

THE Western Producer

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SPECIAL EDITION: FASCINATING INNOVATORS WHO SHAPED PRAIRIE AGRICULTURE

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Do you know what contributions these people have made to Prairie agriculture? Find out inside.

Innovators in Agriculture

BY BARB GLEN
SASKATOON NEWSROOM

Is there any group more innovative than farmers?

The history of agricultural development on the Prairies is rich with original thinkers who faced a problem, took up a challenge and changed agriculture through their efforts.

Welcome to our special holiday season edition, in which we salute innovators, some past and some present, who have made a significant, positive contribution to the development or improvement of agriculture and rural life on the Prairies.

It's important to note at the start that this is not a comprehensive list and it is not intended to be viewed as such. We've profiled 44 people within these pages, but we all know there are hundreds of individuals whose achievements would merit inclusion in a complete list of agricultural innovators.

One need look no further than the provincial and national agricultural halls of fame to find scores of people whose work has brought the industry to its current state of sophistication.

But as with so many things, time and space limitations intervene.

So, we've tried for a mix, factoring in geography, occupation, gender and type of achievement. We're heavy on the historical, though a few on our list are still actively pursuing goals in their respective fields.

Within these pages you will find:

- A music critic who bred one of the country's most famous wheat varieties.
- A man whose plant breeding continues to brighten flowerbeds.
- The first female agriculture minister in Canada.
- A crop duster who helped protect soil.
- A farmer who brought zero till into the mainstream.
- A rancher who knew all about shopping malls.
- A woman whose personal tragedy led her to help all farm women.
- A founder of the Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth.
- The world flax king, who is more famous for something else.
- A politician who really got into the dirt.
- The man who invented the air seeder.
- The researcher who helped determine that a better name was needed for low glucosinolate, low erucic acid rapeseed.
- A man for whom a buggy is named.
- The best premier Alberta never had.
- An entrepreneur who donates \$1 million annually to charity.
- A scientist who finds triticale exciting.
- A woman for whom a rose is named.
- An agriculture minister who compared farm policy to a flush toilet.

This issue, dated Dec. 27, 2007, brings you relatively little of the timely news to which you are accustomed to reading within *The Western Producer*. That's because of drastically altered deadlines brought about by a combination of Christmas, Boxing Day, Canada Post delivery requirements and the schedules

of our printer. This issue was compiled in the weeks leading up to Christmas and finalized on Dec. 19. Any significant agricultural news that has occurred in the past week will be reported in the new year. We hope you enjoy this special edition. Happy New Year from all of us at *The Western Producer*.

Western members of the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame

BRITISH COLUMBIA

J.C. Berry	Dairy cattle
Murray A. Davie	Guernsey
Alexander H. Mercer	Farm organization
Percy H. Moore	Holstein
Robert Gordon Souter	Artificial insemination

ALBERTA

Douglas G Blair	Cattle breeding
John E. Brownlee	Grain
Patrick Burns	Beef
Robert Church	Veterinarian
W.A. Crawford-Frost	Hereford
Harry W. Hays	Minister
Christian Jensen	Sheep
George Lane	Percheron & beef
Donald C. Matthews	Angus
Archibald McLean	Cattle exporter
Daniel E. Riley	Rancher, farm organization
Alexander M. Runciman	Farm organization
Henry Wise Wood	Farm organization
J. Charles Yule	Farm show & livestock

MANITOBA

James Clayton Gilson	Grain
Robert Henry Gordon	Beef breeder
E. Cora Hind	Journalist
J.D. McGregor	Angus
A.C. McPhail	Large white swine
Douglas McRorie	Banking
William J. Parker	Farm organization

SASKATCHEWAN

Alfred E. Cross	Rancher
Richard Keith Downey	Research
Johathan R. Fox	Polled Hereford
J.G. Gardiner	Minister
Charles W. Gibbings	Grain
J. Harvey Gjesdal	Grain
Joseph Ernest Hull	Landrace swine
David Lawrence Kirk	Farm organization
Gerrit Jacob Kraay	Research
Alexander J. McPhail	Grain
W.R. Motherwell	Agriculture minister
George W. Robertson	Farm organization
W.J. Rutherford	Deputy minister
Alfred Eugene Slinkard	Research
William James Small	Farm show
David L. T. Smith	Veterinarian
Christian Tyndall Sutter	Deputy minister & education
Kenneth F. Wells	Veterinarian
Seager Wheeler	Plant breeding

E.A Partridge	Grain, journalist
Alfred Savage	Veterinarian & education
Francis W. Schofield	Veterinarian & education
Frank Leith Skinner	Horticulture
R.J. Speers	Horse racing, breeding
Baldur Rosmund Stefansson	Research
A.R. Tolton	Farm organization

A leader in lentils

Murad Al-Katib

BY SEAN PRATT
SASKATOON NEWSROOM



Murad Al-Katib spent every summer of his youth on European vacations that would always conclude with a visit to the family's Turkish homeland.

"Coming from a multicultural background my parents always wanted us to know there was a world outside of Saskatchewan," said Al-Katib, president of Alliance Pulse Processors Inc., one of the largest pulse processing firms in North America.

He didn't realize it then but those trips would shape what would become a business philosophy for a Saskatchewan company expected to generate \$150 million in sales in 2008. The company slogan is, "From the producer to the world."

Al-Katib was born and raised in Davidson, Sask., a town of 1,000 located halfway between Saskatoon and Regina.

That surprises a lot of people who assume by his appearance and his name that he's a foreigner. When he wasn't as well known a figure in agricultural circles he would get the occasional compliment from growers about his impeccable English.

"I guess I can thank Mrs. Holswick, who was my Grade 12 English teacher at Davidson high school," was his standard sarcastic response.

Al-Katib's father, a British-trained doctor, moved the family from Turkey to Saskatchewan in 1965 and eventually set up a practice in Davidson. His mother became a town councillor and eventually mayor of the small community.

After high school graduation Al-Katib received a bachelor of commerce degree at the University of Saskatchewan followed by a master of international management from the American Graduate School of International Management in Arizona. His graduating class in Arizona had 400 students from 68 countries.

"It was a world within a campus," he said, adding the experience furthered his view that the world is open for business.

While he was attending school in Arizona, Al-Katib wrote a letter to Saskatchewan premier Roy Romanow detailing his thoughts on how such an export-dependent province could do a better job on international trade by ensuring exporters are paid in a safe and timely fashion.

The deputy premier followed up on the letter and Al-Katib soon found himself heading up the international finance division of a new government organization called the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP).

As a graduate of one of the top business programs in

North America, Al-Katib had always envisioned himself working on Wall Street. But the more he thought about it, the more he wanted to return to his home province.

"I realized I could come back to Saskatchewan and get an opportunity to do things that I would never have the chance to do in New York."

He spent the next six years working for STEP, travelling to 65 countries to pave the way for the smooth export of Saskatchewan products.

In his travels he met the Arslan family, owners of Arbel Pulse Grain Industry and Trade S.A., the largest exporter of pulses in Turkey and a big buyer of Saskatchewan lentils. They were delighted to learn that Al-Katib spoke fluent Turkish.

Al-Katib couldn't understand why Saskatchewan was exporting raw product to splitters such as Arbel when the province could be processing the product straight off the combine.

"Why do we want to make the same mistake with red lentils that we made on mustard?" he thought to himself.

Al-Katib credits his mother, who worked tirelessly on bringing economic development opportunities to Davidson, as the inspiration behind his plan to build North America's largest red lentil splitting plant in Regina.

He approached the Arslan family about investing in the project.

Saskcan Pulse Trading Inc. became a reality when the two parties consummated the deal at the

International Pulses Trade and Industry Confederation convention in Vancouver in 2001.

Jan. 30 marks the fifth anniversary of the first load shipped out of the Regina plant. The company has initiated a series of acquisitions and mergers since then. The new company, Alliance Pulse Processors, operates six processing plants in Canada, the United States and Australia.

As of Oct. 31, Al-Katib was overseeing a firm with a market value of \$60 million and 145 full-time staff in Saskatchewan alone.

It hasn't always been a smooth ride. He came under heavy criticism in the summer of 2006 when red lentil prices were languishing at slightly more than 10 cents per pound, a far cry from where he told growers they would be.

Prices rebounded that fall and haven't let up. Al-Katib is proud that Canadian red lentil farmers are no longer squeezed by international buyers.

Why do we want to make the same mistake with red lentils that we made on mustard?

Murad Al-Katib, Alliance Pulse Processors Inc.

"The proof is in the returns that we've shown to growers. When I started, red lentils were always at a discount to green lentils."

Garth Patterson, executive director of Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, said he wouldn't go quite that far because grower returns are the function of many factors. However, he said Al-Katib did prove that western Canadian growers can add value to red lentils domestically rather than shipping the raw product abroad.

"He really had a vision to be a world leader in red lentils and in a short time period ... he has been able to achieve that."

In addition to what Al-Katib's business has done for the industry, he has also made significant personal contributions to policy development, serving on various Saskatchewan Pulse Grower committees, as vice-chair of Pulse Canada and as president of the Canadian Special Crops Association.

"He is a pleasure to work with," Patterson said.

Despite the expanding global presence of his company, Al-Katib has no intention of leaving Regina, where along with his wife, Michelle, he is raising six-year-old twins: daughter Serra and son Tariq.

"I always say, 'In business, never is a long time,' but I will never move away from this area. This is home to me," he said.

And if his son has anything to say about it, the company will be in the family for at least another generation. When people ask Tariq what he wants to be when he grows up, he says he wants to trade lentils like his daddy.

"I'm not sure that's going to get him the chicks or anything, but it's something I'm proud of," Al-Katib said.

NOTEWORTHY

Lentils, rich in soluble and insoluble fibre, help lower cholesterol. Soluble fiber forms a gel-like substance in the digestive tract that snares bile (which contains cholesterol) and ferries it out of the body. The insoluble fiber helps prevent digestive disorders like irritable bowel syndrome.

