



I.D.E.A. Industry Update - June 13, 2003

Ramboc/Managro Kick Off Summer With Grand Opening Barbecue

Ramboc Enterprises and Managro Ltd. have combined their Saskatoon operations into a single building, which will act as a service, distribution and retail facility for both organizations. In celebration of this new beginning, Ramboc and Managro are throwing a free barbecue for all customers, staff and suppliers. The event will be held Monday July 16 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., on site at the new building location (30 Molaro Place, Saskatoon). There will be 10% off all retail and precision products (excluding wholegoods), tours of the new building as well as the opportunity to meet staff from both companies, including President and CEO Tom Struthers.

Wheat Growers Association Shuts

One of the longest serving farm organizations on the prairies is shutting down. The Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association (WCWGA) will be wrapping up their operations when they meet for the final time on Thursday June 19, 2003 at the Hotel Saskatchewan in Regina.

"The fact is our membership was in decline and we have just come to the point where the revenue is not enough to sustain the organization," explained current Chairman Tim Harvie.

Harvie says the WCWGA had attempted to increase its membership in the last three months by sending out over 700 renewal applications. But through that campaign they only received about 35 back. At \$150 per membership, there wasn't enough money to keep operating.

Harvie says the board of directors tossed around all sorts of ideas to try and keep the organization afloat, but he says without having a core membership they don't have the financial resources. The WCWGA started in 1970 and once had over 10,000 members. That has now diminished to less than 1,000.

"We've had a real struggle the last two or three years to attract people to step up and be a director of the association," stated a frustrated Harvie who added there is just a great deal of apathy right now and farmers don't want to get involved in agri-political groups.

As for the voice carried by the WCWGA, Harvie is worried that there are very few groups who will now speak out for marketing choice and less government involvement in agriculture.

"The WCWG has been the go-to voice for that perspective for a number of years for all the media and government as well. I think there is going to be a huge hole in the political landscape now when the wheat growers are no longer there to look towards."

The WCWGA has long been an advocate of a free marketing system and moving out from under the operations of monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board. Harvey thinks that maybe if they shut down for some period of time and producers finally get fed up enough with the current situation that maybe the organization could get started again.

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Agricore United Optimistic Despite Ongoing Losses

Agricore United has announced a net loss of \$22.1-million or 51 cents per share for the quarter ending April 30, 2003. This is nearly double the net loss for the same quarter a year ago.

"Although the 2002 drought continues to impact our grain handling earnings, our seasonal performance has stabilized thanks to increased crop input sales, steady margins and ongoing expense reductions," said CEO Brian Hayward.

Sales of fertilizer, seed and crop protection products increased by \$41.9 million or 80 percent to \$94 million for the quarter as farmers faced dramatically improved growing conditions compared to a year ago.

Agricore United says its ratio of grain shipments to industry shipments was 40 percent for the latest quarter, up from 35 percent last quarter and for the 12 months ending October 31, 2002. However, the industry wide reduction in grain available for shipping continued to drive gross profits lower from grain handling.

New Book on Diseases of Field Crops

A third edition has been published of the successful book *Diseases of Field Crops in Canada*. Saskatoon scientists Karen Bailey, Bruce Gossen, Richard Gugel and Robin Morrall, with collaboration from numerous colleagues across the country, have produced this 304 page book, complete with 659 colour photos. Previous editions have sold over 25,000 copies, but there was a need to bring subject matter up to date and to include new diseases and crops that have become important. The new edition is expected to become a primary reference for students, agrologists, seed growers and farmers wanting to identify and control diseases. With sponsorship from a number of organizations and with the authors and editors working as volunteers, *Diseases of Field Crops in Canada* is available for only \$35. Copies are available by calling University Extension Press at 966-5565.

Many Areas of Saskatchewan Looking for Rain

According to the weekly crop report from Saskatchewan Agriculture, seeding in the province is 98 percent complete. Some of the seeding yet to be done is for green feed crops and reseeding due to wind or insect damage. Across Saskatchewan, a majority of reporters rate topsoil moisture conditions as adequate. However, in central and northern grainbelt areas, topsoil moisture conditions are rated as short to very short by 30 percent or more of reporters. In many areas, producers would like to see a general rain to help with germination and crop development. More than 60 percent of reporters rated spring cereal, oilseed and pulse crop development as normal, with nearly 40 percent rating development as behind. On fall cereal crops, just over three-quarters of reporters rated development as normal, with 20 percent rating development as ahead of normal. Flea beetles, grasshoppers and cutworms continue to cause damage to some crops. Wind damage was reported to crops in many areas.

Rain in Dry Part of Manitoba

According to the weekly crop report from Manitoba Agriculture, parts of the northwest, which were very dry, have received some welcome rainfall. Ste. Rose, Dauphin and Swan River received 30 to 75 mm, while The Pas received about 50 mm. Most of the crops in the region had been stressed by dry conditions, but will now be able to develop more normally. The north Interlake region of Manitoba received only a small amount of rain. Some crops in the Ashern area are not germinating due to dry soils. Both hay and pasture continues to develop slowly due to dry conditions. In eastern regions, growing conditions have been excellent and crops have advanced quickly. There are continued reports of flea beetles and cutworms in many regions. In the central area, fungicides have been applied to some winter wheat fields.