

Abundance

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TURNING LAWNS INTO LUNCH

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Putting Saskatchewan
on the shelf

New organic variety trial aims
to change the game for
farmer-led seed solutions

Converting seasonal green manure
crops to multi-year alfalfa forage
in organic crop rotation

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Upcoming Events

Save the dates for some summer field days! Details will be announced at a later date.

July 8, 2026 North Battleford, SK

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Welcome Spring!

Every spring offers a fresh start. As an old saying goes, "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." Every year, farmers uphold an enduring commitment to the future—planting seeds today as a hopeful investment in what is to come.



First off, a heartfelt thank you to all of the sponsors, exhibitors, attendees, speakers, and volunteers of the *Advancing Organics Conference & Trade Show!* On March 26 & 27, we gathered in Regina at the Queensbury Convention Centre for two days of presentations, trade show

and networking as well as our Annual Meeting on March 26. We were so pleased to have record attendance and receive so much great feedback! It was great to see many of our members and make some new connections. This is the flagship event of our education program, and we hope it leaves attendees feeling inspired and informed, and ready for the busy seeding season ahead.

Congratulations to our Education Scholarship 2026 recipient, Jonelle Bouchard of Outlook, Sask.! You'll learn more about her further on in this issue. We wish her all the best in her studies and career pursuits.

In this issue's *Innovate* article, we are excited to share the inspiring story of City Street Farms—a Regina-based company transforming underused urban yards and lawns into thriving garden plots, supplying the family and local community with fresh, healthy produce.

In our *Sustain* article, Dunling Wang is back to discuss the benefits and challenges of converting seasonal green manure crops to multi-year alfalfa forage in your organic crop rotation. Multi-year alfalfa forage crops can offer agronomic, ecological and economic advantages in organic farming systems including benefits to soil health, nutrient cycling, and weed control. But like any production method, consideration has to be given to your particular farm and location to determine its suitability in your operation.

SaskMade Marketplace has built its reputation on showcasing products grown, processed and crafted in Saskatchewan, giving local food entrepreneurs—many of whom are also organic—a place to share their work with customers who care about where their food comes from. In this issue's *Nourish* article, we talked with the Saskatoon retailer about innovation in prairie food entrepreneurs, food sovereignty and security, and sharing Saskatchewan's food story.

Our *Feature* article explores the work of SeedChange's Canadian field program, the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security (BFICSS), and the innovative farmers in the Prairies that are adapting and developing varieties of wheat and oats that are bred for organic and regional farming conditions with on-farm plant breeding and seed adaptation projects.

In more sober news, in January, the agricultural sector was shocked by the announcement of cuts to AAFC agricultural research centres and programs across the country. The loss of publicly funded ag research and plant breeding is of great concern to us, but SaskOrganics is also deeply concerned about the cut to the Organic & Regenerative Research Program at the Swift Current Research & Development Centre. The loss of this program is a huge blow to our sector, with already so little organic specific, regionally relevant research. We update you further in this issue about the advocacy efforts undertaken in opposition to these cuts.

As always, please be sure to read the ads you see throughout this magazine. It is thanks to the support of our advertisers that we can continue to publish, print and mail this magazine for free to our members across the province. ●

Wishing you a safe and productive seeding season ahead.

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Putting Saskatchewan on the shelf

From honey and grains to small-batch preserves, SaskMade Marketplace showcases the creativity of local food entrepreneurs while helping customers support producers across the province.

By Brook Thalgott Photos provided by SaskMade Marketplace

Local food has always been part of Saskatchewan's identity. From grain and pulses to honey, berries and handmade preserves, the province's producers have long shaped the way people eat. But in recent years, interest in buying local has grown well beyond farmers' markets and farm gates.

At Saskatoon's SaskMade Marketplace, that interest comes through the door every day. The store has built its reputation on showcasing products grown, processed and crafted in Saskatchewan, giving local food entrepreneurs—many of whom are organic—a place to share their work with customers who care about where their food comes from.

For store manager Peter Laosebikan, the mission is about more than stocking shelves with regional products. It's about connecting people with the farmers and processors behind them.

"Our mission is to celebrate and support Saskatchewan producers by providing a trusted marketplace where their products can reach customers who value local quality and craftsmanship," he says. "By highlighting Saskatchewan-made goods, we're not just selling products, we're telling the stories of the people and communities that produce them."

A GROWING APPETITE FOR LOCAL FOOD

Over the past decade, consumer interest in local food has steadily increased. Customers are asking more questions about where their food is grown, how it is produced and who is behind the brands they buy. Laosebikan says those conversations have become even more common recently.

"We've seen a significant increase in consumer awareness around where food comes from," he says. "Recently, trade tensions and news around tariffs between Canada and the United States have also influenced consumer behaviour. We're seeing more shoppers intentionally choosing Canadian products and asking where items are produced."



Many customers want to know that their purchases are supporting farmers and small businesses close to home. Surveys show Canadians are increasingly trying to buy domestically produced goods, particularly during periods of trade uncertainty.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRODUCERS

Behind every jar of jam or bag of flour on SaskMade's shelves is a relationship with a local producer. Finding those products and bringing them to market takes time and collaboration. "We work closely with producers across the province through industry networks, referrals, trade events and direct outreach," Laosebikan explains. "Often producers approach us once they're ready to scale their product into retail."

When evaluating a new product, the store looks at several factors including quality, consistency of supply and the story behind the brand. Just as important is whether the product reflects the creativity and character of Saskatchewan's food sector.

"We try to build collaborative relationships with producers, offering feedback, helping them understand retail expectations and showcasing their products in ways that highlight what makes them special."

These partnerships help emerging companies move from small batch production into a broader retail environment.



SUPPORTING NEW FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

Many Saskatchewan food businesses begin in small kitchens, shared processing facilities or on family farms. SaskMade often becomes one of the first places where these products reach a larger audience. "Supporting emerging entrepreneurs is an important part of what we do," says Laosebikan. "We provide a retail platform where small producers can introduce their products to a wider audience."

The store also helps new businesses navigate the realities of retail.

"We offer guidance on packaging, pricing, labeling and retail readiness so their products succeed on the shelf," he explains. "In many cases, our store is one of the first retail spaces where customers discover a new Saskatchewan product."

That early exposure can help a brand grow from a local start-up into a recognized regional product.

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY AND FOOD SECURITY

As customers learn more about local food systems, conversations in the store often expand beyond taste and ingredients. Shoppers are increasingly curious about sustainability, food security and the impact of their purchasing choices. Buying closer to home can strengthen regional food systems and reduce transportation distances, something many customers appreciate.

"We often talk with shoppers about the importance of strengthening regional food systems, reducing food miles and supporting producers who are part of our communities," he says. "Many people appreciate the idea that by choosing Saskatchewan-made products, they're helping sustain local farms and small food businesses."

INNOVATION ON THE PRAIRIES

The variety of Saskatchewan-made foods has also expanded in recent years. Producers are experimenting with new flavours, formats and ingredients while showcasing crops grown on the Prairies.

"We're seeing a lot of creativity and innovation from Saskatchewan producers," Laosebikan says. "There's growth in value-added products like specialty condiments, snacks, beverages and ready-to-use ingredients that highlight local crops."

Many of those products feature Prairie staples such as grains, berries, honey and wild rice. At the same time, producers are paying closer attention to ingredient transparency and sustainable packaging.

Cleaner ingredient lists and thoughtful product design are becoming part of the story that resonates with customers.

SHARING SASKATCHEWAN'S FOOD STORY

For Laosebikan, the rise of local food reflects a deeper connection between producers and the people who enjoy their products.

"Saskatchewan has an incredible story to tell when it comes to food," he says. "There is a growing community of customers who truly want to support local products and the people behind them. We're proud to help bring those products to customers across the province and country."

By continuing to innovate and collaborate, farmers and food processors can strengthen that connection across the province. ●

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Turning lawns into lunch

City Street Farms is transforming underused urban yards into thriving garden plots, challenging assumptions about where food can grow and who can grow it.

By Brook Thalgott Photos provided by City Street Farms

When Candace Benson looked around her city, she didn't just see grass. She saw an untapped resource. "The inspiration came from seeing so many residential lawns in the city taking up resources but not being used," says Benson, co-founder of City Street Farms in Regina. "Meanwhile, people are on waiting lists to garden in community garden spaces and the price of agricultural land continues to skyrocket."

In response, Candace and co-founder Miranda Holt launched a model that repurposes front and backyards into small-scale garden plots. "We saw the opportunity to put land within city limits to productive use and address all of these issues with one solution." They worked together for four seasons before Benson took over the whole operation in 2025.



ROOTED IN COLLABORATION

In its first season, City Street Farms saw modest but steady interest from Regina homeowners. "It was on par with what we expected," says Benson. But when they began selling at the farmers' market, word spread. "We started getting more inquiries from homeowners about the potential of using their yards and that was when we realized that there are a lot more folks interested in putting their yards to productive use than we thought."

The model is based on a clear agreement: "The homeowner provides the growing space, access to water and payment of the water bill, and a one-time fee at the start of the first season to contribute to turning the lawn into a garden," Benson explains. "In exchange, City Street Farms does all of the farm work... and provides fresh vegetables and/or bouquets throughout the growing season."

To keep things sustainable, they ask for a three-year commitment from homeowners. "We are going on five and six seasons with our current farmyards," she adds.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD URBAN FARMYARD?

Benson looks for practical factors when evaluating a site. "Full sun and a blank slate in terms of existing landscaping are the most important things we look for in a potential space," she says. Proximity also matters. "We learned the hard way that having the yards nearby to each other is essential for making this model as efficient as possible."

Every yard they grow on has come from an interested homeowner. "They have already bought into the idea before we get started," she says. But the curiosity doesn't stop at the property line. "The real shift happens with people walking by the yards and stopping to ask questions, or skeptical neighbours."

GROWING MORE THAN VEGETABLES

City Street Farms doesn't just grow food, they grow relationships. "Over the years we have worked with the Regina Food Bank, done presentations at the library and with the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation," says Benson. "Most recently we have added one community farmyard that works with volunteers throughout the season to build gardening capacity and donate the harvest."

That harvest had a real impact. "For the 2025 season, the food was donated to the Thompson Food Collective's school breakfast program."

This work contributes to a larger cultural shift. "I think the general thoughts towards the separation of food production from urban spaces is shifting," she says. "Having a connection to food production is about so much more than growing techniques and eating local food. It's about getting outside, being connected with natural cycles... and solidifying our place in the community."

ORGANIC FARMING METHODS, URBAN CHALLENGES

Farming in the city comes with its own set of challenges. "One of the main challenges we face for growing using organic methods in an urban setting is compost production," says Benson. "We are limited to the compost piles we can responsibly manage in our own backyards."

There are also chemical concerns. "We rub up with the occasional neighbour spraying chemical fertilizers and pesticides on their lawns, but we are lucky that most of our growing spaces have some physical barriers... to help limit these migrating to our plants."

City Street Farms manages pest control with simple but effective organic techniques. "Our pest management strategies consist of physical barriers (floating row cover) and removing them by hand," she explains. "We focus on building healthy soils, ensuring a strong pollinator population and attracting beneficial insects."

They've also invested in microbial health. "We have been dialing in our compost tea routine and aim to spray tea on a regular basis for general plant and soil health."



ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CITY FARMERS

For those inspired to follow a similar path in their own community, Benson offers practical encouragement. "Simply starting is the most important thing," she says. "Yes, starting small and having a general understanding of what you're getting into is important, but at a certain point one has to start learning from experience."

She also emphasizes balance. "It's important to have a clear vision but that also comes with experience, so it's a constant balancing act between planning and taking action."

Her advice includes a financial safety net. "I am also an advocate for maintaining outside income for new farms especially. I still rely on off-farm income. Less pressure on the farm to provide an income has allowed it to grow at its own pace and resulted in less stress overall."

DIGGING INTO PURPOSE

What keeps her going? The simple joy of working outdoors. "Getting to work outside every day during the growing season sounds so simple but it really is one of the most rewarding parts of doing this work."

More than just vegetables, City Street Farms is cultivating skills, resilience and hope. "If we can demonstrate and help facilitate alternative urban growing spaces and build gardening and farming capacity within the community, this work will be endlessly motivating." ●

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A trial plot growing on AAFC SCRDC's organic land, photographed July 10th. This wheat line was selected by Stewart Wells, on his organic farm near Swift Current, SK.

New organic variety trial aims to change the game for farmer-led seed solutions

By Sarah Preston, Regional Program Manager (Prairies), SeedChange

Organic farmers across the Prairies are eager for varieties that can help them overcome the challenges of modern farming. Although Canada's public plant breeding programs for cereals and field crops have created excellent varieties in use by organic farmers, funding for these types of programs is declining and there is virtually no investment in the development of varieties for low-input conditions like organic and regenerative organic farming.

In the absence of this support, innovative farmers are leading the way to develop solutions to these challenges through on-farm plant breeding and seed adaptation projects. These initiatives aim to develop and adapt crop varieties to thrive under organic management in a wide range of regional farming conditions.

Most farmer-bred grains are selected to suit markets that exist outside of typical commodity grain value chains. The production scales and price premiums associated with specialty organic markets and direct-marketing relationships can help offset the costs of on-farm variety improvement, which gives organic producers some natural advantages in pursuing seed diversity work. Decisions about which end-uses and production scales to breed for, and how to market new varieties, are heavily shaped by the ways that seed policies regulate the certification and sale of both seed and food grains. Canada's variety registration system excels at serving mainstream variety needs and protecting seed quality, but the barriers to entry effectively exclude farmers from contributing to variety development for commodity markets.

Farmers are more than capable of fostering the on-farm seed diversity that is so critical for resiliency—but to have an impact beyond their own farms, they need access to the variety registration system and a policy environment that makes their participation financially feasible. The collective responsibility of seed security is realized through cooperation and partnership. Farmers' work to diversify and adapt seeds for organic conditions in Canada should be appreciated and supported. In the shadow of looming cuts to public research capacity at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) — including the imminent loss of the Organic and Regenerative Research Program at the Swift Current Research and Development Centre (SCRDC) — an emerging organic variety trial is taking on new meaning.

SeedChange's Canadian field program, the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security (BFICSS), has been supporting farmers in the Prairies to adapt and develop varieties of wheat and oats that are bred for organic farming conditions for over a decade. Previous organic variety trials with partners like the University of Manitoba (U of M), University of Alberta and Mackenzie Applied Research Association (MARA) showed off farmer-bred lines in action and provided data on how the farmer-breeders' selections shaped each line. Those findings helped identify the six best performing farmer-selected varieties to emerge from SeedChange's and the U of M's Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB) program, which will now be evaluated against standard checks and the popular organic-bred varieties Park, Red Fife, and Marquis.

A NEW DIRECTION FOR ORGANIC VARIETY TRIALS

In 2025, SeedChange enlisted the expertise of Dr. Myriam Fernandez and other breeding program researchers at AAFC's SCRDC to conduct a replicated variety trial to test farmer-bred, heritage, and heirloom wheat cultivars in organic conditions. Dr. Fernandez' team led the trial on-field and is providing scientific data and analysis of the test cultivars.

This trial follows protocols used in the Western Bread Wheat Co-op trials for CWRS, helping growers and Recommending Committees at the Prairie Grain Development Committee to understand how these farmer-bred and heritage lines compare with modern check varieties when grown in the conditions they were bred for. Existing Prairie co-op trials do not provide organic test sites, making it impossible to accurately assess new organic lines and increasing the economic risk of collecting the requisite pre-registration data.

This new organic trial represents the first formal opportunity for heritage and farmer-developed lines to be evaluated under organic conditions with the same rigorous standards, now with a view to variety registration.

The data from Dr. Fernandez's team will show whether these lines are ready to advance to Western B-Level Co-op trials for registration — or highlight where more breeding work is needed. The analysis will include traits such as grain yield, height, lodging, test weight, weed biomass, weed yield, and protein content.

The expertise of public researchers like Dr. Fernandez and field technician Noé Waelchli, and the institutional capacity of AAFC SCRDC's Organic and Regenerative Program are irreplaceable and play a crucial role not only in collecting practical, regionally-relevant field data, but also in keeping agricultural research relevant and accessible to the farmers who need it. SeedChange hopes to continue their organic wheat variety trial through new partnerships with MARA and the Parkland Crop Diversification Foundation (PCDF) in Roblin, MB. These new sites will collect agronomic data in two new regions and soil zones, and provide more opportunities for farmers, researchers, and industry representatives to connect and learn about the varieties in the field.

Scientific collaborations between public researchers and industry — like this trial — are highlighting how working in partnership supports farmer-led innovations at multiple levels. At the same time, SeedChange is amplifying farmers' capacity to breed and adapt new cultivars, and is advocating for greater seed diversity on the market and more equitable policies at the federal level to support farmer-led seed systems. ●



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A well-managed alfalfa field. Photo by Shelby Gruss.

Converting seasonal green manure crops to multi-year alfalfa forage in organic crop rotation

By Dunling Wang, PhD, PAg, Provincial Specialist, Alternative Cropping Systems, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Converting seasonal green manure crops to multi-year alfalfa forage (typically three to four years) offers substantial agronomic, ecological and economic advantages in organic farming systems. This approach improves long-term soil health, stabilizes nutrient cycling, enhances weed and pest management, and can provide an alternative income stream. It also reduces risks associated with seasonal green manure failure, especially under increasingly variable climatic conditions.

Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) is a deep-rooted perennial legume adapted to well-drained soils with a pH of 6–8. It is widely used for hay, grazing and silage across Western Canada and commonly appears in multi-species cover crops in the Dark Brown, Black and Gray Soil Zones. It is less used in the Brown Soil Zone due to its higher water demands.

KEY BENEFITS OF MULTI-YEAR ALFALFA FORAGE

Soil Health and Structure: Multi-year alfalfa contributes large volumes of above- and below-ground biomass, promoting significant increases in soil organic matter. Deep root systems, which often reach 10 to 15 feet, help break up compaction, improve water infiltration and aeration, and increase soil resilience to drought and heavy rainfall. A dense canopy and strong perennial root structure maintains continuous soil cover, effectively eliminating erosion from wind and water.

Nutrient Management: As a nitrogen (N)-fixing legume, alfalfa forms symbiotic associations with Rhizobia bacteria, converting atmospheric N₂ gas into plant-available ammonium. Pure stands can contribute up to 200 lbs N/ac annually. These nitrogen credits benefit subsequent crops, often meeting the N requirements for several years.



Fully developed alfalfa root systems.
Photo credit: National Alfalfa Forage Alliance.

Alfalfa also acts as a "nutrient pump." Its deep roots capture nitrogen and phosphorus from lower soil horizons and redistribute them to the surface layers. In addition, multi-year alfalfa supports rich microbial activity, creating a "microbial hotspot" that enhances soil biodiversity and overall nutrient cycling.

Weed and Pest Management: Frequent hay cuttings and a competitive canopy effectively suppress both annual and perennial weeds, reducing future weed pressure and decreasing the need for aggressive tillage. Rotations that include multi-year alfalfa help disrupt life cycles of

host-specific pests and soil-borne diseases by removing suitable hosts for an extended period.

Economic and Operational Benefits: Concerns that alfalfa increases input costs are often offset by reduced annual seeding expenses, lower weed management requirements, and potential revenue from hay, grazing or silage. Multi-year alfalfa is resilient to drought and hail, providing a form of biological "crop insurance" compared with seasonal green manures.

Alfalfa contributes to whole-farm profitability by increasing grain yields and protein content in crops grown for up to three years after termination. Alfalfa fields also support pollinators, beneficial insects and diverse wildlife, enhancing ecosystem services.

In addition, incorporating perennial alfalfa forage into organic crop rotations effectively balances the workload, helps stagger farm operations and uses labour and farm machinery more efficiently throughout the growing season.

DESIGN THE CROP ROTATION PLAN FOR THE WHOLE FARM

Establishing a long-term crop rotation plan that integrates multi-year alfalfa forage can offer successful crop production and sustainable profits at the farm level. An example of this rotation could be an eight-year cycle that includes: oat (alfalfa, under seeded) – alfalfa (forage) – alfalfa (forage) – alfalfa (forage and termination) – wheat – flax – pea/ oat (intercropping) – lentil.

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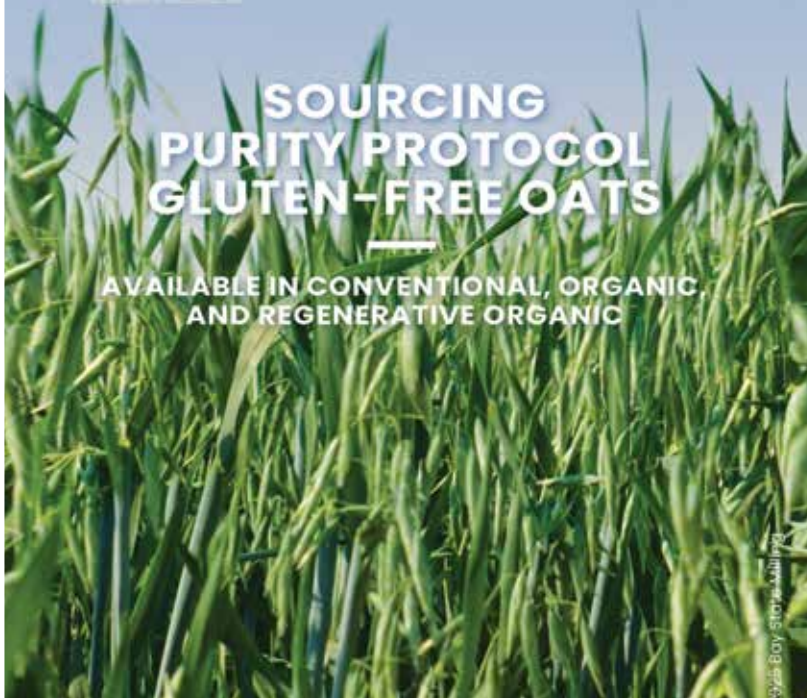


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When this type of rotation is successful, a potential farming strategy can be developed where one-quarter to one-third of farm acres may be maintained in alfalfa at any given time, with remaining land allocated to cash crops. Alfalfa functions as a “systems crop”, which contributes multi-functional, long-lasting agronomic benefits that support sustainable and diversified farm income.

ALFALFA SEEDING STRATEGIES

Selecting high-quality, preferably certified seed helps ensure genetic purity, vigor and low weed-seed contamination. Purchasing seed locally supports better adaptation to environmental conditions.

Seeding rates range from 10 to 22 lbs/ac for pure stands, with a higher rate in drier conditions. Eight to 15 lbs/ac is enough when underseeded with cereal crops. Cereal nurse crops seeded early in spring protect young alfalfa seedlings and improve survival. Reduced cereal seeding rates (about 50 per cent of the normal) allow adequate light and space for alfalfa establishment.

Emergence is an important driver of stand uniformity. For example, seeding 15 lbs/ac (about 75 seeds/ft²), with about 60 percent emergence, will produce 45 seedlings/ft². Significant thinning occurs in the first 12 months, reducing to 25 plants/ft² and further declining to stable productive stands of 9 plants/ft² by year two, as crowns deepen and mature (Figure 1).

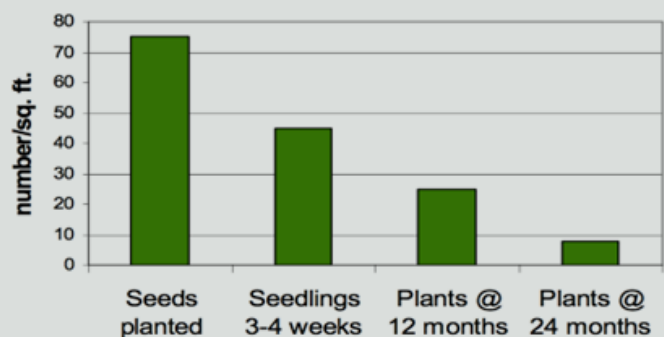


Fig. 1 Progression from seeding 15 lbs/acre of alfalfa seed to productive plant stands 24 months after seeding (Mike Rankin, Univ. Wisconsin, 2008).

Seeding depth is generally less than ½ inch in clay or loamy soils but can be up to ¾ inch in sandy soils. Packing the seedbed is essential for strong seed-to-soil contact.

Relay seeding into an existing crop (July–early August) is also possible if moisture is sufficient. After cereal harvest, alfalfa continues growth until the first killing frost.

ALFALFA TERMINATION

Mechanical tillage remains the primary method for terminating multi-year alfalfa. Moldboard plows or chisel plows with overlapping sweeps help sever deep taproots effectively.

RECOMMENDED TIMING:

1. Fall termination is preferred as it supports early residue breakdown, promotes earlier spring warming and drying, and enables early cash-crop planting.



Plow down alfalfa crops Photo credit: Dunling Wang.

2. Summer termination is possible after one forage cut but may require follow-up tillage.
3. Spring termination is the least effective and may require several passes, and has the potential to delay seeding of subsequent crops.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

While multi-year alfalfa provides many advantages, it may not suit every farm:

1. Soil moisture depletion: Alfalfa extracts significant water from soil and is not recommended in regions with Brown soils or severe moisture limitations.
2. Weed pressure: Poor alfalfa establishment can lead to weed invasions. Using the higher end of recommended seeding rates or re-seeding bare patches can help maintain stand density.
3. Nutrient removal: Baling removes substantial amounts of N, P and micronutrients, potentially requiring future soil amendments, particularly phosphorus.
4. Revenue considerations: Taking land out of annual cash-crop production for multiple years may reduce revenue if markets or livestock integration options for forage are limited.
5. Residue management: Thick alfalfa residues after termination can delay soil warming and spring seeding. Strategic fall termination can reduce this risk.
6. Incomplete termination: Residual perennial crowns can regrow in subsequent crops. Effective fall tillage and proper equipment setup are critical to minimize volunteer regrowth.

SUMMARY

Integrating multi-year alfalfa into an organic rotation can offer significant advantages, though success requires weighing these benefits against the potential operational challenges of your specific farm and land. ●



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Bits & Bites

By Deb Tuchelt, Executive Director, SaskOrganics

AAFC RESEARCH CUTS AND THE IMPACT ON ORGANICS

In January, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) announced sweeping cuts to research facilities and programs in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia, and the elimination of positions of the researchers, technicians, and support staff who carry out research and operate the facilities.

The loss of funding for public research and plant breeding programs is deeply concerning to the organic sector. Public research with long term and reliable funding is best placed to address long-term, national and complex problems. Private sector agricultural research is shaped by commercial priorities and cannot address the range of research topics needed by farmers or for Canada's long-term food and agriculture sector's success, and is almost certainly unlikely to benefit organic and low-input production methods.

Of particular concern to SaskOrganics was the termination of the Organic and Regenerative Research Program at the Swift Current Research & Development Centre. This one-of-a-kind program in Saskatchewan and within AAFC has been delivering organic and low-input, regionally relevant research and knowledge transfer for nearly 20 years. Its research on practices like diversified crop rotations, cover cropping and intercropping, pathogens and disease, and integrated pest management, not only benefit organic farmers but also the growing number of farmers interested in regenerative and low-input agriculture.

Other national organic research projects that are part of the Organic Science Cluster 4 were also impacted as a result of facility closures.

In the days and weeks following the announcement, SaskOrganics took action on multiple fronts. We issued a media release, participated in several news interviews, and joined meetings with other affected agriculture stakeholder groups. We also sent letters, both independently and in collaboration with partner organizations, to the Federal Agriculture Minister, the Prime Minister, and multiple MPs. These efforts called for a reversal of the closure of the Organic and Regenerative Research Program, a pause on all research closures and staff reductions pending a full impact assessment and meaningful sector consultation, and full transparency regarding the decision-making process and any prior analysis of the cuts. We will continue to do what we can to advocate for organic and publicly funded research. ●

EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT 2026

Jonelle Bouchard



Jonelle Bouchard was raised on an organic farm near Outlook Saskatchewan. From a young age her parents taught her the importance of food and lifestyle choices.

When she was only seven years old, she and her brother were given the responsibility of taking care of their chickens for eggs and meat.

As Jonelle got older, she was able to assist with the grain farming. Learning to drive the grain trucks in the field and eventually backing up those same trucks accurately to unload at the auger was sometimes more of a challenge than she would like to admit!

While still in high school, she decided she wanted to pursue a career in soil or plant sciences. Before jumping into post secondary she took a seasonal position at a potato research facility near Outlook. This experience confirmed her interest in plant science and she enrolled in the science degree program at Providence University in Ottenburne, Man.

Jonelle feels that having a solid understanding of plant and soil health will assist her in future endeavors. There are many avenues that will be available to her with an education in science and biology that will be applicable to the organic industry, whether it be going into plant or disease research, agronomy, or working alongside organic producers like her family. ●

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