

Farm-Profile Program

In order to demonstrate our region's capacity to fulfill direct-exports we must recast our image on the world-stage. To this end, we presented a 5-pronged framework to display our virtues in farm-production, research-capacity, crop-variety, quality-assurance, and container-logistics. In the coming months a key element of our strategy will be individual *Farm-Profiles*, to showcase our producers' capacity to grow a broad range of quality, high-value crops to meet buyers' particular needs.

Farms are the least visible treasures of the Prairie grain-economy, portrayed as mere collection-points in bulk-systems. Our mission is to dispel this image by extolling their virtues, how they advanced over the years, increased their yields, diversified their crop-mix, and are now ready to rise to the challenges of a new era driven by direct-exports. In pursuit of this quest, our portal must give utmost priority to displaying their production capacities, to show to the world that instead of being mere *peons* of bulk-traders, they can be *bona fide* grain-suppliers to global markets.

To demonstrate the vitality of this task, let us go back to the nature of grain-trades we are trying to facilitate. We are taking a web-based approach, but as we made it clear at the outset, this is not going to turn into an e-commerce platform where we post crops that buyers can choose from and purchase. We are trying to cultivate interest on the part of overseas buyers to turn to our production-sources, farms, to meet their particular crop needs, and hopefully engage in sustainable contract-sales.

As we discussed earlier, end-users of grains know very little about our region; sometimes they may not even be aware that the grains they buy from trading-houses or wholesalers to mill or process are *Grown-in-Canada*. Thus, we face a formidable challenge in raising awareness and confidence among global buyers that our region is not only a prime source of the grains they need, but also that even higher quality crop varieties and grades can be bought directly from producers.

This is why we want to present a *Prairie-Profile* that we can use to promote the virtues of our region as a prime source of grains -- not hype but reality. As part of this effort, we also want to present individual *Farm-Profiles*, as our mission is to cast our producers as prime suppliers of grains, not just agents along the grain-chain. The same way as producers can relate to the viability of direct-sales-models, so can buyers, but they need more visibility into our grain economy from different angles.

In this article we describe what we have in mind in the way *Farm-Profiles* with a brief description of the contents, what producers' need to submit to create one. We also layout a roll-out plan from 10-15 profiles to many more across the region. Then we provide a roadmap to how we plan to promote this material in overseas markets. But we will wait for your comments and suggestions before finalizing our strategy.

Our Farm-Profile Concept

Purpose: As part of our trade-facilitation efforts, our mission is to present Prairie producers as “sources” from which importers can procure grains , whereby making them as accessible to overseas buyers as they are to North American ones. With the *Farm-Profiles* we post, we want to extol the virtues of our advanced farm-economy where importers can source the crop-varieties they need, and get them shipped to their facilities in containers -- door-to-door grain deliveries with crop-integrity intact.

Scope: End-users of our grains never see the true scope of Prairie agriculture, as all they are exposed to is the “bulk-system”. Our farms are among the most advanced in the world, with science-and-technology in action to produce a huge variety (types or grades) of high quality crops to fulfill contract-orders, individually or collectively. If only this capacity were more visible to prospective buyers overseas, buyer interest would be forthcoming, leading to sales-negotiations and ultimately contract-orders.

Input: We are developing the tools to display farm attributes, which we describe below, but we naturally need input and cooperation from producers to execute this plan. The type of material we are going to need from participants include photo-images, technology-highlights, farming-practices, past crop-mix and volumes, and this year’s crop-outlook. We will discuss these needs with each participant and get their consent that the information they are providing can be displayed on our portal.

Process: After you sign up, we will contact you for a brief consultation session, and as we start receiving material we will populate your profile. When a “draft” is ready, you will be able to review it online, privately and securely. Then we will finalize the material with your explicit consent, and post your profile on the *Farm-Profile* tab of our portal. As the numbers of profiles increase, we will introduce a search-routine (by crop-attributes) for viewers to find the type of farms they are looking for.

The first batch of 10-15 profiles we prepare and post are at no cost to participants. We intend to scale this program up to 100s of farms (in time 1000s), thus we need funding. Now we are looking for corporate, institutional and/or government sponsors to be able to offer this service at as little cost to producers as possible.



End Goal: Prairie Grain Mall

Concept: We intend to assemble the farm-profiles into what we will call the *Prairie Grain Mall* -- a virtual collection of grain-outlets, akin to market-places or trade-malls you see all around the world. On-display at this virtual-mall will be a wide variety of "grains", already in stock or to be available at the end of that crop-year. Buyers will be able to search for what they need, and post expressions of interest to purchase -- a starting point for trade-dialogues between parties, hopefully leading to contracts.

Tools: We are now developing a platform with data and image management tools, whereby your photos and graphics can be updated and uploaded quite easily. We will set-up personalized farm databases (crop types, volumes, prices, etc.) which you can update and manage on your own. We will also report aggregate statistics for crop-regions, grains by type and grade, to give prospective buyers more visibility into regional grain-stocks. Also, you will be able to post your own promotional pieces.

Specials: Once we achieve a critical mass of farm-profiles, we will be promoting regional highlights to prospective buyers -- like farm of the week posts, crop-region overviews, science or technology specials, as well as specialty-crop reports. As most market-places do, on a regular basis we will assemble and post promotional reports to extol Prairie virtues on subjects of particular interest to global grain audiences. Thus, we intend to take on a promotional role in creating new trade opportunities.

Forum: The *Prairie Grain Mall* will also have a section for prospective buyers to engage in, where they can post purchase-requests. Producers can follow these posts and respond with their own crop-availability posts or expressions-of-interest. This will serve as a first step towards potential buyer-seller engagement that can then lead to more detailed discussions on contract terms-and-conditions and delivery-schedules -- though we do not want to raise expectations of one-click e-sales.

If we can ramp up sign-ups to Farm-Profiles, from 10-15 by early summer to 100 or more by this year's harvest, we would be able to launch the Prairie Grain Mall concept before the end of 2022. We look forward to your comments and suggestions on the Prairie Grain Mall concept, while urging you to sign-up for Farm-Profiles.



Profile Roll-Out Plan

Initial launch: We will start with 10-15 profiles of producers we select from those registered to the program on our website -- farm-profile *sign-ups* on the landing-page. We will draw a representative sample from these sign-ups for the initial launch, and in time expand to a much larger collection as we roll-out. With the visitor feedback we get to the initial launch, we will design a staged roll-out-plan to cover the entire Prairie region with hundreds of farms, in time even thousands.

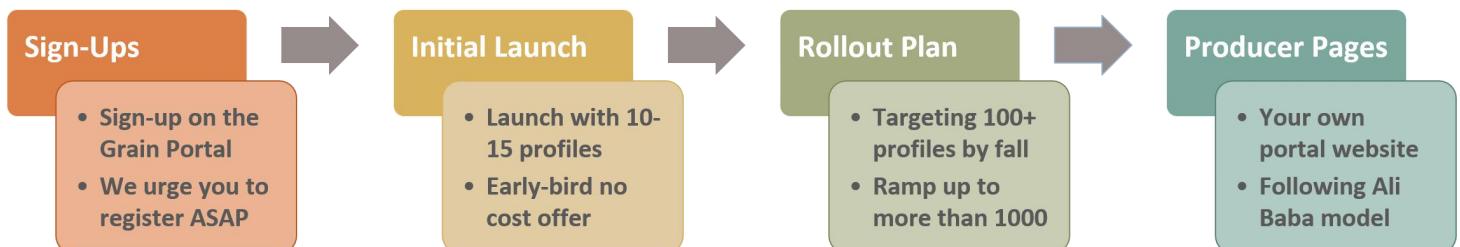
Regional scope: We anticipate that the farms we select for the initial phase will be mostly in Saskatchewan (where our following is the largest). In the next phase, the program will extend to Manitoba and Alberta with similar samples, hopefully with the support of those provinces, as we expect from Saskatchewan early on. Once we post the first 10-15 farm profiles, we will also start reaching to target-markets -- we will fine-tune our roll-out strategy as we get feedback from prospective buyers.

Representation: Our roll-out plan will cover all three provinces, and we will ensure that all crop-regions with direct-export potential are fairly represented. This may introduce some crop-bias into the process, but by relying on producer feedback we will make sure that posted profiles reflect both local-interest and market-potential. Our profiles will include farms of all sizes; as we noted before, through cooperation or consolidation initiatives even smaller farms can participate in direct-contracts.

Producer Pages: Once the *Prairie Grain Mall* we have in mind reaches hundred or more “profiles”, we also want to introduce another tool, producer-pages that can grow into individual websites that we can promote under our portal-umbrella -- a concept *Ali Baba* uses very effectively in its portal-models. Also, we will promote voluntarily formed producer partnerships or cooperatives, to achieve large and sustained volumes to fulfill contract-sales that will be more secure for producers.

We have an ambitious time-frame in mind. We want to be ready with at least 10-15 profiles as you watch your crops grow this year, and be online with hundreds of profiles before you start seeding for 2023-24, when we hope direct-exports will reach hundreds of thousands of tons, and grow steadily into 2024-25 crop-year and beyond.

Prairie Farm Profiles



Promoting to End-Markets

End-markets: As we discussed earlier, our initial trade-facilitation efforts will focus on Asia Pacific -- in addition to the largest market, China, we will target Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. In each of these markets, we will designate representatives to pursue our interests. In China we already have an established base; despite our grim trade outlook with China, we believe direct-export opportunities are still promising (direct or re-export channels).

Buyer-posts: We will promote not only producer-posts but also prospective buyer-posts, in the form of expressions-of-interests and even purchase-requests (with crop specifications and volume requirements). We hope to have enough of these buyer-posts for producers to consider fulfilling at the end of the 2022-harvest. Into the 2023-24 crop-year we expect a much larger volume of posts that can be matched with stocks our producers have for sale -- foundations of an active market-place.

Buyer-pages: As on the producer side, we will encourage prospective buyers to go beyond just purchase-posts, and take-up buyer-pages like our producer-pages. These will provide us more information on buyers (corporate identity, finances, operations, etc.) to vet their credentials, and also help us assess how we, as a portal, should get involved in prospective trades -- procurement, consolidation and/or logistics agents, depending on the nature of the trades (volume, mix, terms, etc).

Reach-out: As you would expect, reaching out to buyers will be more challenging than to producers in our own backyard. The core of our buyer-campaign will be web-based but coupled with two other tracks. First, we will leverage our market-research to identify key industry leaders -- like we did in our two previous market-research posts. Second, we will lean on local contacts or representatives to make referrals -- even in China, a market we are most familiar with, this seems necessary.

Our market-reach efforts are already underway but low-key, as it is hard to promote direct-exports when there is so little visibility into our production-capacity. Once we reach a critical-mass of Farm-Profiles, we will intensify our market-reach, but in the meantime our priority is to prepare and post as many Farm-Profiles as we can.

