

Farm-Profile Follow-Up

With last week's article we introduced our *Farm Profile Program* -- an integral piece of the 5-prong-framework in recasting our global image. This program will shed light on our region's production-capacity by showcasing farms, among the most advanced in the world but little known beyond our borders. Since we have been relying on bulk-exports, we never felt the need to promote ourselves from this angle. But in pursuing direct-sales, this must become an integral part of our promotional strategy.

As we discussed in our two previous articles, in the context of bulk-trades farms are seen as mere collection-points, *peons* of grain-traders, not *bona fide* producers to their own right. In direct-sales farms are the actual production-sources importers buy from, making farm-production capacity the focus of their attention -- how crops are grown, their variety and quality, and for higher value grades, even more specific crop-attributes. This in turn brings the focus on farming technology and methods.

It so happens that these are the leading virtues of our Prairie grain-economy, but virtues that we have not paid much attention to in promoting ourselves in global markets -- perhaps taking them for granted, or not appreciating their importance. Now that we are shifting our focus to direct-sales channels, to create higher-value export opportunities that can yield higher-margins, we must bring more attention to production-capacity at the farm level, key to crop quality, grades and varieties.

To this end, we are trying to recast our global image down two complementary tracks. First, we proposed a 5-prong-framework to portray the strengths of the Prairie grain-economy -- advanced-farms, research-capacity, crop-variety, quality-assurance, and logistics-capacity. Second, we are trying to amplify the region's production-capacity by posting individual farm-profiles, the subject of our last article where we described our approach, the roll-out plan and promotion strategy.

The article we posted two weeks ago on *image-recasting* attracted a lot of attention, by far the most read article on our portal so far. The next article was on *farm-profiles* but fearing that we had not laid out the process clearly enough we thought we would post this follow-up on the same subject -- how producers would benefit from participating, with a brief description of the process they would have to go through. We also elaborate on information requirements and the process ahead -- evolution from prototype-templates to profile-database to farm-mall to trade-forum.

Naturally, we cannot post farm-profiles without proprietors' participation. We need their consent and input, information to showcase their capacity. But this does not have to be onerous; it can be as simple or elaborate as they choose. We have added a new farm-profile tab to our portal for participants to see a *template* of what their profile might look like, and a *sign-up* box to proceed with the consultation process.

Importance of your participation

The *paradigm-shift* we are calling for from *bulk-trades* to *direct-sales* is basically a restructuring of the grain-supply-chain. Through bulk-systems, you as producers sell your crops to grain-companies that consolidate at large terminals and ship to end-markets in bulk-ships. At the receiving end, your crops enter bulk-stocks that are then redistributed to end-users, typically through yet another set of intermediaries.

Door-to-door containerized grain shipments that we are advocating cut out a few links in the supply-chain, and allow producers to sell direct to end-buyers. A few decades ago bulk-systems offered significant cost advantages but with the advent of intermodal-systems, now door-to-door costs have become competitive, in fact in favour of containerization, with even further advantages other than just cost.

By selling direct to end-users you can cut out intermediaries along the supply-chain and enhance your margins -- albeit with some trade-risks but ones that can be mitigated. Containerization offers a further advantage, identity-preservation, for you to grow and sell higher value crops with specific attributes (grades or varieties) that fetch a price premium -- attributes that are typically lost through bulk-channels.

Then why has this shift, from bulk to direct, not taken place under market forces? In fact, these opportunities exist and are often taken advantage of domestically, even across North America, but we have not been able to extend our market-reach to overseas buyers. We are known for our bulk-exports, not for highly advanced-farms and their production-capacity, sources of grain that importers can buy from directly.

The fundamental change you would notice in the new supply-chain is that you will now have new “buyers” -- not just grain-companies but also end-users. For sales to thrive in any line of commerce, buyers and sellers have to get to know each other to build trust and confidence. But currently, overseas buyers have little visibility into our farm-economy, a barrier we are trying to overcome with your *farm-profiles*.

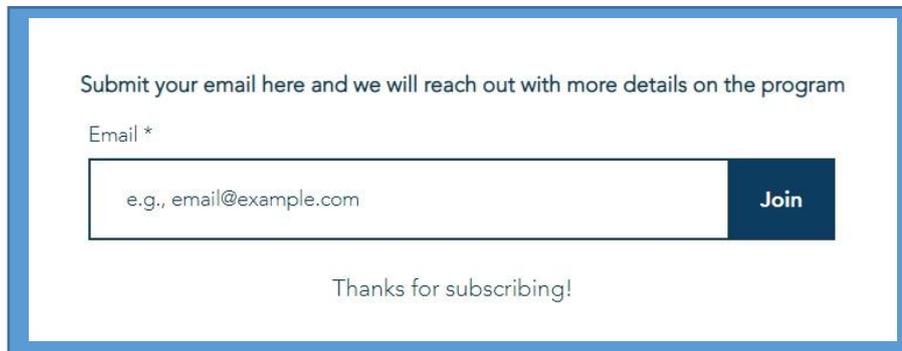
We will come back to the advantages and the challenges that new export-channels bring in our future articles in the coming weeks. Also, we will address them during the producer-meetings we will be holding in the next two months. In the meantime we urge you to participate in our farm-profile-program, as it is in your best interest.

Shifts in Grain Supply Chains: Bulk to Direct



Process Overview

The process starts with *sign-up*, a simple email registration, on our portal:



We follow your *sign-up* with a brief telephone conversation, or an email-exchange -- whichever is convenient for you. We describe the process we need to go through to prepare your profile, and outline the type of information we would need from you. Depending on the type of information you are prepared to divulge, or have available to post, we propose a “template” -- which can be as brief or elaborate as you wish. Once you agree to the proposed format, we send you an email to confirm the details of the input we will require from you. And once you agree, we are all set to go.

Once you start forwarding the material, photo-images and text-outlines, we start populating your draft-profile. When this is ready, we share and review your profile online, by giving you access to it on our portal. We get your feedback, comments and suggestions; then we make all the changes and revisions for your final review. Upon receiving your email-consent, we are ready to post your farm-profile online.

Once finalized and posted, your profile will be publicly available on our portal for all to see. But the information on your portal-profile belongs to you, and you can ask us to remove or revise any part of it as you please. You can ask us to bring down your profile at any time, while we maintain the same right if we are in disagreement with any of the contents, but either way the information belongs to you. We cannot use it in any other form or through any other channel without your explicit consent.



Suggested Information

You can see a template of a prototype-profile on our portal. We are very flexible when it comes to your own profile; it can display as little information as you wish, or be as elaborate as we would like to showcase your farm. In general we would like to stick to brief text-contents but rich in photo-centric displays -- relying on readily available photos, until the weather permits for professionally taken new shots.

We would like to start each profile with a brief-overview and end with a personalized story that we can compose with you. As you can see from our prototype-template, we would like to capture the essence of your farm through six rotating windows:

Operational Highlights: A few key business-profile highlights are important to instill confidence in prospective buyers, that you are a business establishment, source of quality-crops that buyers can deal with professionally in executing sales-contracts.

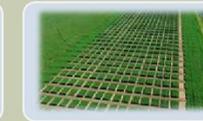
Technology Elements: Evidence of advanced technology -- farm equipment, devices, information-management-systems -- are all features that attract buyers to your farm, particularly if they are interested in specialty-crops, even order-to-grow possibilities.

Storage-Handling: On-farm bin-capacity, and loading or other handling systems are important factors in containerized export shipments, which we would like to bring attention to -- if not, there will be nearby facilities that your crops can be shipped to.

Crop Varieties: Of critical importance to your profile is naturally your crop-mix, what you grow (by type/grade) in different sections of your farm, now and in the past. Also, it would be useful to indicate your desire to diversify to other crop varieties.

Stock Volumes: Also, it is useful to give an indication of your yields (past, present and projected), and crop-volumes you typically have or could plan for in stock (in your bins or elsewhere) -- important for buyers to express interest in contract orders.

Special Projects: We would like to highlight any seed, crop, or any other research projects you have participated in (or plan to). Also, if you have embarked on (or plan to) any sustainability initiatives, it would be great to bring attention to them.

					
Operational Highlights	Technology Elements	Storage Handling	Crop Varieties	Stock Volumes	Special Projects
Farm attributes Key features	Farm machines Systems-data	Bin-capacity Grade-clean	Crop-range Land-sections	Available Next year	Research Sustainability

Introduction: An Overview

Farm Profile Contents

Your Story: A Bit of History

Platform Evolution

As we discussed in our last article, our platform will evolve in stages, from sample templates to an active trade-forum. We are ready to migrate to the profile-platform as quickly as profile-subscriptions ramp up, and our goal is to get to the grain-mall phase as fast as we can, as we believe this is going to turn into the most effective promotional tool in export markets -- a novel concept, first of its kind in the world.

1. Prototype Template: What you are signing on to is the first phase, 10-15 sample profiles we select from initial sign-ups to the program. Viewers will be able to scroll through the list and select the one they like to view -- each one showcased with an “overview”, 6 boxes populated with photos and brief text-headlines, and “story” section with a short history of the farm and what proprietors would like to highlight.

2. Profile Platform: We are now working on a more advanced platform with photo and data management tools to handle large volumes of profiles (1000 or more). The 10-15 prototypes will be migrated to the new platform, and more profiles added as fast as subscribers sign-up. Using the new tools, we will be able to offer subscribers the ability to upload new photos, add comments/materials, and manage their data.

3. Prairie Grain Mall: Once we reach 100 profiles or more, we will introduce our new feature, *virtual grain-mall*, for prospective buyers to scroll through. They can visit individual farm-pages (or farm-sites) to get a taste of the Prairie grain-economy and query crops that they are interested in (by grade/volume). At this stage we will also be posting special-features of regional or end-user interest to attract visitors.

4. Trade Forum: Into 2023-24 we expect our grain-mall to have not only producer exhibits but also buyer-pages. Producers will be able to post what crops they have in stock for sale (by type and grade) and buyers can post expressions-of-interest and even purchase-offers. It is at this stage that our initiative will turn into a trade-forum where sellers and buyers can interact and move towards contract-negotiations.

Our goal is to post the prototype-templates as quickly as possible, reach 100 or more profiles on the new database platform by Fall, 2022, and introduce the virtual-grain-mall before the end of the year, thereby achieve trade-traction for the 2023-harvest.

Evolution of our Platform with Prairie and Farm Profiles

1

Prototype Template

10-15 sample farm-profiles on the existing portal



2

Profile Database

Enhanced display and DB-management for 1000+ farm-profiles



3

Prairie Grain-Mall

Novel concept for buyers to visit to see crop/farm displays



4

Trade Forum

Enhanced features to facilitate trade contacts/orders

