



## I.D.E.A. Industry Update - December 2, 2004

### **\*\*\*I.D.E.A. Annual General Meeting and Conference -UPDATED INFORMATION**

The I.D.E.A. 6th Annual General Meeting and Conference will take place February 7-8, 2005, Winnipeg, SK, in conjunction with the CAAR Convention. This year's theme is "Accelerating Your Success" and features speakers such as Ben Hudye of Hudye Soil Services Inc, a member of I.D.E.A., Agri-Trend Agrology Ltd., and Orlyn Kostenuk of Performance Training. We're also pleased to present Dr. Brian Little as our keynote speaker. Look online at [www.independentdealers.com](http://www.independentdealers.com) to find our conference agenda and the conference registration form. Also, watch your mail for information regarding the conference.

### **\*\*\*Privacy Policies**

I.D.E.A. has developed model customer and employee privacy policies for I.D.E.A. members. Watch your mailbox for details on these useful documents.

### **\*\*Markets Newsletter**

If you have access to the internet, by now you will have seen several installments of our trial new weekly, internet-based markets newsletter, available at: [www.pfcanada.com/report.html](http://www.pfcanada.com/report.html). In partnership with Pro Farmer Canada, I.D.E.A. members receive a free trial of this weekly newsletter through to December. Throughout the trial, we encourage you to share this information with your staff and farm clients, and we welcome your comments and feedback.

If you have not been receiving the newsletter, but would like to, it may mean we don't have your email address on file. Email us with your updated contact information at [office@independentdealers.com](mailto:office@independentdealers.com) or call us at 306-933-4904.

### **\*\*\*Take Advantage of the Canadian Farm Business Advisory Services**

Producers may be eligible to receive \$2000 worth of consulting services for a nominal fee of \$100 under the Canadian Farm Business Advisory Services Renewal Program. The consultation includes a farm business assessment along with an action plan and follow-up consultation. Interested producers can find more information online at [www.agr.gc.ca/renewal](http://www.agr.gc.ca/renewal) or by calling 1-866-452-5558.

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### **\*\*\*Farmers Hope the Worst is Behind . . .**

A new Statistics Canada report puts net farm income for 2003 at its lowest level in over 25 years. Statistics Canada reported Thursday that net cash income, the difference between what farmers take in and what they pay out to operate, fell 39.1 per cent to \$4.4 billion in 2003. And while farmers did regain some ground in the first nine months of 2004, farm groups say it's not nearly enough to make up the ground lost last year. The 2003 figure, the lowest level since 1978, is attributed to the mad cow crisis and drought.

"Back-to-back droughts in 2001 and 2002 and the diagnosis of a single cow with bovine spongiform encephalopathy in northern Alberta last year were among the main factors for the steep drop in net cash income," the statistics agency reported. Prairie farmers were hardest hit. Net cash income plunged 65.2 per cent in Alberta, 61.5 per cent in Saskatchewan and 45 per cent in Manitoba. Only Nova Scotia, Quebec and British Columbia farmers reported increases.

The agency said cumulative farm cash receipts for the first nine months of 2004 rose for the first time in three years, mainly because of higher crop revenues. Despite decreases in cattle and calf receipts, total livestock revenues improved this year, with higher returns for hogs and dairy products. Farmers received \$26.1 billion from livestock and crop receipts and program payments between January and September, up 6.4 per cent from 2003. (Source: Michelle Macafee, Canadian Press)

### **\*\*\*Computers, GPS Help Farmers Go High-Tech**

Aided by a computer and a Global Positioning System - constellation of Earth-orbiting satellites - a farmer's tractor can now drive itself. The use of such technology has increased in the past few years as farmers try to cut costs to stay profitable as crop prices remain relatively stagnant. Infrared sensors control how much fertilizer is applied. Retinal imaging tracks cattle. On the horizon, perhaps, are tomato-picking robots. Experts estimate that up to 15% of farmers now have GPS precision-controlled tractors or combines.

AutoFarm, a company based in Menlo Park, Calif., adapted a \$40,000 GPS system for agriculture from an automatic aircraft-landing system. About 300 have been sold since the equipment went on the market last spring.

GPS receivers placed on top of tractors pull in locational radio signals from satellites and a ground station fed by satellites. A computer inside the tractor memorizes the coordinates of the field and guides the tractor over the same path, for tilling, planting, spraying and harvesting. But expense is one reason high-tech can be a hard sell to farmers. Some believe that precision-guidance systems make economic sense only for large farms.

GPS systems, which began hitting the fields about seven years ago, can cut the loss of herbicide to evaporation by allowing farmers to work at night, when winds often are calmer. And driving over the same route each year minimizes the compaction of soil by the wheels that can reduce yields. Computer/GPS systems also produce maps showing where a field is the most and least productive. Farmers can use more seed and fertilizer in less productive areas or take those areas out of production. The new technologies are expected to result in larger farms. (Source: Yahoo News)