

THE VERDANT ELEMENT

Lakeland Agricultural Research Association

Getting into Farming

The realm of farming is very vast and we often focus on the conventional elements such as annual crop production or cattle production. The world is also focused on large scale production - how many acres do you farm or how many cattle do you run? There is such a vast range of agriculture production beyond cattle and grain and it can often be a successful avenue for young farmers to get into, particularly if they own few acres or no land at all.

The Young Agrarians put together a very good article with tips and tricks for young farmers who are looking at getting into farming:

Step 1: Farming Starts with a (Day)Dream

Ask yourself these questions: What do you want to farm? Are you an animal person, grain person, vegetable person, a cut flower person? or have an affinity for something else? Do you like interacting with customers? Is your focus feeding your local community, families, or selling at grocery stores or restaurants? Do you like food-processing/value added products?

A great place to start is to **find farms that inspire you**. If possible, try to arrange a farm visit with the farms you're interested in to get a better understanding of their day-to-day life. Chat up the vendors at your local farmers' market. Take on the opportunity to start making some farmer friends and begin honing in on what it is you love most about farming.

Step 2: Get Your Hands Dirty

The only real way to learn about farming in Alberta is to get your hands dirty. REAL dirty! Learning from others who are more experienced is invaluable. We recommend volunteering for a farm, working seasonal farming jobs, or interning/apprenticing at a farm.

Some farms have structured educational programs while other farms may be more informal. Either way, you'll likely be fully immersed in day-to-day activities and be building your skills as you go. Seasonal work is also a great option. A summer job on a farm might be a great fit or helping out a farm

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How to Say "Sorry" at Harvest - By Elaine Froese

Excerpt from *Farm Family Coach Insights: Seeds of encouragement for success in farm transition* pages 81-84.

Sometimes I wish I did not have real-life examples of how I make mistakes, but my mishaps make good fodder for my writing. The last harvest I was the combine driver who backed into the fuel truck while I was unloading my auger for cleanout to move to the next field. I have a bad habit of many accidents while backing up, so I should have checked my mirrors. The damage was a bent hydraulic shaft over the straw choppers, which was fixed with a \$400 part, and no downtime, thankfully.

I told my husband that I was sorry for the mistake, and I thanked my son for quickly tracking down the part. Our employee also now understands the importance of not parking vehicles behind me.

Harvest this year is going to be extra fun because we all feel behind before we start due to the late-season crops. I have already started praying for no frost until November!

Five Ways to Say Sorry

I would like to share some practical ways to make things right that I learned from Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas this summer in their fabulous book called *When Sorry Isn't Enough*. Chapman is also the author of *The Five Love Languages*, so you may be familiar with his practical approach.

1. "I'm Sorry"

You express regret. I was quick to do this after I heard the thud of hitting the truck. I also expressed regret to the semi-driver who grazed me as I was backing my SUV out of my garage onto my lane, rushing to get to the post office. I now always look down the lane before cranking out of the driveway! Sometimes expressing regret is all it takes to make restitution with the person you have offended, but recall the young kids whom you have asked to say "sorry," and it comes out quickly from their little mouths, but with the wrong tone of voice, and no further change of behavior. Not a good thing.

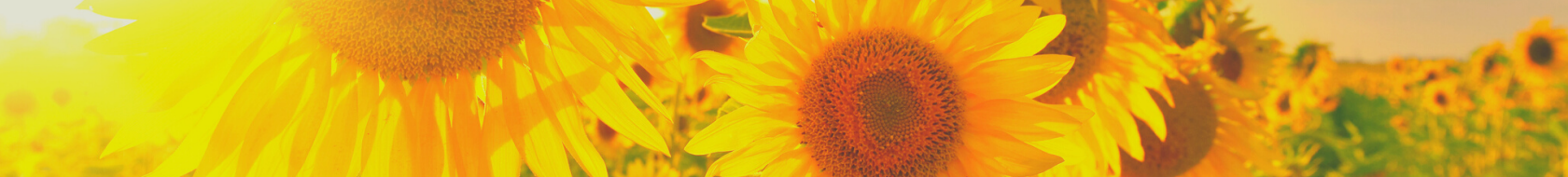
2. "I Was Wrong"

Those folks who can accept responsibility for their hurtful actions get more traction with spouses who expect more than a quick sorry. This means that you accept the fact that you made a mistake and own up to it. I was not going to sneak around the next field with a dented shaft; honesty is always the best policy in my books. Someone has torn a piece of sheet metal out of our shed, but we have never found anyone to own up to the mistake. The damage is done, but no one accepts responsibility. The hole is still not repaired!

3. "How Can I Make It Right?"

Making restitution. When I backed Wes's Pickup into a car parked in my blind spot with the pickup hitch making a perfectly square hole in the car's front bumper, I was angry that the driver had not

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Farm Communication - By Elaine Froese - Continued from page 2

used his horn to stop me! I had to make it right with a \$700 cheque to pay for a new car bumper, and I no longer drive the truck in town. Besides an apology, some people want to know what is going to change in the future with your actions so that you can make things right. In harvest season, when stress is high, you really need to focus on a positive attitude to catch people doing things right so that you can build up the emotional bank account of all the harvesters. Be willing to take some difficult feedback if you are cutting too high, or the meals need to be timelier to the field. Don't take things personally, but seek out the ways other folks would like to be appreciated. Watch the tone of your voice on the FM radios. Long hours, dusty itchy backs, and poor yields make people cranky if you are not careful to check your attitude. Just making fresh hot coffee for my son and our employees "makes lots of things right" during busy field times.

4. "I Want to Change"

Genuinely repenting. In harvest season, you have habits around how you like to open up a field and the direction of the swaths. Sometimes getting folks to adopt a new way of doing things is stressful until they can see the benefit. The swather driver needs to have some compassion for the grain cart guy or trucker as to the pattern created by the swaths. Are you open to suggestions to change your ways? Make a mind shift to be able to ask, "Is there something you would like me to do differently?"

5. "Can You Find It in Your Heart to Forgive Me?"

Requesting forgiveness takes courage, but the result is that you will feel better and lighter when you are forgiven. I appreciate a spouse who does not yell or swear at me when I cause damage with backing up. He forgives me, and we move on. Chapman says that "for those with a controlling personality, asking forgiveness is out of their comfort zone emotionally. To successfully learn to speak the apology language of requesting forgiveness or, for that matter, any of the apology languages, an extremely controlling individual will likely require the help of a counselor or friend who is willing to be honest with him or her."

So now you are primed for harvest, getting machines ready, and your ability to apologize in the right way.

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Here are Chapman's tips of what not to say when apologizing:

Haven't you gotten over that yet?

- Why do you always...?
- What's the big deal?
- Give me a break.
- You just need to get over it.
- You sound like your mother.

Try this instead:

- I did it, and I have no excuse.
- Can you ever forgive me?
- I realize that talk is cheap. I know that I need to show you how I will change.
- I will try to make this up to you by...
- You have every right to be upset.

Take care of everyone on your team, and yourself with good sleep, great food, and gracious attitudes. I will do my best this year not to back into anything!

Elaine Froese (pronounced 'phrase'), CSP, is a certified professional speaker, and an award-winning certified coach and author. She's a go-to expert for farm families who want better communication and conflict resolution to secure a successful farm transition.

Her superpower is helping families find harmony through understanding.

"JUST MAKING
FRESH HOT COFFEE
FOR MY SON AND
OUR EMPLOYEES
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THINGS RIGHT"
DURING BUSY FIELD
TIMES."





Environmental Farm Plans

The environment is becoming a more prominent issue. It is a large factor in marketing agriculture and food products in today's global markets. Consumers are demanding more transparency and are demanding high quality and safe products. Reputation of food safety is critical to retain and gain access to domestic and international markets.

Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) provide a tool for producers to self analyze their operation and identify environmental risks, current standards, areas for improvement and also highlight what they are doing well.

Having a completed EFP allows producers to access different funding opportunities, such as the Canadian Agricultural Partnerships Programs or OFCAF. It is also useful in product branding that demonstrates specific environmental standards.

The EFP is a living document and should be reviewed and updated periodically.

If you wish to complete an EFP or have any questions regarding EFP please contact Dustin Roth at technician@laraonline.ca or (780) 812-1036

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through calving or harvest. Check out the [YA Apprenticeship Program](#), our [Job Board](#), and the [Young Agrarians Alberta Facebook group](#). Usually opportunities for experience start being listed in January/February. Whatever route you pursue, gaining exposure to farming is key to knowing whether farming is for you in the long term.

Step 3: Learn, Re-Learn and Grow your Farming Network

If you've reached this stage, you've gained some hands-on farming experience and have narrowed down some options of what you want to do. But as you have most likely experienced by now, **farming is a continuous learning process**. There are so many approaches to farming and every decision is context-specific – it's important to figure out which practices you want to take on in alignment with your personal values and time.

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"LEARNING FROM
OTHERS WHO
ARE MORE
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INVALUABLE."





SAVE THE DATE

FINDING FAIRNESS IN FARM TRANSITION

Farm succession is a tough topic, but it is vital. We are pleased to welcome Elaine Froese, Canada's Farm Whisperer, to Smoky Lake County for a one day workshop!

Elaine is the go-to expert for farm families who want better communication and conflict resolution to secure a successful farm transition.



For more information call

(780) 826-7260

DAY	TIME	
DECEMBER 1	9:30 AM	Smoky Lake Agriplex



Resilient Agriculture Landscapes Program

The Resilient Agriculture Landscapes Program (RALP) funding is offered on a per-acre payment basis for a term of 3 years. In this way, RALP can better support producers in their ability to implement projects on their land that over time can provide significant benefits to the producer, the public and future generations.

The program will pay a per-acre fee that is calculated to cover most of the applicant's implementation cost. Additionally, applications will be evaluated on project size, carbon sequestration, number of livestock impacted, and water quality and biodiversity enhancement, which may result in an impact adjustment payment (impact adjustment payment will vary based on the minister's discretion).

The program funding maximums are:

- \$150,000 - active primary producers
- \$300,000 - Grazing Reserve Associations/operators of a Community Pasture or an approved Indigenous applicant.

The minimum payment under the program is \$2,000.

For more information or to get started, contact Dustin Roth with LARA at (780) 812-1036 or technician@laraonline.ca

<https://www.alberta.ca/sustainable-cap-programs.aspx>



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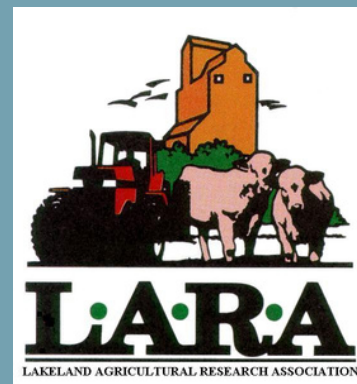
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Follow Us on Twitter! @LakelandARA
Follow Us on Instagram @Lakeland_ag
Follow Us on Facebook at LakelandARA

Sustainable farming encompasses a wide range of practices and principles; combining environmental stewardship with profitability and ensuring that the family farm will be there for generations to come.



www.laraonline.ca

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Step 4, 5, 6, 7, 8...It Doesn't Stop Here!

Farming isn't going to happen overnight and it takes a lot of commitment. This is where your networks come in handy. **Ask your peers for help when you need it and reciprocate the favour.** If you feel a bit lost, go back a couple steps and learn through experience at other farms and/or further education.

Excerpts from How to Start Farming in Alberta posted by Michelle Lam on September 3, 2021 at <https://youngagrarians.org/how-to-start-farming-in-alberta/#:~:text=The%20only%20real%20way%20to,interning%2Fapprenticing%20at%20a%20farm.>

About Young Agrarians (YA)

Young Agrarians (YA) is a farmer to farmer educational resource network for new and young ecological, organic and regenerative farmers in Canada. We recognize the Indigenous lands and territories that we work on and alongside, and are committed to providing programs that are inclusive and available to farmers and friends of diverse backgrounds. YA is volunteer-driven, with farmers across the country organizing on-farm events and building community to create spaces for knowledge sharing and growth. The network is made up of a diverse array of food growers and lovers including farmers, fishers, holistic managers, market gardeners, ranchers, seed savers, food activists, bee keepers, community gardeners, and food and farm organizations.

You can learn more about them and their programs at: youngagrarians.org.

