

THE FUTURE – WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR AGRICULTURE?

By
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Simply put it means CHANGE – Big time, fast paced change. Change in the way we farm, what we farm, and how farming gets compensated. If the change does not happen our farming industry will not survive.

I see this Century as the Century of Convergence – engineering and biology will be converged to create fast paced technological changes. Based on rate of progress in the year 2000, we will see change in the order of 10 to 20,000 years of progress in this Century. The technologies to watch are *biotechnology* (coming of age) and *nanotechnology* (the new kid on the block). These technologies combined with information generation will set the pace for changes we only dream of today.

From a science based world we will see tremendous change in the world. I expect that by the time you see the year 2050; the average life expectancy will be 120 to 150 years in the developed world.

However, we need to be thinking about today's realities as well.

- An increasing global population – 6Billion to 9Billion by 2050.
- An increased demand for high quality food.

- A limited land base for food production.
- A decreasing supply of water globally.
- Farming as a low income business in developed countries (such as Canada).

Our challenges as we go forward and try to create an industry that will be viable and globally recognized as leaders are simple.

- Transform perception of agriculture from a supplier of food to a needed pillar of a healthy Canada.

During the 20th Century farming progressed from being stewards of the land to stewards of the environment. A logical progress in this stewardship process would be stewards of a Healthy Canada – healthy people, a healthy environment, and a healthy economy.

I want to share with you a Vision for Canada, a vision that a group of committed Canadians came together to develop because they felt something needed to be done to ensure we have a viable agri-food industry in the 21st Century – there were participants from Industry, Universities. and Government who are committed to Canadian agriculture.

The group developed the following vision:

Vision statement

In the year 2015 Canada is a world leader in the enhancement of human, animal and environmental health through the application of research, technology, and social innovations in agriculture and the bioscience industry.

As a solution provider to society, we reduce the burgeoning health deficit, improve quality of life, and embrace environmental sustainability.

We are the trusted standard against which others measure themselves.

Bumper sticker version

Agriculture: A fundamental pillar for a healthy Canada

I can stand here today and make great predictions for our future in the agri-food industry – an industry that is sustainable and truly important to Canada’s future – which it is..... **BUT**.....

Today’s headlines: farmers blocking food terminals; farmers protesting on Parliament Hill; and farmers losing their lively hood due to low price commodities makes such predictions a bit laughable, even though the prediction may be true. Today we have a crisis at the farmgate.

I believe there is a way out of this crisis and getting to the future we all want to see. That solution is by everyone getting behind the vision for starters.

This vision calls for a strategy that articulates how stakeholders can work together to secure a profitable and internationally competitive future for the

food and farming industries, while contributing to a better environment and simultaneously improving nutrition and public health.

All of you are just starting with your careers – mostly in agriculture. I believe it is a great time to be starting out in a career in this sector. You will encounter change that is not even thought about today. – a key impact will be people living healthier and longer.

How a career unfolds is not always predictable and that is good – myself, I have worked as a researcher for Industry; marketing roles with industry; headed up an ag-biotech initiative to make Saskatoon a global leader; was Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food in Saskatchewan; raised a Venture Capital fund for agriculture and invested the fund in 10 start ups; consulted; I sit on several boards and advisory groups, I have been an invited speaker in 24 countries and lecture at Universities. Today I am presently the Director of Business Development at the Canadian Light Source (Synchrotron) as well as several Advisory and consulting tasks.

It has been a great career for me and it continues, and I expect that you will all have the ability to chart your own career path going forward.

My advice:

- Build your network.
- Plan to make a difference and Enjoy whatever you do.