we see firsthand how critical public research capacity is to the success of our industry. AAFC researchers, technicians, and support staff

have long been essential partners in advancing barley breeding, disease management, and agronomic practices. Their work has helped ensure Saskatchewan remains a reliable supplier of high-quality barley to both domestic and global markets.

The potential loss of that expertise raises important questions about what comes next.

Public breeding and agronomic research are foundational to the success of our sector. Maintaining a strong, coordinated system that complements producer investment is critical if Canadian barley is going to remain competitive in an increasingly demanding global market.

Why Public Research Matters

For decades, Saskatchewan barley growers have invested significantly in public research through core breeding agreements and collaborative projects. These are not theoretical investments. They have delivered real, measurable returns in the form of improved varieties, stronger disease resistance, better agronomic recommendations, and more competitive market opportunities.

The strength of our barley sector today is built on that foundation.

When public research capacity is reduced, it is not just a matter of fewer people in labs or field plots. It affects the entire pipeline, from early-stage breeding through to applied research that supports on-farm decision making. Over time, that can slow innovation, limit progress, and ultimately impact the returns growers see from their levy investment.

Uncertainty and the Need for Clarity

At this point, there is still uncertainty around how these staffing reductions will affect specific barley research programs. Questions remain about

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the continuity of ongoing projects, the timelines for breeding programs, and the long-term stability of research partnerships.

SaskBarley is actively working to better understand these impacts. Our priority is to ensure that the investments made by producers are protected and that the research system continues to deliver value.

Public breeding and agronomic research are foundational to the success of our sector. Maintaining a strong, coordinated system that complements producer investment is critical if Canadian barley is going to remain competitive in an increasingly demanding global market.

Looking Ahead

This moment is about more than short-term staffing changes. It is about the long-term capacity of Canada's barley research system and the role it plays in supporting farm-level profitability.

SaskBarley will continue engaging with government and research partners to advocate for solutions that maintain and strengthen public research capacity. For producers, the goal is clear: to ensure that the research foundation supporting yield, quality, and market access remains strong for years to come.

The decisions made today will shape the future of barley production in Saskatchewan. It is essential that we get them right.



A Quarter Century of Bringing Grain Farmers' Priorities to Parliament Hill

For Canada's grain farmers, decisions made in Ottawa reach the farm gate. They shape farm viability, how producers will invest in the next season, and whether Canada is able to supply the domestic and global grain markets they rely on.

By Scott Hepworth | *Chair of Grain Growers of Canada*

Ensuring policymakers understand what those decisions mean for producers and for the broader economy is the purpose of Grain Growers of Canada's (GGC) annual Grains Week in Ottawa that took place this year from February 23rd to 26th.

Each year, we bring farmer leaders to Parliament Hill for direct engagement with federal decision-makers. This February, we brought together 25 producers from across the country to Ottawa, where they participated in more than 30 meetings with Members of Parliament, Senators and political staff from across parties to raise the priorities and concerns shaping Canada's grain sector.

With the recent announcement of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) research facility closures and growing concerns about declining research capacity, we began the week with a roundtable discussion with the Honourable Heath MacDonald, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and Deputy Minister Lawrence Hanson, where producers raised these issues directly.

Producers highlighted the potential impacts on innovation and long-term productivity in the grain sector while reiterating the need for greater transparency around AAFC staffing reductions and research facility closures to ensure producers and research partners understand what capacity may be affected and how these changes could impact the sector.



Grain Growers of Canada Chair Scott Hepworth with Senator Rob Black, Chair of the Standing Senate Committees on Agriculture and Forestry.



SaskBarley Director Bernie McClean with Federal Minister for Agriculture and Agri-Food, Heath McDonald.

Each year, we bring farmer leaders to Parliament Hill for direct engagement with federal decision-makers. This February, we brought together 25 producers from across the country to Ottawa, where they participated in more than 30 meetings with Members of Parliament, Senators and political staff from across parties to raise the priorities and concerns shaping Canada's grain sector.

Beyond the roundtable, discussions with parliamentarians focused on several key priorities for producers: renewed investment in agricultural research and development, continued engagement to protect Canada's trade relationships, action to mitigate labour disruptions that threaten supply chains, and investments in infrastructure that help Canadian grain move efficiently to global markets.

For producers, these meetings are about more than visibility. They ensure the realities at the farm gate are understood by those shaping the policies that affect the sector.

This year's Grains Week also carried added significance as GGC marked its 25th anniversary, recognizing a quarter century of bringing grain farmers' priorities directly into federal policy discussions.

To mark the occasion, GGC hosted a parliamentary reception welcoming

more than 160 attendees, including producers, parliamentarians and industry stakeholders, highlighting the strong relationships built between grain farmers and decision-makers in Ottawa over the past 25 years.

Long-time agriculture advocate, Senator Rob Black, showcased that support by recognizing 25 years of GGC's advocacy, delivering a statement in the Senate and presenting the organization with a commemorative certificate during the reception. We also welcomed Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Kody Blois, a strong supporter of the sector, who delivered keynote remarks at the event.

Beer Canada also partnered with us to highlight the connection between grain farmers and Canada's brewing industry, illustrating how Canadian

grain moves from field to glass and the important role the sector plays across industries, supply chains and the broader Canadian economy.

The depth of engagement throughout the week from Parliamentarians, partners, and producers reflected the ongoing connection between grain farmers and decision-makers in Ottawa, recognizing that for a quarter century we have worked to bring farmers' priorities directly to Parliament Hill.

That work remains essential as we continue ensuring the voices of Canada's grain farmers are represented where the decisions that affect them are made.



Barley Straw: Take It or Leave It?

From preserving soil nutrients to supporting long-term fertility and carbon health, the decision to keep or remove straw carries lasting implications for both land and yield.

By Geoff Geddes | *Freelance Writer*

It may not break the camel's back, but barley straw can make or break soil health. While it is often removed from fields for use as livestock bedding or feed, many growers are leaving straw in place and reaping the rewards.

The right approach will differ from farm to farm, but letting straw lie is well worth exploring.

"Prior to the advent of no-till, barley straw would often be tilled, burned or disposed of in other ways, as it interfered with seeding operations," says Mitchell Japp, research and extension manager at SaskBarley. "As zero-till became the norm, growers began saving that straw and benefiting from its stored nutrients, such as potassium."

Much of that potassium leaches into the soil and the straw has an insulating effect, helping to regulate soil temperature and moisture for future crops.

"By contrast, harvesting the straw removes potassium, which can reduce soil fertility and force growers to add fertilizer or manure to compensate," says Japp.

In a recent study, Dr. Jeff Schoenau, professor of soil science at the University of Saskatchewan, and research associate Dr. Ryan Hangs have been examining the short and long-term impact of straw removal.

"In cases where straw was taken off over several years and not replaced, we saw lower availability of

potassium in those soils," says Dr. Schoenau.

Preserving barley straw today is more feasible than ever thanks to the evolution of seeding equipment. Good straw choppers and spreaders can break up the straw into appropriate lengths and distribute it the length of the combine.

Some landscape positions in a field may be more suitable for straw harvesting, such as the depressions, which have high organic matter and nutrient levels that make them more resilient. These are also the areas that are often cut around and harvested later due to delayed maturity, so that the straw drop for baling is not an inconvenience.

"In terms of maintaining the health, quality and fertility of the soil over many years, we must recognize that straw plays a key role by returning organic matter that contains carbon and other nutrients," says Dr. Schoenau. "Straw residue also protects soil against wind and water erosion."

As well, because barley straw is about 50% carbon by weight, removing it may lead to a significant drop in the soil carbon content, reducing microbial activity and soil health in the process.

Apart from crop production, barley straw has other applications. In recent years, it has seen more use as another method of controlling excessive algae growth.

"In cases where straw was taken off over several years and not replaced, we saw lower availability of potassium in those soils,"

Dr. Jeff Schoenau

Professor of Soil Science at the University of Saskatchewan

"There is potential for straw to help mitigate that growth in dugouts and water sources," says Japp. "Whether you are using water for livestock or spraying applications, algae is a concern these days. If you can have a cleaner water source, that is a good thing."

Traditional mechanical and chemical methods of algae control are not always efficient or economical. When applied at the proper time and rate, barley straw has been a very successful algae control technique. Though it does not kill existing algae, it inhibits new growth. The exact mechanism is poorly understood, but it seems that barley straw, when exposed to sunlight and in the presence of oxygen, produces a

chemical that inhibits the growth of algae. (<https://extension.psu.edu/barley-straw-for-algae-control>)

Other potential applications for barley straw have arisen in recent years, such as incorporating cellulose from the straw in ethanol production and using straw to make pulp in paper production.

Like other aspects of farming, removing barley straw from the field might not show immediate effects.

"The results thus far from our study are over a short time span," says Dr. Schoenau. "The effects of a process like straw removal on nutrient availability may not become highly apparent until after many years. If you keep harvesting the straw and removing nutrients from your field without replacement, however, I think you will see the downside."

Based on previous research work, Dr. Schoenau says growers are bound to eventually take a hit to their bottom line after repeated harvesting of straw without replacement of nutrients. This will take the form of poor soil health and fertility and, most notably for farmers, a decrease in yield.

Ultimately, deciding if barley straw should stay or go won't make or break your operation, but it's worth a closer look.

"As farmers take stock of their land base and how it can produce the greatest economic benefit, using their barley straw strategically is another way to maximize returns," says Dr. Schoenau. "To me, the bottom line for your crops is a simple one: At some point, you must replace what you remove."



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