



The Young Farmers Newsletter

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A Growing Opportunities Initiative

Lincoln and Mila Wolfe

MacGregor – When Lincoln Wolfe's wife Mila is asked why they farm, she takes a framed picture from the wall in their farmhouse dining room and passes it across the table. "Here, you read it," she says. "I'll just get all choked up."

It's *A Farmer's Creed*, written by an unknown author and published by the New Holland Company in 1975. She found a framed version of it at a craft sale a few years back and gave it to her husband for Christmas the first year they were married.

The part that most affects her is "...I believe true happiness comes from watching your crops ripen in the field, your children grow tall in the sun, your whole family feel the pride that springs from their shared experience..."

That about sums it up for this young family when it comes to describing why they have pursued a life in production agriculture. They see farming as an opportunity, a calling, and a place where they can grow together as a family.

Lincoln, 34, grew up on the family farm he now operates with his 29-year-old wife and their two children, Riley, 3, and baby Nicola. Mila, a minister's daughter, joined the business when they married.

Together, the couple farms 6,200 acres (2,480 hectares) of grain, oilseed and edible beans. They also have 100 head of cows and 400 head of feeder cattle.

"I like the wide-open spaces," Lincoln says, when asked why he returned to the farm life. "I guess it's a country-boy mentality."

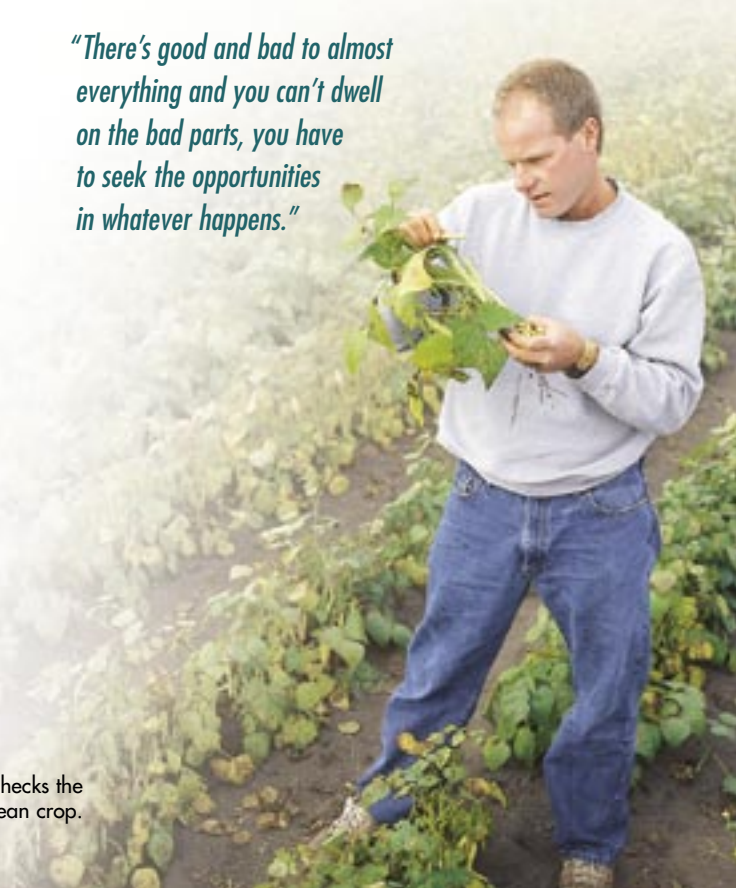
He studied boiler making and took two years of business administration at university before returning to the farm in 1998. He used his trade to supplement his income the first few years and he's applied his business administration training to operating the farm.

There's no denying farming can be a stressful life. With their feeder cattle approaching market size, they've been affected by the BSE crisis and that adds an element of uncertainty to their plans.

The couple feels the stress of weather, markets and trade issues as much as everyone else in the sector. "I don't want it to seem that, 'tra-la-la'...farming is wonderful," Mila points out, but they refuse to let it get them down. "We don't. We can't," she says. "This is what we are going to do. We've made that decision and we just plug along as best we can."

"There's good and bad to almost everything and you can't dwell on the bad parts, you have to seek the opportunities in whatever happens."

Lincoln checks the progress of his bean crop.





Lincoln spares a moment during harvest for the family pet.

"It's becoming a very competitive market place, where non-tariff trade barriers are a reality that has to be addressed."

Lincoln admits he found it hard to manage the stress during the first few years he was back on the land. But working as a family keeps the business from becoming a pressure-cooker. Busy seasons on the farm are almost always followed by some family time away from the day-to-day decision-making.

Mila has a traditional and valued role on the farm. She cares for the children, does the bookwork, goes for parts and provides general support by way of regular meals to her husband and two hired hands. "It's very important," he says. "It's an integral part of the overall operation."

The couple feels blessed to live in an area where there are other young families who have remained on the farm. They try to spend much of the month of July at a local campground and beach visiting with friends and family. "We have a lake that's nearby," he says, "where we camp and enjoy what life is all about."

The young farmer is convinced there's an opportunity lurking within the various challenges facing production agriculture, somewhere and he's determined to find it.

"I think positive thinking is a large part of the requirement," he says. "There's good and bad to almost everything and you can't dwell on the bad parts, you have to seek the opportunities in whatever happens."

The couple has pursued an aggressive short-term business plan, securing the farm's basic acreage base and then expanding it with more purchased and rented land. Lincoln started farming in 1998 with 800 acres (320 hectares). A year later he began renting his parents' land and has since expanded the farm's base to 6,200 acres (2,480 hectares). They finalized the purchase of the family farm just last winter, in the midst of the BSE crunch, although Lincoln's parents are carrying the mortgage.

Lincoln isn't committed to a particular long-term path, preferring to remain flexible so he can take advantage of emerging opportunities and the expansion potential he sees in agriculture. His approach requires a management style that gives him the financial and intellectual resources needed to tap into opportunities when they arise.

To manage his production risk, Lincoln has diversified, focused on producing high-quality crops and marketing those crops to buyers willing to pay for quality. "Marketing is a huge part of our day-to-day activities, keeping on top of the markets and expanding marketing opportunities."

He has started producing kidney beans under contract to customers who demand high-quality beans and pay their suppliers a premium. He has also moved into production of canola for the specialty oil markets.

Lincoln is interested in better management of nutrients on his land. He is a host farmer to nutrient research plots run by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. He also turns to his local Farm Production Advisor for advice on the new and less familiar ventures, such as the beef operation.

On the production side, he follows a specific crop rotation tailored to each field, designed, in part, to ensure soil erosion is kept to a minimum.

Mila and Nicola watch Lincoln and Riley play soccer.

A Farmer's Creed

The one risk the couple can't control on their farm is trade-related market disruptions. "It's becoming a very competitive market place," he says, "where non-tariff trade barriers are a reality that has to be addressed."

One of the ways Lincoln has decided to manage that pressure is by being pro-active. He became involved in the Manitoba Pulse Growers Association, this year, as vice-president. He believes the organization is a powerful instrument for networking and staying abreast of industry developments.

Lincoln credits his parents for the confidence and positive outlook he has about farming. "My father was very good at passing on responsibility," he says. "I managed the farm for the last three or four years before he retired, which smoothed the transition considerably."

Although he had been involved with the farm operation since he was a young child, Lincoln never felt pressured to take over the family farm. His parents encouraged him to get post-secondary education before he chose a career.

"They didn't push me at all to be a farmer, but kept the opportunity there so that I could." He wants to provide the same opportunity to his children. "I just want to give them the opportunity to farm and not push them to do it because you are either a farmer or not a farmer. You can't be made a farmer."

*They see farming as an opportunity,
a calling, and a place where they
can grow together as a family.*



I believe a man's greatest possession is his dignity and that no calling bestows this more abundantly than farming.

I believe hard work and honest sweat are the building blocks of a person's character.

I believe that farming, despite its hardships and disappointments, is the most honest and honorable way a man can spend his days on this earth.

I believe my children are learning values that will last a lifetime and can be learned in no other way.

I believe farming provides education for life and that no other occupation teaches so much about birth, growth and maturity in such a variety of ways.

I believe many of the best things in life are free: the splendor of a sunrise, the rapture of wide open spaces, the exhilarating sight of your land greening each spring.

I believe true happiness comes from watching your crops ripen in the field, your children grow tall in the sun, your whole family feel the pride that springs from their shared experience.

I believe that by my toil I am giving more to the world than I am taking from it, an honor that does not come to all men.

I believe my life will be measured ultimately by what I have done for my fellowmen, and by this standard I fear no judgment.

I believe when a man grows old and sums up his days, he should be able to stand tall and feel pride in the life he's lived.

I believe in farming because it makes all this possible.

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On-Farm Testing

Helps Producers Make Decisions



Receiving unbiased information from his own farm is one of the reasons Lincoln Wolfe of MacGregor took part in on-farm crop testing with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI). Another selling feature was the ability to try new products at a reasonable cost to see how they performed under local conditions.

Lincoln is one of several growers who have worked with the Portage la Prairie MAFRI office testing micronutrients and fungicides for several growing seasons. The Almassippi sandy soils in the MacGregor area are low in copper and zinc. Eighty per cent of the soil tests the Portage la Prairie MAFRI office did with growers in 1998 and 1999 were either deficient or marginal for copper. Over 90 per cent of the fields were either deficient or marginal for zinc.

Crop responses to micronutrients vary from year to year, depending on a number of factors. These include weather during the growing season, crop type, cropping history, phosphorous and soil conditions (ph, organic matter, texture).

Lincoln sees the value of the on-farm testing and is willing to put in the extra time required. Though it is difficult to put a dollar figure on the economic benefits, the information has helped him make better agronomic decisions. Even though seeding and harvest are very busy times of year, he believes it's worthwhile to evaluate the economics of various inputs.

From 1999 to 2001 - spring wheat yields increased 9.3 per cent on average or 3.3 bushels/acre (8.2 bushels/hectare) from broadcast micronutrient application (copper and zinc) over 14 fields. The seed placed copper in wheat demonstration showed a 1.6 per cent increase in yield or .6 bus/acre (1.5 bus/ha). Even with these yield increases the net returns/acre (ha) were minus 66 cents (\$1.63) for broadcast and minus \$10.60 (\$26.18) for seed placement.

In three years of trials, foliar copper was applied to 12 fields of wheat resulting in a 3.7 per cent yield increase. The **net return** ranged from \$4.70/acre (\$11.61/ha) in 2002 to a \$9.33/acre loss (\$23.05/ha) in 2003. Based on the results for the 12 fields the average net return was minimal.

In seven fields of white beans, foliar zinc produced an average yield increase of 57 pounds (25.9 kg) for a net return of \$7.88/acre (\$19.46/ha).

Lincoln plans to continue on-farm field scale testing. Because the variables that affect the results change from year to year, ongoing testing is imperative.

The micronutrient tests showed that what worked one year may not work the next. Some of Lincoln's future work will include fungicide timing, edible bean fertility and disease control in edible beans.

Micronutrients should only be applied on deficient soils and monitored to determine if an economic yield response has occurred. Soil testing and plant tissue testing are two tools to help determine if a deficiency exists.

John Heard, MAFRI soil fertility specialist in Carman, is a proponent of on-farm testing. He has these general rules for people interested in becoming on-farm testers:

1. Keep the trials simple. Don't try to answer too many questions with the same project.
2. Because weather affects the results, trials must be carried out over several years.
3. Do not assume what the tests will show.
4. Co-operate with neighbours, crop clubs and agricultural professionals to increase the number of sites and encourage discussion.

On-farm testing is a positive partnership between government, industry and producers. Everyone is able to share the unbiased information and the costs. Munro Farm Supplies, Phosyn, Agrium, Covering New Ground and the farmers were all partners in this series of tests.

Information prepared by Shawn Cabak, Farm Production Advisor, Portage la Prairie. For more details about this on-farm test, contact Shawn Cabak at 204-239-3353.



Diversify Your Farm Business with the Food Development Centre



SPRAY DRYER

Spray drying is an industrial process involving particle formation and drying. The spray dryer can be used to develop a variety of products such as milk powder, fruit powder, egg powder, instant drinks, and soy protein. It can also be used for microencapsulation of flavors, colors and nutraceuticals.

The wealth of primary products grown in Manitoba makes the province a potential gold mine in the value-added agri-food industry and the Food Development Centre (FDC) is helping farmers find and develop new economic opportunities.

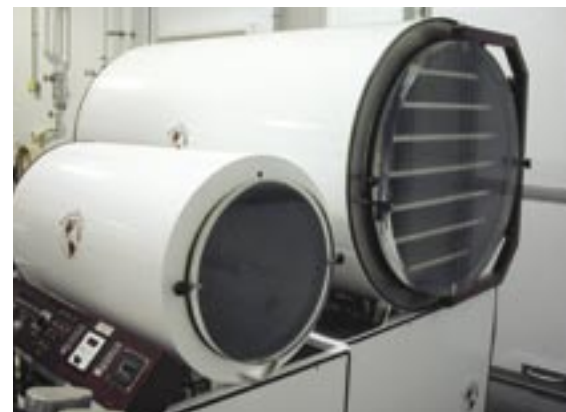
Manitoba farmers know how important diversification is to a successful agriculture operation and many are already expanding their businesses by adding value to crops and livestock. FDC, located in Portage la Prairie, has been supporting farmers in diversifying and adding product value since 1978, allowing many to move into the agri-food and nutraceutical sectors.

“Over the past 10 years, more and more primary producers are coming to us with innovative food processing projects,” says FDC manager Pat Scott. “FDC has evolved with the global agriculture industry and we continue to expand and renovate the centre to help clients develop food, beverages, feed products, ingredients and processes using their own primary products.”

FDC staff work directly with farmers to identify value-added market opportunities and help weed out potentially unsuccessful ideas. The creativity and variety of projects, Scott says, are very exciting. As examples, she points out some current projects that include a bison producer interested in manufacturing a niche market version of beef jerky; an echinacea producer and an elk farmer developing nutraceutical products; a flax producer looking to extract oil for the specialty ingredient market; and a vegetable producer keen on producing a juice product in Tetra Pak™ packaging. The centre is also working with clients in Northern Manitoba to develop products from raw materials found there.

“We have a large number of successes,” Scott says, “and with the new Growing Opportunities programs (part of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives’ reorganization) we’re going to be providing additional support to our clients in the next stages of the food chain.”

FDC is an industry phenomenon in Canada because of the number of commodities it is federally licensed to process. Along with its provincial licences for dairy, organic and elk processing, FDC’s new pilot plant (which is just being completed) will be federally registered to process meat, fruit, vegetables, honey, fish, seafood and industrial hemp.



FREEZE DRYER

Freeze drying technology removes all moisture from food products and tends to have less effect on a food’s nutrition, taste and structures than other techniques. Freeze drying is a superior preservation method for a variety of foods and food ingredients, such as fruits and vegetables.

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FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

The FDC received an investment of \$13.6 million in federal and provincial funding under the Agricultural Policy Framework Initiative that has allowed the centre to expand and purchase leading edge equipment. The FDC’s expanded facility is over 42,000 square feet and will be federally registered for meat, processed food products including fruits and vegetables, honey, fish and seafood, and industrial hemp processing. It will also retain its provincial licenses for dairy, organic and elk processing. The FDC’s in-house partner, Great Plains Aseptic Processors (GPAP), will operate the Tetra Pak™ technology for aseptic processing of liquid foods.



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The superbly equipped pilot plant offers producers a cost-efficient opportunity to use sophisticated technology and information to create a commercially saleable product from the concept stage. Clients rely on the skills, training and experience of FDC staff to help manage the technical and regulatory issues of developing a product.

FDC's in-house partner, Great Plains Aseptic Processors (GPAP), operates Tetra Pak™ aseptic technology, which safely processes and packages shelf-stable liquid food products. The GPAP processing suite is the only one of its kind in North America for contract aseptic processing and packaging viscous liquid food products. Nowhere else on the continent do producers have access to technology to prepare and aseptically process raw commodities into liquid products without having to invest in setting up their own production facilities. By focusing on value added products such as soups, sauces and premium beverages, GPAP is able to eliminate the traditional entry barriers that entrepreneurs have faced, by offering access to this unique technology on a fee-for-service basis.

FDC staff also help clients, who may want to export south of the border, by providing a facility that is approved under the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) program for food safety and by providing consulting services to clients who are seeking HACCP approval for their facilities.

The dynamic evolution of international trade, food production and market demand has had a significant impact on the way Manitoba producers operate their farming businesses. Manitoba Starch is a fine example of how a primary producer has successfully diversified. The Carberry company makes starch from local raw materials and sells it for use in food, cardboard and other industrial products. Until recently, the owners of Manitoba Starch were veteran potato producers supplying raw product for McDonald's french fries.

FDC has a long history of working with entrepreneurs, food processors and farmers to develop commercial products and enhance food processing. "With the shift in the agricultural industry towards diversification and adding value to commodities," Scott says, "the mandate of FDC has become much more relevant to producers. The value-added food processing industry is the largest manufacturing sector in Manitoba."

FDC provides contract research and development, food product development, process development and optimization, pilot plant production, HACCP plan development, sensory analysis, shelf life studies, nutritional labelling, ingredient extraction, packaging, equipment and ingredient sourcing, library and information services.

Farmers who produce raw materials that can be brewed, baked, distilled or processed may want to contact the Food Development Centre to discuss value-added opportunities for their operations: **204-239-3150** in Portage la Prairie; toll free at **1-800-870-1044**; or visit the FDC website at www.manitoba.ca/agriculture/fdc

Information prepared by Linda Lowe, Librarian at the Food Development Centre and the editor of the newsletter agora

Prepared by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

GROWING **Opportunities**



DID WE MISS ANYONE?

If you know any young farmer who did not receive a copy of *The Young Farmers Newsletter* have them contact us at youngfarmers@gov.mb.ca
We will gladly send a copy to them.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

We'd like to know what you think of *The Young Farmers Newsletter*, and what you'd like to read about in future issues. Email your thoughts to us at youngfarmers@gov.mb.ca

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