

SASKATCHEWAN
Agri-Value Forum
& **Networking 2026**



April 30 – May 1, 2026

Sheraton Cavalier
612 Spadina Crescent E
Saskatoon, SK S7K 3G9

saskagrivalue.com

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Message from The Honourable Eleanor Olszewski
Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan)

On behalf of Prime Minister Carney and our government, I am pleased to extend my warmest wishes to everyone participating in the **2026 Saskatchewan Agri-Value Forum and Networking Event**.

Saskatchewan is Canada's agricultural heartland, growing the food Canadians and families around the world need. The opportunity before us now is to build on those strengths by doing more here at home.

That means expanding domestic manufacturing and processing capacity to create more value, unlock new opportunities, and support good-paying jobs right here in Saskatchewan. In an increasingly uncertain world, this work matters more than ever.

In the face of that uncertainty, Canada's new government is focused on what we can control. This includes supporting businesses, organizations, entrepreneurs, and researchers—like those gathered at this forum—as you build a stronger, more resilient economy. We are investing in the capacity of Canadian businesses to produce more at home, securing new trade agreements to help products reach new markets, and ensuring that provinces and territories are positioned to drive growth in the years ahead. With its resources, expertise, and ambition, Saskatchewan is particularly well placed to play a leading role in this work and contribute to Canada's success.

Forums like this one play an important role by bringing together the leaders, innovators, and partners who are turning potential into progress. By strengthening partnerships and advancing value-added agriculture, you are helping grow Saskatchewan's economy and contributing to a stronger Canada.

I wish you a productive and successful forum.

The Honourable Eleanor Olszewski
*Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience
and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development
Canada (PrairiesCan)*



Message from The Honourable David Marit Minister of Agriculture, Government of Saskatchewan

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I am pleased to welcome you to the **2026 Saskatchewan Agri-Value Forum and Networking Event**. This gathering highlights the strength of our value-added sector and brings together leaders who drive innovation across the province.

Growing value-added agriculture remains a priority for our government, and we continue to make strong progress toward our Growth Plan target of \$10 billion in value-added revenue by 2030. Saskatchewan's estimated value-added revenue for 2024-25 is \$8.4 billion, demonstrating steady momentum. Programs such as the Saskatchewan Lean Improvements in Manufacturing and the Product Development Program support companies in improving efficiency, developing new products and enhancing competitiveness.

Across Saskatchewan, new facilities are opening and capacity is expanding. This momentum reflects the confidence investors have in our province, the quality agriculture and agri-food products we produce and the vision of the companies transforming our agricultural strengths into new opportunities.

I encourage you to engage fully in discussions, connect with your peers and share your expertise. Your leadership and vision are essential to advancing the agri-value sector and ensuring Saskatchewan remains a destination of choice for food and ingredient processing.

Best wishes for a successful forum.



The Honourable David Marit
Minister of Agriculture

Message from The Honourable Warren Kaeding Minister of Trade and Export Development, Government of Saskatchewan

The **2026 Saskatchewan Agri-Value Forum and Networking Event** provides a unique opportunity for the province to showcase one of the most exciting growth areas within our economy. Saskatchewan's value-added agriculture sector is attracting attention and investments, locally and from around the globe.

For many years now, Saskatchewan has been working hard to grow value-added processing. With more than 40 per cent of Canada's farmland and a robust and reliable supply-chain, processors are choosing to make substantial investments in our province.

Saskatchewan is home to large multi-national value-added producers such as Louis Dreyfus Company, Cargill, and AGT Foods, as well as smaller, yet no less important companies such as Bay State Milling, Grain Millers, and Lovingly Made Ingredients, to name but a few. Together, they ensure that Saskatchewan's value-added sector is creating jobs and prosperity for all those who call this great province home.

Saskatchewan's focus on research and development is second to none. One of the province's most recent achievements in the sector was the advancement of the Canada-India Pulse Protein Centre of Excellence announced as part of Premier Scott Moe's mission to India. This proposed research centre, to be built in India, will focus on the enhancement of pulse protein processing and the development of fortified foods. This shows how Saskatchewan's expertise goes far beyond its provincial borders, helping to ensure food security across the globe.

It is investments such as these, and many others by industry leaders, that are helping the province diversify its economy. With \$18.5 billion in exported agri-food product sales annually, and more than 300 food processors employing over 5,000 people, value-added agriculture is playing a vital role in protecting Saskatchewan.

A strong and vibrant value-added sector contributes to our record gross domestic product of \$83.6 billion, creates jobs and attracts substantial investment. I am sure that today's conference will lead to a wealth of new connections and opportunities that will promote even more growth in the sector.

Wishing all attendees an enjoyable conference.



The Honourable Warren Kaeding
Minister of Trade and Export Development



Conference Agenda

April 30, 2026

- 8:00 am **Registration & Coffee**
- 8:30 am **Opening Remarks**
Amy Standish (Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture)
- 8:45 am **Function, Food and Health in the Ultra Processed Age**
Kelly Dowson (Group Managing Director, FIS Group)
- 9:45 am **Networking Break**
- 10:15 am **Panel: From Automation to Intelligence: How AI and Data Analytics are Reshaping Food and Beverage Manufacturing**

Moderator: Nestor Gomez (Founder & President, BrightLine Solutions)
Cameron Bergen (CEO, Mode40)
Rhonda Ekstrom (Executive Leader, C-Merak)
Shawn Harman (President & CEO, Harman Group Companies | Star Egg Co. Ltd.)
- 11:15 am **Wittington's Made in Canada Fund: Supporting Canadian Food Resiliency**
Zack Newton (Senior Director, Investments, Wittington Investments, Ltd)
- 12:00 pm **Lunch**
- 1:00 pm **Panel: The Future of Food as Medicine: How Gut Health, Functional Nutrition, and GLP-1 Impact Food Innovation**

Moderator: Kelly Dowson (Group Managing Director, FIS Group)
Brooke Bulloch (Registered Dietitian & CEO, Food to Fit)
Heather Huenison (Co-owner & COO, Naturally Amped)
Katharine Ng (Principal Data Scientist, One.Bio)
- 2:00 pm **Networking Break**
- 2:30 pm **Fireside chat: Building Resilience and Strengthening Agri-Value Enterprises in Uncertain Times**

Moderator: Alastair MacFadden (Assistant Deputy Manager, Prairies Economic Development Canada)
Matt MacDonald (National Leader - Food & Beverage Processing, MNP)
Anzhelika Johnston (Director of Quality Assurance, Bay State Milling)
Rhonda Ekstrom (Executive Leader, C-Merak)
- 3:30 pm **Keynote: Becoming Preferred: Level Up the Brand Experience**
Michael Vickers (Executive Director, Summit Learning Systems)
- 5:00 pm **Industry Networking Reception**
Top of the Inn, Sheraton Cavalier Saskatoon Hotel
Greetings from Honourable David Marit
(Minister of Agriculture, Government of Saskatchewan)





Speakers



Amy Standish
Ministry of Agriculture

Amy Standish became Assistant Deputy Minister of Policy and Programs at the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture in February 2024. She joined the ministry in 2019, holding leadership roles including Director of Strategic Policy and Executive Director within the Policy Branch.

Prior to joining the Ministry of Agriculture, Amy held a variety of roles across the Government of Saskatchewan beginning in 2012, including positions with the Ministry of Trade and Export Development, the Ministry of Finance, and the former Ministry of Central Services.

Amy holds a Master of Public Administration from the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Geography from the University of Regina. Raised just outside Regina, with strong ties to her family's farm and orchard near Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, Amy now resides outside Regina with her husband and children.



Kelly Dowson
FIS Group

Kelly Dowson is the Managing Director of FIS Group, leading a collective of innovation and consumer insight businesses that support growth across the food and beverage industry.

With a background in food science and more than 15 years' experience spanning foodservice, hospitality, retail, and manufacturing, she specializes in turning consumer behaviour and emerging trends into actionable strategies. Kelly is also an industry speaker, awards judge, and expert advisor on food and drink innovation and strategy.



Nestor Gomez
BrightLine Solutions

Nestor Gomez is the founder of BrightLine Solutions Inc., a New Brunswick based technology consulting and professional services firm focused on the agri-food sector. BrightLine Solutions helps food companies validate, pilot, adopt and enhance technology solutions that deliver clear value with minimal risk, while supporting a portfolio of foodtech SMEs and startups expanding into, or operating in, the food sector.

Nestor has over 20 years of experience in technology leadership, analytics, and digital transformation across food manufacturing, innovation networks, and associations. Previously, he held senior technology and innovation roles at McCain Foods and the Canadian Food Innovation Network, where he led digital manufacturing and data analytics initiatives and launched collaboration platforms.

His current work focuses on practical AI applications in the post-farm food sector, including manufacturing, quality checks, process monitoring, packaging, distribution, and food service. He helps organizations move from exploration to execution through clear use cases, change management, and measurable results.



Cameron Bergen
Mode40

Cameron Bergen is the founder and CEO of mode40 Ltd., where he leads the team behind MAST, the world's first agentic-AI Manufacturing Execution System (MES) platform. Built to turn real-time production data into measurable profit on the shop floor. With more than three decades dedicated to the agri-food sector, his career began hands-on in the field before advancing into senior roles at one of Canada's largest food companies. There, he helped design a \$150M processing facility that

became central to the company's growth into a leading exporter and ultimately supported a landmark \$1B acquisition.

Over his career, Cameron has helped pioneer practical methods now used across North America to modernize manufacturing through AI, analytics, and Industry 4.0 execution systems. He is known for his grounded, common-sense approach with customers and partners. His standard is simple: the solution must adapt how plants truly operate and the data must prove its worth.



Rhonda Ekstrom
C-Merak

Rhonda Ekstrom is a senior business consultant and executive leader at C-Merak, a Saskatchewan-based ingredient company reimagining the future of food through clean-label, taste-forward faba bean proteins. With more than 30 years of experience across business strategy, operations, human resources, governance, international trade, marketing and technology, Rhonda brings a thoughtful, big-picture perspective to the agri-value sector - one grounded in both innovation and practicality.

At C-Merak, Rhonda helps shape the company's strategic direction, business development, and market growth, supporting its transformation from a strong farming foundation into a vertically integrated, innovation-driven ingredient supplier. She leads human resources and organizational development with a focus on building resilient teams and a values-driven culture. Her work centres on nurturing meaningful customer relationships, advancing clean-label protein solutions, and helping position Saskatchewan as a recognized leader for value-added food innovation.

Before joining C-Merak, Rhonda served as Vice-President of Business Development for the Global Transportation Hub, where she worked to strengthen global supply chain connections through Saskatchewan's inland port.

She also served as Vice-President for Hewlett Packard in Saskatchewan, helping local organizations adopt innovative technology solutions while delivering exceptional client service. Rhonda currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Saskatchewan Roughriders and contributes her governance experience to other private-sector organizations.

Known for her ability to connect people, technology, and purpose, Rhonda embraces modern tools - including AI - while remaining deeply rooted in the enduring values of agriculture: growth, stewardship, and long-term sustainability. Her leadership reflects a genuine commitment to helping Saskatchewan companies thrive on the global stage while creating lasting value that supports communities at home.



Shawn Harman
Harman Group Companies | Star Egg Co., Ltd.

Shawn Harman is President and CEO of the Harman Group Companies Star Egg Co. which is a leading Western Canadian egg producer, processor, and distributor. The organization markets over 1.6 million eggs per day, serving retail, foodservice, and industrial customers across Canada.

Shawn has led significant expansion across production, infrastructure, and value-added processing, positioning the group for long-term growth with a focus on operational excellence, vertical integration, and building a resilient enterprise that supports producers, customers, and communities for generations.

Shawn has resided in the community of Humboldt with his family since 2002.



Zack Newton
Wittington Investments, Ltd.

Zack is currently on the investment team at Wittington Investments, Ltd., the holding company for the Weston group of companies. At Wittington, one of his responsibilities includes the Made in Canada program which seeks to make equity or debt investments in companies or projects that improve Canadian food resiliency. Previously he held roles at organizations including Thomvest and Torys and he has served on several boards of directors.

He received a J.D./M.B.A. from the University of Toronto and a B.A. (Honors) from Cornell University. Zack has been actively involved with several community organizations, including as Vice Chair of Canada's National Ballet School and as past Co-Chair of the Art Gallery of Ontario's AGO Next program.



Brooke Bulloch
Food to Fit

Brooke is a Registered Dietitian and CEO at Food to Fit Nutrition. She earned a BSc in Nutrition from the University of Saskatchewan.

Brooke has been working in private practice since 2012, and today her practice includes 7 team dietitians and a social worker. With offices in both Saskatoon and Regina, Brooke and her team support clients in person and online throughout the province.

Brooke is an experienced media spokesperson and has been working with media since 2011. She is a recurring guest on CBC and CKOM radio and has been published in The Globe and Mail, Canadian Living, Chatelaine, Cottage Life Magazine, and Inside Fitness to name a few. Brooke Created content for Co-op Food's Magazine and blog from 2019-2024. She delivered food, nutrition, and health messaging on Global and CTV Morning News for over 12 years.

Brooke is an advocate for health equity, social justice, and inclusive healthcare practices. She dedicates much of her time to learning, listening, and advocating for change.

As a working mom and business owner, Brooke values simplicity and sustainability in nutrition planning, along with a curious and flexible non-diet approach to food and eating.



Heather Huenison
Naturally Amped

Heather Huenison is the co-owner and Chief Operating Officer of Naturally Amped, a Saskatchewan-based fermented foods company that has experienced rapid growth by bringing traditionally fermented, gut-supportive foods into mainstream retail. With a background in engineering and an MBA, Heather brings a systems-driven approach to scaling food-as-medicine products within real-world agri-food constraints.

She leads operations, regulatory compliance, and strategic growth at Naturally Amped, overseeing CFIA licensing, ingredient sourcing, production scale-up, and multi-province retail expansion. As demand accelerated, Heather has been responsible for building the operational infrastructure, processes, and supply chains required to support growth while maintaining food safety, quality, and consumer trust.

Heather's perspective on food as medicine is rooted in execution - how evidence-informed food systems move from concept to shelf, and how they can be produced efficiently, transparently, and at scale. She brings an in-the-trenches view of what it takes to make functional food viable with Canada's food system.



Katharine Ng
One.Bio

Katharine Ng is a Principal Data Scientist at One.Bio, a biotech spinout of University of California, Davis focused on creating highly soluble natural fibers that can selectively modulate human health. A microbiologist by training, Kat completed her PhD in Justin Sonnenburg's lab at Stanford University, where she studied antibiotic-mediated disruption of the gut microbiota. She performed postdoctoral work in KC Huang's lab at Stanford, studying the factors that influence recovery of the

microbiota after perturbation, including diet.

As a senior research associate in Carolina Tropini's lab at the University of British Columbia, Kat worked on understanding how single strain growth of bacteria under stress can be generalized to predicting larger community responses.

In her role as a principal data scientist, Kat has worked with the R&D team to characterize the compositional diversity of dietary fiber in our food systems, as well as to understand how different dietary fibers exert distinct effects on the gut microbiota, enabling the selection of fibers for specific health applications. She has also spearheaded numerous consumer research projects and worked on product development at One.Bio, providing a perspective on functional foods that is informed by basic science and consumer preferences.



Alastair MacFadden
Prairies Economic Development Canada

Alastair MacFadden is an Assistant Deputy Minister at Prairies Economic Development Canada, the federal agency that ensures businesses and workers are equipped for a durable inclusive and diversified economy. Previously, he was Director of Executive Education, interim Director of the University of Saskatchewan campus, and Executive-in-Residence at the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School (JSGS) of Public Policy.

Alastair MacFadden cont'd

Alastair also served as Deputy Minister of Immigration and Career Training and Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour Market Development for the Government of Saskatchewan.

Alastair is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan with degrees in biochemistry (B.Sc.), psychology (Hon. Cert) and brain and behavioural psychology (M.A.). He began his public service career in the non-profit sector working with youth and adults with disabilities and their families. His career journey shaped a lifelong commitment to using data, visuals, metaphors and stories to advance public policy.



Matt MacDonald
MNP

Matt is MNP's National Leader of the Firm's Food and Beverage Processing practice and a Business Advisor, Assurance and Accounting, in Mississauga. Matt proactively helps clients manage their business and set strategic goals for both their personal and professional futures. By leveraging his extensive experience working with family businesses and clients across multiple sectors, Matt helps his clients implement practical business advisory, tax, and accounting strategies,

along with strong business fundamentals.

An active participant in the food and beverage processing industry and various associations across Canada, Matt brings more than 15 years of experience to his role as a trusted advisor.

Matt received an Honours Bachelor of Arts (BA) in political science and economics from McMaster University and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) in executive leadership and finance from Liberty University.

Matt has extensive board experience in both the private and not-for-profit sectors, most recently serving as a national director for Make-A-Wish Canada. He sits on the Oakville Chamber of Commerce board of directors.



Anzhelika Johnston
Bay State Milling

Anzhelika Johnston is a Saskatchewan-based quality assurance leader with deep expertise in grain-based technologies and value-added food processing. With more than a decade of experience in milling and ingredient sector, she currently serves as Director of Quality Assurance for the Oat Milling Business Unit at Bay State Milling Company, where she oversees quality systems, regulatory compliance, and continuous improvement initiatives.

Her career includes ten years at Ardent Mills in progressively senior quality roles, where she led facility-wide food safety programs, supported innovation, and strengthened operational excellence. Anzhelika's academic foundation includes a Ph.D. in Food Technology, complemented by research experience at the University of Saskatchewan and earlier faculty roles in Ukraine.

Anzhelika is recognized for her collaborative leadership style, strong communication skills, and passion for teaching and mentorship. She brings a science-driven, solutions-focused perspective to industry discussions and is committed to advancing food safety, supporting innovation, and strengthening the broader agri-food ecosystem.



Michael Vickers
Summit Learning Systems

Michael Vickers inspires success! Michael redefines the possible for sales professionals, leaders, and managers. Whatever the sales or business opportunity, Michael will enhance the odds. Every person who has an idea to promote, a team to motivate, or a competitor to challenge will attain a new level of success after an event with Michael. Whatever result you are striving for, if it involves influencing others, or achieving success through others, Michael will build your confidence and accelerate your team's performance.

A popular speaker, consultant and educator, Michael coaches thousands of professionals across Canada and the United States, every year to grow individual and organizational performance. Summit Learning Systems, Michael's training organization, brings leading-edge strategies to clients in every sector of the North American economy.

Michael's success is completely grounded in and built on his personal experience. A consummate entrepreneur, Michael is a graduate of his own franchised retailing enterprise, a manufacturing and distribution company, and a highly successful publishing venture. A ceaseless innovator, Michael is constantly researching leading companies, searching for best practices, and distilling the experience of success, many of which can be found in his best-selling books entitled, "Becoming Preferred: How to Outsell Your Competition", and "Dance of the Rainmaker: Creating Authentic Differentiation in Today's Competitive Marketplace".

Michael also shares weekly insights as the host of the podcast, "Becoming Preferred," available wherever you listen to podcasts.

Michael's unique gift is his mastery of the art of influence, and his ability to translate that mastery into practical, powerful techniques anyone can use. His presentations are entertaining, intimate and unabashed. He is hilarious in his stories, boundless in his enthusiasm, and relentless in his message that success is available to everyone!

Workshop & B2B Networking Agenda May 1, 2026

8 am - 11 am **Workshop: Becoming Preferred - Building Your Brand Experience Blueprint**
Michael Vickers (Executive Director, Summit Learning Systems)

You have heard the "why." Now let's build the "how." This hands-on workshop picks up where the keynote left off, giving you and your team the tools to map, evaluate, and elevate your client experience from first contact to long-term partnership.

What you'll work on:

- Mapping your current client journey and identifying high-impact touchpoints
- Applying the "Five Customer Values" to overcome price-driven conversations
- Building "High Touch" strategies that create lasting trust
- Designing experiences that turn satisfied customers into vocal advocates
- Creating authentic differentiation

You will leave with a personalized Brand Experience Blueprint—a working document you can take back to your organization and implement immediately. No vague concepts. No generic checklists. Just a clear, actionable roadmap tailored to your business.

8 am - 11 am **Pre-arranged B2B Networking Session**

New for 2026, this pre-arranged B2B networking session matches participating agri-value companies with like-minded companies to explore collaborations and partnerships to advance their strategic business goals. This focused environment allows businesses to explore new opportunities, accelerate deals, and build meaningful professional relationships in a streamlined, efficient format.

Plus: Representatives from government and key ecosystem partners are on site to share insights on funding programs and support services available to agrivalue businesses.

8:00 am **Light networking breakfast**

9:00 am **Scheduled meetings**

10:00 am **Coffee break**

10:30am **Scheduled meetings**

11:30 am **Light networking lunch**





Organizing Committee

Government of Saskatchewan

Godwin Pon
 Ward Read
 Bailey Gervais
 Les Parker
 Ha Do
 Ron Kehrig

Ag-West Bio

Alejandra Toro
 Monica Pollard

Prairies Economic Development Canada

Ernest Heapy
 David Rorstad

Thank you to our organizers and sponsors.



Prairies Economic
 Development Canada

Développement économique
 Canada pour les Prairies



Looking for assistance with your value-added product?

Contact the **Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, Value-Added Unit**

| agrivalue@gov.sk.ca



The Government of Saskatchewan prioritizes enabling economic growth and diversification in the province's added-value agriculture sector, and co-ordinates these efforts in several ways.

The **Ministry of Agriculture's Value-Added Unit** works to advance this sector in collaboration with industry, other ministries and stakeholders. It provides a range of services, such as:

- Assisting existing and new agri-businesses with business competitiveness issues, including path-finding for infrastructure challenges;
- Assisting companies with market development issues and access to ministry programming, such as the Product Development Program and Saskatchewan Lean Improvements in Manufacturing (SLIM);
- Connecting agri-value businesses to Saskatchewan's research sector;
- Making connections with other agri-businesses and potential investors;
- Taking a collaborative approach in advancing international interests in Saskatchewan's value-added sector; and
- Providing industry insight.

The unit is focused on supporting sector competitiveness, research and research commercialization, investment attraction, and trade and market development. It collaborates closely with the **Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development (TED)** to enable new or increased investment and fostering trade to increase exports.

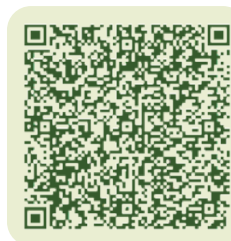
The strategic goals of TED are to increase the value of Saskatchewan's exports by promoting and developing opportunities for its exporters, to increase private capital investment in Saskatchewan by connecting investors with opportunities, and to establish the province as "The Place to Do Business" within Canada and around the world by enhancing and promoting Saskatchewan's competitive advantage.

TED is focused on supporting economic growth to generate wealth and opportunity in Saskatchewan. The ministry is responsible for:

- Facilitating a co-ordinated cross-government approach to attract investment and grow export markets, and leading foreign investment attraction efforts in value-added agriculture;
- Fostering and supporting a competitive business environment;
- Facilitating trade; and
- Strengthening Saskatchewan's international relations.

Ag-West Bio is Saskatchewan's bioscience industry association. The company works as a catalyst for developing partnerships and industry growth in the bioeconomy through investments, aiding strategic alliances, and providing business planning support, regulatory advice, and communications. Funding for Ag-West Bio by the Government of Canada and Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) is the federal department that works to diversify the economy across the Canadian Prairies. PrairiesCan leads in building a strong, competitive Canadian economy by supporting business, innovation and community economic development unique to Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba.



List of Saskatchewan Programming for Value-Added Businesses

For more information on the Value-added Strategy or Value-Added Unit, contact the Ministry of Agriculture, Value-Added Unit at agrivalue@gov.sk.ca.



For further information or to leave a suggestion for next year's event, please visit saskagrivalue.com.