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AGRICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIPS

**Media's Role in Agriculture
and the Effect it has on
Consumers**

Craig Lester

September 2024

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CANADA

Nuffield Canada Agricultural Scholarships

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3. Achieve personal development through travel and study; and
4. Deliver long-term benefits to Canadian farmers and growers, and to the industry as a whole.

Applications are due annually. Visit Nuffield.ca for more information.

SCHOLAR PROFILE

Craig Lester is passionate about connecting people, ideas, and resources and believes agriculture is the best place for that to happen.

Born and raised on a mixed beef and agriculture farm in Rolling Hills, Alberta, he learned at a young age about the vital role agriculture plays in people's lives worldwide. His family has farmed the land in Rolling Hills since the early 1940s.

A fourth-generation cattle farmer, Craig spent more than two decades as a broadcast journalist, writer, and radio producer. He owns and operates Rural Roots Canada, an agriculture media and communications company.

Craig's roots in agriculture in southeast Alberta run deep. His parents and brothers and sisters-in-law have followed in the footsteps of his grandparents and great grandparents who settled and started farming in the Rolling Hills area in the early 1940s. Craig's nieces and nephews, now the fifth generation, have started helping on the farm.

In his free time, he volunteers with several local, national, and global agriculture organizations, including the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ), Canadian Farm Writers' Federation (CFWF), Alberta Farm Writers' Federation (AFWA), Calgary Stampede, amongst others.

Craig applied for the Nuffield scholarship to broaden his horizons, foster his personal growth, expand his network, form lifelong friendships, pursue his commitment to lifelong learning, and live life to the fullest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My Nuffield journey has been made possible thanks to a long list of people who have gone out of their way to ensure that I had the most fulfilling and enriching experience over the last 18 months.

My family has been in my corner since the start: my parents, Curt and Lynn, my brothers and sisters-in-law, Stephen and Chantal, Andrew and Darby, and nieces and nephews, Zack, Hayden, Avery, and Jack.

So many people have gone out of their way to help me make connections and accommodate me throughout my travels. These people include, but are not limited to Graeme Finn, Jenn Norrie, Kallee Buchanan, Arlie Felton-Taylor, Owen Roberts, Blake Vince, Masaru Yamada, Joana Mendes, Rachel Martin, Claire McCormack, Claire Taylor, Adrian Bell, Kylie Leonard, Paul McVeigh, Georgia Beattie, Daryl Chubb, Robynne Anderson, Dmitri Houtart, and Peter and Paula Hynes.

I also want to thank the dozens of people around the world who took time out of their busy schedules to share their knowledge and insights on the role media plays in agriculture. Congratulations to all my fellow Nuffield scholars for your work and friendship. You are all truly inspiring.

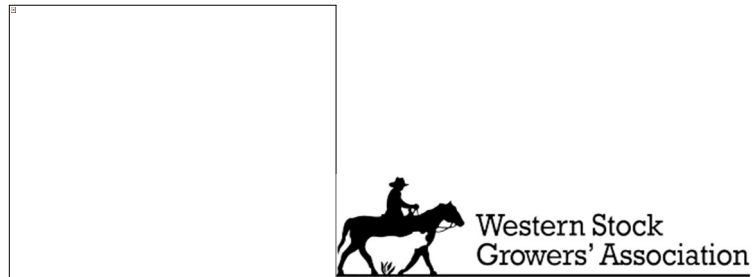
I wouldn't have been able to take time from running Rural Roots Canada if it wasn't for my team including Tim Parent, David Spence, Kristen Lepp, Gemma Pasquarelli and Cole Christensen. Thank you all for taking on extra work and allowing me to have this incredible opportunity to learn and grow.

A heartfelt thank-you to my sponsors, headlined by Alberta Grains, with contributions from BASF, Alltech, Foothills Forage & Grazing Association, Cole's Ag, Eastern Irrigation District, Western Stock Growers' Association- James Hargrave Legacy Fund, Rolling Hills Agricultural Society, AGvisorPRO, Hemsing Farms, Curt & Lynn Lester and Stephen Lester & Chantal Larose and Jacobson Stock Farms. Thank you for making this dream a reality!

Finally, I want to thank Nuffield Canada Chair Steve Larocque who was the first to encourage me to bet on myself, apply and embark on this once-in-a-lifetime experience, even though I had only met him minutes before.

SPONSORSHIP

My Nuffield Scholarship was sponsored by



- Rolling Hills Agricultural Society
- Hemsing Farms
- Jacobson Stock Farms
- Curt & Lynn Lester
 - Stephen Lester & Chantal Larose

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intersection of agriculture and media is crucial in shaping public perception, policy, and consumer engagement with the food system. This report explores how media influences the agricultural sector, the challenges of fragmented audiences, declining mainstream newsroom resources, and the widening rural-urban divide. Through extensive global research and travel across 15 countries, this study examines successful strategies for enhancing agricultural storytelling, bridging communication gaps, and fostering stronger relationships between farmers, journalists, and consumers.

Key Findings:

Media Landscape and Challenges: The decline of traditional media and the rise of digital platforms have resulted in fragmented audiences and reduced agricultural coverage. Newsroom cutbacks have led to fewer specialized agricultural reporters, making it essential for the industry to actively engage media professionals and ensure accurate storytelling.

- **Understanding Audience Behaviour:** Research from the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (2024) highlights that public trust in farmers is high, but traditional media ranks lower in credibility. Consumers primarily get their information from digital sources, emphasizing the need for agriculture to be present where audiences consume news.
- **Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide:** The general public's understanding of agriculture remains limited, as investigated in studies such as Nutrien's Bridging the Agriculture Perception (Seitz, K. & Nutrien. (2023)) and Canadian Centre for Food Integrity 2024 Public Trust Research Report (2024 *Edelman Trust Barometer*, n.d.) showing significant knowledge gaps. Programs like *Swiss Farms Welcome You* and influencer partnerships by the Canadian Cattle Association demonstrate the potential for direct engagement initiatives that connect consumers with agricultural production.
- **Effective Storytelling Strategies:** Successful agricultural media campaigns leverage relatable themes such as food security, affordability, innovation, sustainability, and celebrity endorsements to engage broader audiences. Examples like *Country Calendar* in New Zealand and Japan Agriculture News highlight the impact of dedicated agricultural storytelling in media.
- **The Role of Farmer and Media Champions:** The importance of both farmer and journalist champions cannot be overstated. Farmers who are keen to tell their story must be properly supported and equipped to communicate their stories. This support must come from organizations and companies in the form of creating time and headspace and training. It also needs to be mentioned that not all farmers want to be

spokespeople for the industry, they just want to do the work. The time and headspace of producers needs to be respected, allowing them the time and space to not only to operate their farms, but also have time for their families. At the same time, media professionals need greater exposure and empathy towards agriculture to improve coverage.

- **Mental Health and Media Perception: Research from University College Dublin** (underscores the significant effect of media coverage on farmers' mental health. Negative narratives and misinformation contribute to stress and anxiety, reinforcing the need for responsible reporting and informed storytelling.
- **AI, Algorithms, and Media Modeling: Artificial Intelligence and media analytics offer new opportunities for understanding public sentiment and optimizing agricultural messaging.** Adopting predictive modeling techniques, like those used in Tasmania's salmon industry, can help agriculture tailor its communication strategies.

DISCLAIMER

This report has been prepared in good faith but is not intended to be a scientific study or an academic paper. It is a collection of my current thoughts and findings on discussions, research and visits undertaken during my Nuffield Farming Scholarship.

It illustrates my thought process and my quest for improvements to my knowledge base. It is not a manual with step-by-step instructions to implement procedures.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

“You’re not going to have top-tier food systems without top-tier journalism.”

- Claire McCormack PhD Researcher – Irish Research Council – University College Dublin

This statement underscores the pivotal role of journalism in shaping public discourse and policy surrounding agriculture and food systems.

When I began my Nuffield journey to explore the impact of media on agriculture and consumers' perceptions of the industry, my focus was narrow. I aimed to find "tactics" to improve how agriculture and food production engage with media—whether through traditional news outlets, social media influencers, production companies, journalists, or storytellers of any kind.

Considering how media is consumed today, the seemingly infinite number of digital platforms has created a fragmented media environment, presenting a massive obstacle to reaching the population at large.

On the positive side, this new media environment allows companies and organizations to deploy high-precision campaigns, efficiently and effectively reaching their targeted audiences. The advancement of metrics and the technology to leverage them creates many opportunities for the future. (However, it is imperative that the industry continues to invest in media analysis to build out effective strategies.)

On the negative side, increased competition for attention and algorithms targeting small, niche audiences have made it challenging for anyone to reach larger, broader audiences. At the same time, the current digital media environment has made it easier for organizations, businesses and people with anti-farming or competing agendas tools to spread misinformation and disinformation about the industry.

I set out not only to meet journalists and communicators telling agriculture’s story around the world but also to connect with farmers who have carved out niches as media champions of agriculture in different parts of the globe.

Through my study and travels, I gained a broader understanding of what was happening in the minds of storytellers and the public, as well as the measures needed to increase both the quantity and quality of agricultural media coverage.

Reporters, storytellers, journalists, and media professionals must be regarded in the same way as the public. Studies have shown that people living in urban settings are often as many as three generations removed from agriculture and rural life. This has created a significant knowledge gap.

In response, educational initiatives have been launched to bridge that gap. However, the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity¹ argues that there is still much work to be done (CCFI 2024).

Early in my study, I frequently encountered the issue of fragmented audiences when looking for solutions to engage large groups.

At the same time, content creators, journalists, and storytellers are also consumers. In their story pitch meetings or brainstorming sessions, they draw on experiences and perspectives shaped by their daily lives in urban environments.

Consider this: what if a "mainstream" reporter passed a grain field every day on their way to work? Seeing that field daily would likely influence their thoughts. Similarly, if they walked through a mall and saw TV ads or an ad stand promoting environmental production standards in Canadian dairy?

In comparison, a rural journalist who drives by farms and speaks with people directly involved in the industry on a daily basis is much more likely to write agriculture-related on a much more frequent basis, because it is top of mind.

In both of these scenarios, journalists are being influenced by their surroundings and communities.

This premise led me to a simple solution: agriculture needs to be where the media are in order to get its message across. Too often, in agriculture, we try to bring media to the industry, urging them to attend events, visit websites, or engage with social media channels, which usually has limited to mixed results.

This focus on understanding the media landscape and the impact of media on agriculture will resonate most with journalists, agriculture communications professionals and advocates,² and farmers and ranchers. All are central to improving how agriculture engages with news media and how the media covers agricultural topics.

1. **Journalists** – Journalists, whether they work in broadcast or print, are often like the general public, many being three to four generations removed from the farm. This distance from agriculture means that agricultural topics are not top of mind or fully understood. It is essential that journalists understand the importance of agriculture and food production coverage, and cultivate relationships with agriculture champions. Additionally, helping journalists understand how their words impact the mental health of farmers is crucial to fostering more compassionate and informed reporting.

¹ The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI) is a not-for-profit charitable organization whose members and partners represent the diversity of today's food system — from farmers, ranchers, and food companies to universities, non-governmental organizations, restaurants, retailers, food processors, financial institutions, seed companies, and transportation providers.

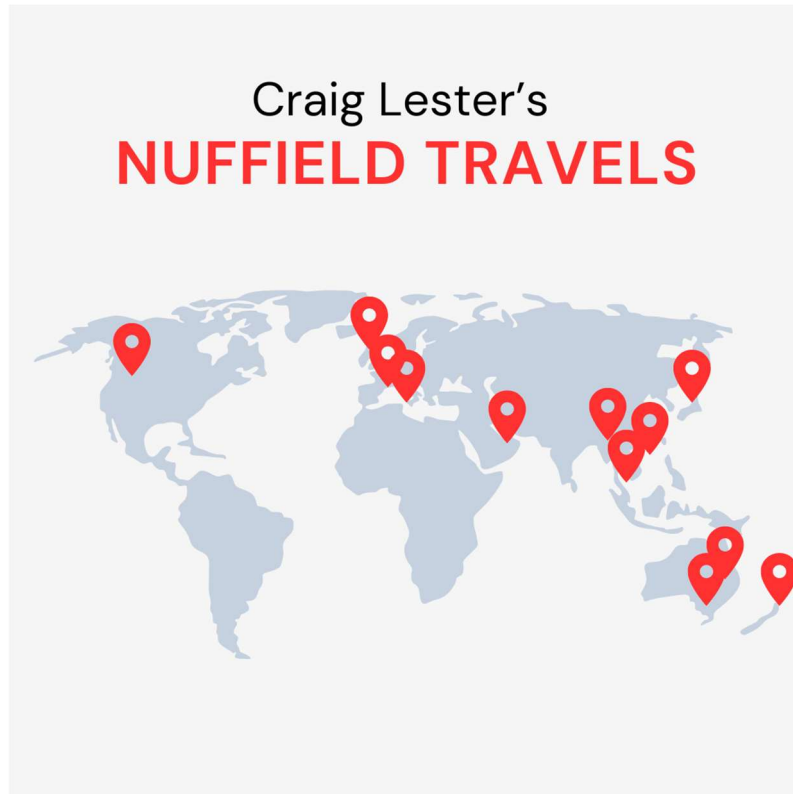
²An Advocate is a person advocates for agriculture.

2. **Agricultural Communication Professionals and Thought Leaders** – Limited time, resources, and people, combined with an exponential increase in competition for attention, make it increasingly difficult for most communication tactics to stand out in traditional media. It's imperative to identify and cultivate media champions within these organizations who can effectively advocate for agricultural coverage.
3. **Farmers and Ranchers** – I've heard from many farmers and ranchers who want to better understand the processes that take place in newsrooms and how stories are developed. This would allow farmers to better understand how to forge meaningful connections with media, and work with journalists who may have a preconceived agenda or narrative prior to hearing the farmer's story. Additionally, important research out of the University College of Dublin, discussed later in the report, argues that we need to better understand how media coverage affects the mental health of farmers. This is imperative to improve the livelihoods of everyone who produces food as well build a relationship of trust and honesty with the media and consumers.

Providing better support through investment, exposure and training, we can work together to help to overcome challenges and bridge the knowledge gap between agriculture and the media and consumers, fostering better communication and understanding on all sides.

1.1 Travel Summary

During my Nuffield studies, I travelled to 14 different countries meeting countless people and stopping at dozens of media, agriculture and agri-tourism stops.



United Arab Emirates

Destinations: Dubai, Alin, Abu Dhabi

- A pre-Contemporary Scholars Conference trip to the UAE to attend Gulfood Food and Beverage Expo, one of the world's largest food and beverage events. I participated in the event to see how agriculture was being shared through the food lens. While in-attendance I attended a conference dedicated to the topic of sustainable food production, which brought together speakers and media from around the globe.
- A visit to the Reuters bureau in Dubai to discuss mainstream coverage of agriculture proved to be fruitful. Talking to them about their coverage of agricultural topics showed that innovation was a common thread in why journalists in their newsroom chose to cover agriculture and food production topics.
- A trip to National Dairy Farm between Dubai and Abu Dhabi allowed me to see firsthand the efforts required to run a major dairy operation in a harsh desert environment in the Middle East. The trip was made possible by the team at Alltech.

Canada

Destinations: Vancouver

- The seven-day Contemporary Scholars Conference (CSC) proved to be a whirlwind learning experience, hearing from experts from a wide-range of backgrounds and meeting fellow scholars from around the globe. A truly empowering and inspiring experience.

Japan

Destination: Tokyo

- A visit to the Isonuma Milk Farm and an indepth discussion with the owner, whose family had owned the farm for 350 years, helped shape my definition of sustainability and showed me what a champion of agriculture looks like. The stop was very empowering and set the stage for my entire Nuffield journey.
- A stop at the Japan Agriculture News allowed me to see how a properly funded media outlet, which invests in people instead of cutting back human resources, can create a healthy, sustainable media outlet that delivers in-depth, consistent content to its audience.
- During my visit, I also had a chance to visit various grocery and high-end food stores, which allowed me to see the unique relationship the Japanese culture has with its food. A unique stop at a shop dedicated to a rotating promotion of all the agricultural producing regions in the country was also very enlightening.

Vietnam

Destinations: Hanoi, Hoi An, Ho Chi Minh

- A tour through Vietnam allowed me to see multiple different agri-tourism operations and grocery stores. In the case of the agri-tourism operations, I was able to see firsthand how agri-tourism operations work, how they market themselves and communicate the farm-to-fork experience. Stopping in a local grocery store provided an opportunity to do an on-going comparison on how retailers are connecting where their food is produced.

Cambodia

Destinations: Phnom Penh, Siem Reap

- Much like Cambodia, my tour through Vietnam included many stops at agri-tourism operations, which gave me an opportunity to further learn about the power the story of producing of food has on bringing people to farms.

Thailand

Destinations: Bangkok and surrounding area

- A stop at a dairy farm just outside of Bangkok was a humbling experience as I was given a new definition of what poverty looks like. Two farmers, elderly in age, competing against diseases in their dairy herd, predators such as cobras, very little in government support, stuck in a tiered production system that does not let small operators grow and competition in the form of corporate large dairies, barely able to stay afloat.
- A cut flower farm gave me a taste of different types of agriculture away from traditional crop and meat production. It was fascinating to see a cut flower farm that was countless acres of fenced off flowers.
- Once again there was no shortage of opportunity to visit agri-tourism operations, particular markets, including Damnoen Saduak Floating Market and Maeklong Railway Market. Meeting with producers and people who are selling locally produced food and learning what brings both local and tourists to these markets.

Singapore

- Singapore was only a 24-hour stop between Thailand and New Zealand, however, it was insightful with stops at the Lau Pa Sat Market and Newton Food Centre, both of which are tourist stops serving up a wide range of cuisine. A perfect example of how powerful food is in bringing people together and attracting them to a location/event. The Newton Food Centre was also a movie location for the Hollywood movie Crazy Rich Asians. It allowed me time to reflect on how food is used as a relatable theme in many stories.

New Zealand

Destinations: Auckland, Wellington

- Auckland provided an opportunity to visit with Beef and Lamb New Zealand to talk about their efforts to communicate the practices of livestock producers. My timing was impeccable as my visit coincided with the launch of their 2023 ambassador campaign featuring an internationally recognized rugby star. I was able to watch them film a promotional interview that supported the launch of the video.
 - The restaurant and kitchen where the interview was filmed was unique in that it served as a way for various groups to host cooking classes and create a true learning environment with both chefs, immigrants and consumers teaching each other how to prepare beef and lamb.

- A meeting with New Zealand Nuffield Scholar Daniel Eb proved to be very insightful. We discussed our studies, and his 2022 report, *The Home Paddock*.³ The biggest takeaway from his report was the importance of supporting farmers within close proximity to urban centres making it easier for media to access agriculture champions.
- A 12-hour train ride from Auckland to Wellington allowed me to take in the countryside and see many different farms during the train ride.
- A stop at Country Calendar in Wellington proved to be very fruitful. Seeing the inner workings of a show that has been on the air for 57 years and has been that is still wildly popular with the general public gave me insight into the importance of research, storytelling and engaging the general public.

Australia

Destinations: Brisbane, Toowoomba (Queensland), Tasmania, Melbourne (Victoria).

- A whirlwind week and a half trip to Australia started with four days in central Queensland. Thanks to some fellow radio journalists at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) I was able to make a number of stops at farming operations in the area.
 - Mort & Co.'s Grassdale Feedlot - A tour of Australia's largest private feedlot as well as an interview with Mort & Co.'s communications manager at their administration office in Toowoomba. Mort & Co. is one of Australia's largest grain-fed cattle producers. Grassdale which also has frequent tours and has expanded into several value added processes to its operation including producing fertilizer from manure, as well a plant that handles cotton dehulling and deoiling to value add their crop production division.
 - A tour of the Dalby regional saleyard - I learned about how a traditional livestock sales operation encourages and promotes agriculture through its agri-tourism programs.
 - Craig Baillie and his team at the University of Southern Queensland, where they have placed food science and wine science in the agriculture faculty (brilliant) in the newly created agriculture and environment school.
 - The meetings also included a sit down with James Maclean, a cattle trader from Allied Beef, James Cochrane, a grain trader with Fox Commodities, the managers

³ You can learn more about Daniel's perspective on food systems transformation by reading his report: Eb, D. (2022). *The Home Paddock: A strategy for values-led redesign of the domestic food system*. In *ruralleaders.co.nz*. Nuffield New Zealand. https://ruralleaders.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Home-Paddock_Nuffield-NZ-2021_Daniel-Eb.pdf

and Communication Manager, Marita Ramia, of Grassdale, Andrew Short from Pacific Seeds, David Cussons of Cussons Media, who is also Nuffield Australia scholar from 2009.

- The cherry on top of this very busy stop was being on-air during ABC's Country Hour, which is broadcast across the state, where Arlie and I spent time talking about my Nuffield study and agriculture in Canada, particularly around cattle and irrigation.
- The first day of my Tasmanian experience included a stop at the Copping Farmers' market, a chance to see all of the unique products the local producers and artisans were selling, also, got to see fellow 2023 Nuffield scholar Iain Field in his element selling his farm's great cheese.
- A stop at the University of Tasmania is where I learned about when I learned about conflict and communication strategy modelling from Corrine and Scott Condie. This modelling allows communication professionals to predict how news is going to be received by the general public and the media.
- A fun day in Melbourne as Nuffield Australia scholar Georgia Beattie toured me around two farms, one of which is her organic mushroom farm, Bulla Park, the largest organic mushroom producer in Australia. Having only limited knowledge about how mushrooms are grown, it was awesome to not only learn, but also to see an operation where they are produced for grocery stores, such as Cole's and Woolworths. It was interesting to note that many of the employees of Bulla Park have an IT background.
- Georgia also took me to meet with 2019 Nuffield scholar Natasha Shields, owner of Peninsula Fresh Organics - an organic vegetable farm that is the only operation that sells organic broccolini in the country. It also has many other vegetable products and also has its own store front nearby! It made for some great conversation in regards as to how to engage customers

Italy

Destinations: Rome

- A last second trip to Rome allowed me to attend the fifty-first plenary session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS51).⁴ Attending the event allowed me to see first hand how food and agriculture policy is discussed at the international level. It also allowed me to network and learn about communication and advocating for agriculture on the global stage.

Ireland

⁴ The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is an intergovernmental body within the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It is the "*foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform in the field of food security and nutrition bringing together representatives from governments, UN agencies, civil society, indigenous people, financial and research institutions, philanthropic foundations, and the private sector.*" You can learn more about it here: <https://www.fao.org/cfs/en/>

Destinations: Dublin, Cork

- My friend and colleague Claire McCormick organized an incredible day filled with discussion with her, Dr. Karina Pierce (Nuffield Ireland scholar), Dr. Patrick Wall, PhD student Zhaoshuo Yu, and Dr. Tomas Russell. Conversation included the changing media landscape, "Food First Strategies" and how farmers are in the health business. We also learned about the importance of nutrition at the molecular level, broke down the meanings of misinformation, disinformation and malinformation, we delved deep into the sociology of farmers, especially around their 'attachment to place', comfort levels around being interviewed by ag journalists vs. mainstream journalists, the work being done here into farmer mental health and the effect media coverage has on it.
- A two day stay at a dairy near Cork, Ireland, owned by Pete and Paula Hynes was a very rewarding experience. Being able to hear their story, while working alongside them on their dairy farm and watching them show their award winning dairy cows at a local agriculture show in Clonakilty on the southern coast. Pete and Paula are unique in that on top of running the dairy and showing cows with their daughters they also write weekly articles for the two biggest mainstream papers in Ireland, the Irish Independent and Irish Examiner respectively They even had Rick Steves tours stop at their farm weekly prior to the pandemic. Countless number of tourists have learned where their food comes from the Hynes.

Northern Ireland

Destinations: Belfast

- Connecting with fellow agriculture journalist Rachel Martin allowed for several days of chatting about journalism practices and engaging our audiences both in mainstream and agriculture media. Martin is the editor of the farm news section of a major mainstream newspaper, Irish Examiner, in Ireland.
- A dinner at one of the oldest pubs in Belfast with agriculture journalists and communicators from the All-Ireland Guild of Agricultural Journalists allowed for plenty discussion on agriculture and mainstream news practices.
- Farm stops, which included a beef producer, in Northern Ireland provided insight into what goes into producing food in this region.

England

Destinations: Bristol

- I was fortunate enough to meet with Dimitri Houtart who at the time was BBC's Rural Affairs Champion. Aside from overseeing programs like Farming Today, and the Food Program and several others, he also acts as advisor on all content that involves rural

affairs and agricultural content across the BBC network and other platforms including documentaries, podcasts etc. The position he holds is unique in itself and has given me insight and ideas on opportunities in media moving forward.

Switzerland

Destinations: Interlaken, Central Switzerland

- Attended the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists World Congress networked with countless agricultural journalists from around the world. represented the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation (CFWF) at the Executive Meetings. I also had the opportunity to visit various farms, food processors and ag education centres. A very enriching experience and an excellent way to exercise the leadership skills I have acquired throughout my Nuffield experience

2.0 The State of Affairs in Canada - Media, Audiences and Public Trust

Building up agriculture's prominence amongst journalists, influencers, and storytellers seems like a simple task. However, the issue is compounded by a perfect storm affecting the media on multiple fronts:

Newsrooms across the country are shrinking and local news is disappearing from communities across the country (Lindgren and Corbett, 2025; MacDonald and MacDonald, 2025); audiences are increasingly fragmented (CFFI, 2023), the news media landscape is fractured (Allsop, 2024) and increasingly polarized (Lempinen, 2025) while attention spans have been commoditized (Barrett, 2018); meanwhile mistrust in the media has never been higher (Newman et al., 2020; Brin and Charlton, 2022), as misinformation has turned the internet battleground (Lempinen, 2024).

The media should be a reflection of society. The goal of any journalist is to tell the stories that affect people every day. Everyone eats multiple times a day, everyday of their life, meaning that agriculture has a direct and indirect impact on the lives of the world's entire population. Policy, food security, food safety, and the environment is subject matter that media already have the media's attention.

2.1 The Decline of the Canadian Newsroom

When it comes to the so-called "mainstream" or "traditional" media, long gone are the days when much of the country would turn on the 6 and 11 o'clock newscasts to learn about the happenings of the day. The way the news is consumed is evolving rapidly due to the expansion of digital platforms, with more Canadians turning to free news sources through social media and online searches (Newman, 2020).

Newsrooms are being hacked and slashed to the bone (MacDonald and MacDonald, 2025). Newsroom jobs that used to be done by three people are now often being carried out by one. As the large media companies continue to cut back on jobs and resources, a casualty is beat reporting. Beat reporting involves assigning a reporter to cover a specific topic. Instead, many reporters are now general assignment reporters, covering the news of the day, whatever it may be. In some instances, news has been centralized in large urban centres like Vancouver and Toronto, with the staff in those cities expected to cover stories in communities they've never been to nor fully understand the issues affecting them.

Traditional media companies have struggled to keep up with consumer viewing and listening trends and technology, constantly pivoting to try and keep loyal listeners while building the overall audience.

This may be best reflected in the 2024 Reuters Institute Digital News Report⁵ which indicates that traditional media companies in Canada continue to struggle post COVID pandemic, as social media news consumption increases (driven by YouTube and Facebook) even though traditional media, and especially print news, are considered far more reliable (Newman, 2024).

This is further backed up by two Canadian studies. The News Deprivation study⁶ from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, delves deep into the decline of traditional media. Of note, it says we have seen a net loss of 11 percent of print media outlets (newspapers and online) and the net closure of nine percent of private radio and TV stations across the country (MacDonald and MacDonald, 2025).

According to the report, 2.5 million Canadians, the equivalent of seven percent of the population, live in a postal code with only one or no local news outlets. This is up from three percent a decade and a half ago. It further states, it's common for most Canadians to have *some* local news coverage but are in a constant state of news deprivation (MacDonald and MacDonald, 2025).

⁵The Reuters Institute's annual Digital News Report is a comprehensive survey of global online news consumption habits across numerous markets, highlighting key trends in how people access, engage with, and feel about news. These reports consistently track the evolving digital news landscape, including the rise of different platforms, shifts in trust, and the public's willingness to pay for online journalism. Learn more about it here: [Digital News Report 2024 | Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](https://www.reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report-2024)

Newman, N. (2024). Reuters Institute Digital News Report: Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions. In <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk>. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://doi.org/10.60625/risj-vy6n-4v57>

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⁶ Macdonald, D., & Macdonald, S. (2025). News deprivation: Canadian communities striving for local news. In www.policyalternatives.ca. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/news-deprivation-2.pdf>

This is especially true for smaller communities. The Local News Research Project,⁷ a joint initiative between Toronto Metropolitan University's School of Journalism and University of British Columbia's SpICE Lab, (Spatial Information for Community Mapping) showed that between 2008 and February 1, 2025:

- 529 local news outlets closed in 351 communities across Canada
 - 403 closings were community newspapers, which publish fewer than five times per week.
 - 111 were local community newspapers that closed after they were merged with other newspapers to produce regional publications (Lindgren and Corbett, 2025).

There is a perfect storm within the mainstream media at the moment, from cutbacks in newsroom staff and resources, which are impacting reporters ability to cover events. All these media cuts have decimated small-town newsrooms, be it radio, television, or print. This means the stories of farmers, agriculture, and ag-adjacent businesses in these communities largely go untold until there is a crisis.

As a result, gone are the days when you would see daily or weekly coverage in "Farm Reports" in news reports. The beat writers, journalists and feature producers don't exist anymore, lost in the corporate cutbacks I talked about above.

Major media companies have struggled to keep up with consumer viewing and listening trends and technology, constantly pivoting to try and keep loyal listeners while building the overall audience.

Here are just a few headlines from Canadian media outlets highlighting the issue:

Corus continues focus on cost-cutting, sustainability

*"Corus Entertainment expects to have completed a workforce reduction of 800 positions or 25% of full-time staff by the end of August as it continues to look for operational efficiencies"*⁸ (Thiessen, 2024b).

Most noon, weekend local CTV newscasts cancelled as part of cuts at Bell Media

*"Almost all local noon and weekend newscasts on CTV will come to an end as part of a massive workforce reduction at Bell announced today that will see 4,800 staff positions eliminated, less than 10% of those within the Bell Media division"*⁹ (Theissen, 2024a)

⁷ Lindgren, April and Corbett, Jon. (2025). Local News Map Data: February 1, 2025. Local News Research Project. <http://localnewsresearchproject.ca/category/local-news-map-data>

⁸ Thiessen, C. (2024b, July 15). Corus continues focus on cost-cutting, sustainability. *Broadcast Dialogue*. <https://broadcastdialogue.com/corus-continues-focus-on-cost-cutting-sustainability/>

⁹ Thiessen, C. (2024a, February 8). Most noon, weekend CTV newscasts cancelled as part of cuts at Bell Media. *Broadcast Dialogue*. <https://broadcastdialogue.com/most-noon-local-ctv-newscasts-cancelled-as-part-of-cuts-at-bell-media/>

Bell to cut 4.8K jobs, sell 45 radio stations in major shake-up

“Bell Media is ending multiple television newscasts and making other programming cuts after its parent company announced widespread layoffs and the sale of 45 of its 103 regional radio stations”¹⁰ (The Canadian Press, 2024).

2.3.4 SPOTLIGHT: Japan Agriculture News



Nestled in the Taito City area of Tokyo is the Japan Agri-News, a print publication that has a circulation of 300,000 people.

One of the most impressive things about this newspaper was the size of its newsroom, production, and support staff. As shown in the picture, there was row after row of office cubicles, indicating a massive team. My visit to the newsroom fell on the weekend, which meant there would be a smaller team on

hand. On this day, about 12 people had gathered for a story idea meeting.

As highlighted in the background, in comparison, a major market newsroom in Canada today would be fortunate to have 12 people in a story idea meeting during the weekday when everyone was working.

The support behind this newsroom was impressive. It showed that it is possible to build and maintain a media business with a healthy, complemented team if the owners have a strong business plan, good management, and the proper support.

The owners of Japan Agri-News clearly demonstrate an understanding of the importance of investing in people. More people mean a higher quality of journalism and story-telling and a higher quantity of content.

¹⁰ The Canadian Press. (2024, February 9). Bell to cut 4.8K jobs, sell 45 radio stations in major shake-up. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/10280833/bell-layoffs-january-2024/>

2.1.1 How are Canadians getting their news?

To better engage the public through the media, it's important to understand how and where people are getting their information.

The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity publishes an annual Public Trust Research Report that examines public trust in the agri-food system.

Among the survey findings in its ¹¹2023 Report was a detailed breakdown of how people find and consume information:

1. Search Engines (Google etc.)
2. Television
3. Facebook
4. YouTube
5. Radio
6. Instagram
7. TikTok
8. Print Media

2.1.2 SPOTLIGHT: Country Calendar New Zealand



For nearly 60 years, the Hyundai Country Calendar in New Zealand has been on the air on TVNZ.

For over half a century it has thrived as a rating leader. According to the staff at Country Calendar, It is the second highest-rated show in the country, right behind the news, with 600 – 700 thousand live viewers every Sunday night.

During the first month of the pandemic, that number rose to over a million viewers. For a country of about five million people, it's an incredible portion of the population to be engaged by the show. It has also grown its production schedule recently, going from 13 episodes in 2005 to 40 in 2016.

¹¹ Ipsos Public Affairs gathered the research for the 2023 report on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Integrity by interviewing 2,670 Canadians aged 18+ between July 10 and 24, 2023.

The key to longevity has been the research, storytelling, and themes that connect with urban and rural audiences.

Country Calendar connects with urban audiences through relatable themes, such as entrepreneurship, family, lifestyle, and navigating the ups and downs of organizations.

Country Calendar has a well-rounded production team. One of the positions that I found to be interesting was the researcher, who would work ahead to ensure that there was a sustainable list of stories that could be told for the year that was in production and beyond.

During my travels, I was fortunate enough to sit in their production office in Wellington, NZ and watch them edit one of the shows. During this time we talked about the themes and storytelling tools they use in creating the episodes, that make it the success it is.

This show is a notable example of how great story-telling and the use of common relatable themes can lead to bridging the gap between rural and urban audiences.

2.1.3 Canadians trust farmers more than they trust the media

Another challenge complicating the issue of reaching consumers through traditional media is the worldwide decline in public trust in news media, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer.¹²

For its 2024 report, it talked to 1,500 respondents in Canada and found that 55 percent of respondents in Canada believe journalists and reporters purposely try to mislead the public by knowingly making false or gross exaggerations. This is up five points from 2023. .

When it comes to overall trust in the media, the barometer indicates Canada sits with a score of 51, which is considered neutral, neither positive nor negative. Trust in journalists is at 58 in Canada, which is also neutral.

Globally, people in 15 of the 28 countries said they distrusted journalists and reporters.

It surveyed over 32,000 people in 28 countries worldwide annually.

This was further supported by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity's 2024 Public Trust Research report, in which only 5 percent of respondents gave media (journalists and news

¹² *The Edelman Trust Barometer, which was conducted between November 3 – 22, 2023 surveyed 1,500 respondents in Canada as part of a survey that involved over 32,000 in 28 countries.*

outlets) a rating of 9 - 10 for being honest about the food system. A very troubling number and shows a crumbling of trust within media.

Agriculture must understand these trust issues to make informed decisions about who tells its story.

In its ¹³2024 Report, respondents were asked when thinking of the Canadian food system, how would they rate their trust in the following groups?

Farmers were tops with 18% giving a 9 - 10 rating out of 10.

In the same survey respondents were also asked to indicate how well each of the following groups are doing in providing open and transparent and honest information about how your food is grown or produced so that you can make informed food choices.

Farmer were once again on top with 14% giving a 9 - 10 rating out of 10.

The report also identified the top five concerns of consumers:

1. Cost of Food 51%
2. Availability of Healthcare - 43%
3. Inflation - 42%
4. Health Care Costs - 38%
5. Availability of Healthy Food - 38%

¹⁴Research by the Canadian Cattle Association's Public & Stakeholder Engagement team in 2023 showed an increase in the number of Canadians who have excellent or very good opinions of beef farmers and ranchers.

Media research and analysis like this is critical to building communication strategies that resonate with most audience to reach urban audiences. It is imperative the industry continue to build on this research and surveying and share it for the benefit of the entire industry.

¹³ A national online survey was conducted from August 8 to 30, 2024th via Ipsos Public Affairs among a large representative sample of 2,852 Canadians aged 18+.

¹⁴ Canadian Cattle Association (2023) - Public & Stakeholder Engagement Program <https://www.cattle.ca/2023-annual-report/division-reports/public-stakeholder-engagement-program>

2.2.0 The Rural-Urban Divide

Although consumers appear to trust farmers, they are not well-understood. Indeed, the growing rural-urban divide has been well documented, discussed, and dissected for decades—and appears to be deepening (Savoie, 2021).¹⁵

A study by Nutrien in 2023¹⁶ explored the issue further by identifying the specific topics that caused the greatest difference in perception between farmers and consumers.

The four major areas where farmers and consumers have different perspectives included:

1. Environmental stewardship
2. Industry advancement
3. Social responsibility
4. Societal support for farmers

The survey also revealed that the level at which consumers truly understand agriculture is less than thought.

According to the report, one in three consumers claim to be knowledgeable about the agriculture industry.

However, results from seven sample questions within the study, which were part of a basic agriculture knowledge assessment, showed some troubling results. Only 22% got five or more answers correct, while only 1% got all seven correct.

These numbers underline the importance of finding ways to bridge the gap.

2.2.1 Where and How did the Divide all Begin?

Learning about how to bridge the divide starts with “*understanding*” what caused the divide. An in-depth coffee chat with Paul Newnham at Gulfood in Dubai, UAE provided some great insights.

Newnham, who is based out of Australia, is the coordinator for the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal 2 and the chair of Public Engagement Taskforce for the UN’s Food Systems Summit and vice chair of the Food System Champion Network.

¹⁵ Savoie, D. (2021, December 10). Canada’s rural-urban divide is getting deeper, and that hurts all Canadians. *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-canadas-rural-urban-divide-is-getting-deeper-and-that-hurts-all/>

¹⁶ Bridging the Agriculture Perception Divide was a survey carried out in the Spring of 2023 involving 604 crop farmers and 3,003 consumers in North America (53 % from the US, 47 % in Canada.) (Seitz & Nutrien, 2023).

“If we look back to the Green Revolution, also known as the Third Agricultural Revolution, which began in the early 20th century and stretched until the late 1980s, we saw a scale-up in production. It was a time when the volume of crops being produced was dramatically increased,” says Newnham.

As agriculture production in developing countries became more efficient and technologically advanced, the agriculture community did not keep up with sharing the story of this evolution, adding to the disconnect.

This has been compounded by the layers of separation between farmers and the consumer brought on by growing urban centres, layers of food processing and socio-economic factors.

2.2.2 Why There Remains a Gulf

2.2.3 Disconnect

As Markus Rediger, who worked for the Agriculture Information Centre in Switzerland for years, points out, two of the reasons behind the disconnect between the public and agriculture are that many consumers in developed countries have never truly experienced food security issues and that there are many levels of processing between the farm and the consumer.

Food is taken for granted. Consumers see the grocery store shelves packed with goods, so they do not think about it much beyond the price, and what they need to make dinner tonight.

When store shelves were a little bare during the pandemic, it resulted in conversation and media coverage because there was a crisis. Think about developing countries where grocery store shelves regularly sit empty. Do you think food is at the top of minds there, and maybe finding other sources if they can't get the bare necessities needed for survival?

While touring a grocery store in Cambodia, it became clear that certain shelves were seldom stocked. It was in that moment that I made the connection that the lack of food security increases the likelihood that food and where it comes will be more top of mind and least likely to be taken for granted.

The number of processing levels between when the farmers harvest their crops or their herd, to when it lands on grocery store shelves or the dinner plate has grown exponentially over the past century.

Rediger says this degree of separation has ultimately added to the divide between consumer and farmer. As a result, food is taken for granted and is not top of mind in a world where there is an escalating competition for attention, which is amplified in urban centres.

2.2.4 Audience Fragmentation

With the rapid growth of the number of social media and digital platforms the ability cut through the noise, grab and hold someone's attention has become increasingly difficult. Fragmentation of audiences across the many different traditional and digital platforms.

This is outlined well by Wikipedia in its description and explanation of the current state of audience fragmentation and in the study *The Dynamics of Audience Fragmentation: Public Attention in an Age of Digital Media* (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012)

Attention is scarce and highly contended. This means that hitting a vast audience requires smart tactics, not just good stories. Platforms and media formats actively compete to hook people with sensational or personalized content, as a result even strong messaging can be drowned out by audience fatigue or algorithmic filtering.

The rapid expansion of these platforms and algorithmic filtering allows for misinformation & disinformation to spread once it is posted online and can make it hard to correct the information in the public domain once it is out.

To reach people, ag storytelling must be highly targeted, use the right platforms, and respect people's attention rhythms.

Why is this important to media coverage? To better engage consumer audiences about the origins of their food, we need to do a better job understanding what fuels this divide, which these two things do.

2.2.4 SPOTLIGHT: Swiss Farms Welcome You

Swiss Farms Welcome You is a campaign at the Agriculture Information Centre in Switzerland to engage the general population to learn more about where their food comes from. Every year, the organization releases promotional material, including posters, to help educate consumers about where their food comes from. In the early years, celebrities such as world-famous F-1 driver Michael Schumacher were plastered across the banners, each with their own clever saying to catch the eye of anyone who saw it. It was a great example of using the intersection between celebrity, sport and agriculture to get its point across. The campaign was so successful that it has carried on for years. It now showcases different farm animals on the promotional material.

2.3.0 - Misinformation, Disinformation and Malinformation

We live in an age where the spread of information has evolved in both positive and negative ways. Information can spread with the push of a button, allowing for knowledge sharing and transfer like never before. At the same time, this has fueled the spread of misinformation,

unsourced content, AI-generated distortions of original messages, and search engine algorithms that show people what aligns with their beliefs and search habits.

Misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation are terms used to describe different types of false or misleading information, each with distinct characteristics:

- **Misinformation:** This refers to false or inaccurate information shared without the intent to deceive. Individuals may unknowingly spread misinformation, believing it to be true. For example, sharing a news story without verifying its authenticity can contribute to the spread of misinformation.
 - [britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com)
- **Disinformation:** This involves deliberately false information spread with the intent to mislead or deceive others. Disinformation campaigns are often orchestrated to manipulate public opinion or obscure the truth. An example includes the deliberate creation and dissemination of fake news stories to influence elections.
 - [britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com)
- **Malinformation:** This pertains to factual information shared with the intent to harm, often by taking information out of context or by emphasizing certain details to mislead. For instance, releasing private information about an individual to damage their reputation is considered malinformation.
 - [humanrights.ca](https://www.humanrights.ca)
- **Contextomy:** Involves taking a piece of information or a statement from a larger context and presenting it in isolation, which can distort its intended meaning. Although the information is still true in itself, removing it from the broader context can create a misleading or incomplete impression.
 - <https://thefallacyfiles.org/glossary>
- **Quoting out of context** is a broader term that involves a similar idea—when someone uses part of a statement or fact that, in isolation, could lead to a different interpretation than it would have in its full context. The intent behind this could be unintentional, or someone might not realize the importance of the surrounding context.
 - **"The Elements of Reasoning"** by Ronald Munson

Understanding these distinctions is crucial for critically evaluating information and mitigating the impact of false or misleading content.

Misinformation is probably the most commonly talked about, as a lack of understanding can lead to a story that is not factually correct.

One concept that is often overlooked is contextomy. An example of this occurs when a reporter at a radio station or television news program tells a story based on a single moment in time, with very limited space to convey the message. For instance, radio stories can range from as brief as 20 seconds to a minute long, TV news packages are longer, but only by a minute at most. In such cases, the complexity of topics like agriculture is often oversimplified, which can result in important details being left out or lost in the story.

Agriculture is a complex industry, one that often needs to be simplified for audiences with limited to no knowledge of it, and to fit the allotted time frames of the news reports. Providing enough context to the stories and issues within the industry is severely crippled by these formats.

For example, the drought that affected western Canadian growers at the beginning of the 2024 planting season made the rounds of traditional media. The stories often focused on the conditions at that moment, the consequences of little to no precipitation, and possibly some background on the struggle the grower had in the previous year or years. While this initial coverage is fine, it often ends there— with little to no follow-up stories or ongoing coverage. Unlike the issues related to government policy, healthcare delivery, or emergency services, which get multiple news cycles.

3.0.0 - Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The Challenge for Agriculture in Traditional Media

Whether it's the signs you pass on the street, the ads on a building, or the stories you see in the news or on your phone, it all makes up the information landscape we live in. But for people in urban centres, that landscape looks a lot different than it does in rural communities. The day-to-day reminders of where food comes from — the fields, the cattle, the equipment — just aren't there. That absence plays a big role in how people see agriculture, or more often, how they don't see it at all.

This disconnect stretches beyond city streets and into the newsrooms where decisions are made about what stories get covered. Agriculture often gets left out of that conversation unless it's tied to a crisis — something that makes people pay attention, like food shortages, price spikes, or trade issues. The challenge is making agriculture part of the story *before* there's a problem. To do that, we need to understand how people think — not just as consumers, but as citizens — and find ways to bring the farm back into focus.

3.1.0 Urban Information Landscapes

Whether we are talking about signs on the side of the road, signs in a grocery store or mall, stories in a newscast, shows on TV connecting food to agriculture or on social and digital media it is all part of an information landscape.

Far removed from the rural environment, which would have visual surroundings such as farms with crops and livestock, an urban centre would not have the same attributes that would remind people of where their food came from every day.

An Urban Information landscape is probably best exemplified in Tokyo's famous Shibuya Crossing.



Established in 1885,¹⁷ Shibuya Scramble Crossing is one of the world's busiest pedestrian crossings. It's estimated upwards of 2,500 people scramble to cross this intersection every time the traffic lights turn red. On average, 1.5 million people cross here every week. Businesses and organizations use this prime real estate to advertise their brands on the many buildings situated at this intersection. It's comparable to Times Square in New York.

My visit to Shibuya Scramble may have been as a tourist sightseeing excursion during my Nuffield studies, however, it was also a time when I had one of the biggest epiphanies of my travels.

The Urban Information Landscape and all of the challenges and opportunities that it presents for agriculture.

3.1.1 Urban Information Landscapes Influencing Traditional Media

Where do reporters get their story ideas?

In short, through social media, government news conferences, contacts, what they see everyday, and other communication channels and sources that they have cultivated themselves.

Delving in the mindset of many mainstream reporters Many mainstream reporters need to be looked at in the same light as the public when it comes to the awareness gap between the farm and the urban population so that when they sit down in their story pitch meetings or are searching for something to cover, agricultural story ideas emerge quickly and easily on their

¹⁷ Japan National Tourism Organization. n.d. "Shibuya Crossing | Travel Japan - Japan National Tourism Organization (Official Site)." Travel Japan. <https://www.japan.travel/en/spot/2177/>.

minds (outside of the traditional, planting and harvest stories that are routinely covered annually.)

Why? Because they rarely see agriculture or food production during their day.

The disconnect between urban and rural, and the growing separation between agriculture and food, has reached a point where conversations in urban media about how food is grown and produced are few and far between and if it does happen, the odds of the conversation continuing beyond newscycle is not likely.

“Local” is an important word in all newsrooms. Journalists focus on issues that their audiences face everyday. Traffic accidents, municipal politics, housing prices, crime and the weather are amongst the issues that dominate the headlines.

This means industries such as agriculture that are mostly situated outside of their media outlet’s prime audience do not receive the same amount of attention.

Food is something everyone on the planet has in common. Yet, the disconnect between the farm and the food on grocery store shelves is significant — it often takes a major issue or controversy to break through the noise and capture attention.

3.2.0 Crisis Coverage

Mainstream news outlets are drawn to cover crises. It’s what drives ratings and is commonly seen as the biggest way to draw consumers’ attention to their content, be it digital, TV, radio or print.

There’s a reason “if it bleeds, it leads” is a common cliché used in newsrooms.

Over time, there have been several different crises that the mainstream has covered.

In recent years, there has been a focus on agriculture coverage.

In my experience, nearly all mainstream agricultural coverage can be covered under four crisis categories.

- Climate/Weather
- Policy
- Food Security
- Food Transparency

Climate / Weather – Climate change has become a central focal point in the media now for several years.

When it comes to issues such as weather, climate change and how they impact farms, coverage is sporadic and needs to be more routine to show patterns and help educate the audience about the ongoing struggles, as well as the successes farmers can see during any given growing season. This provides much-needed context.

Policy - The recent situation around tariffs from the United States in 2024 and 2025 and the extensive coverage it received in media has shown how this crisis brings agriculture and food to the surface. Secondary issues like interprovincial trade barriers and buying local have highlighted the news headlines and created multiple news cycles of coverages.

Food Security –While this issue has been commonplace in many parts of the developing world for centuries, it is something we take for granted here - meaning it is not top of mind for many journalists. However, during the pandemic when there were images of empty shelves in grocery stores, suddenly it was a big issue and it received a lot of media coverage. The issue was local and eye-level for urban consumers.

Food Safety and Transparency – One of the longest-running crises that has received coverage in the media for decades is food transparency. You might recognize it as food recalls, and it has included coverage through various media of grocery pricing issues and food scares.

Examples include the BSE crisis, which crippled the Canadian beef sector, and the salmonella contamination at Lakeside Packers in Brooks, Alberta, or grocery store affordability issues that have made headlines since 2023.

It needs to be stressed that these stories need to connect with consumers. The average listener of a mainstream news story is not going to connect with a drought story, because it is not relatable to them. In the case of the drought the connection needs to be made the effect a drought can impact them. For example a severe drought can result in an increase in food prices. By telling a story that relates back to the listeners we create a connection as to why they should care.

3.3.0 Consumer vs. Citizen

When breaking down what defines an audience, there needs to be consideration of the thought processes of audiences.

To engage audiences sustainably over the long term, it is imperative to understand the people within that audience, which requires understanding how people think and figuring out what's important to them. There is often mixed messaging when it comes to what people want, so it's important to recognize that people are complex, with conflicting opinions and interests.

Schweizer Bauernverband, also known as the Swiss Farmers Union, has broken down people's mindset when it comes to agriculture and food with an excellent quote:

“Within each person is a mindset based on beliefs based as a consumer and as a citizen.”

During the 2024 IFAJ World Congress in Interlaken, Switzerland, they showed beliefs and opinions about agricultural practices differ whether they think as citizens or consumers.

A citizen wants biodiversity, food security, and high growing standards, while the consumer prioritize food, low prices, and choice.

In some ways, these are in contrast, and other ways, they go hand-in-hand. It comes down to perspective and situation; therein lies the challenge and opportunity.

Engaging people as both citizens and consumers require great care and consideration, especially given the sophistication of the food system and the steps that happen from farm to plate.

It's imperative to keep this in mind when engaging people with agriculture's story.

3.3.1 SPOTLIGHT: Canadian Cattle Association

The Canadian Cattle Association stakeholder engagement team has succeeded in this field and now has regular influencer tours, offering genuine farm-to-fork experience and providing insight into what consumers are thinking.

The CCA also attracted media attention with its 'Guardians of the Grasslands' game, used to educate students in ten provinces from Grades 7-12.

A ¹⁸documentary called 'Reduce, Reuse, Ruminare' which looked at the role of cattle in upcycling food waste was premiered at several universities across the country.

This was paired with an influencer campaign on social media, where lifestyle and food enthusiasts visited farms and ranches to learn how cattle transform inedible or unwanted items that people refuse to eat into tasty and nutritious beef.

This a great example of an initiative that had a great strategy, which made sure it got out of the agricultural 'echo chamber' and engaged consumers in Canada's most populated regions.

¹⁸ ***Reduce, Reuse, Ruminare*** is a short documentary that highlights the amazing upcycling ability of cattle and their important role in diverting food loss and waste.

<https://reducereuseruminare.ca/>

4.0.0 - Creating Space for Agriculture in Mainstream Media

There has never been more opportunity for agriculture to tell its story. From farmers to organizations to the people working in media, there are countless ways to connect with consumers and the general public. But it takes more than good intentions — it takes time, headspace, and a clear plan to make sure those stories actually get told.

The tools are there. Social media, mainstream news, direct engagement with the public — they all create opportunities to close the gap between food and the farm. But to make the most of them, we need the right people stepping forward, the right support behind them, and the awareness to meet people where they are.

4.1.0 Farmer Champions

The importance of farmer champions cannot be overstated. Farmers who are keen to tell their story must be properly supported and equipped to communicate their stories.

This support must come from organizations and companies in the form of creating time and headspace and training. It also needs to be mentioned, that not all farmers want to be spokespeople for the industry, they just want to do the work.

The time and headspace of producers needs to be respected, allowing the time and space to not only to operate their farms, but also have time for their families. At the same time, media professionals need greater exposure and empathy to agriculture to improve coverage.

Organizations and companies need to recognize the expertise and resources they can leverage to create time and headspace for farmers to tell their story. Farmers can play a pivotal role in promoting and advancing agricultural practices within their community and industry.

If readers take nothing else from this report, let it be about creating time and headspace for farmers, agriculture leaders and people who are dedicated to telling agriculture's story.

4.1.1 SPOTLIGHT: Tokyo Dairy Farm

Tokyo is the largest city in the world, with a population of over 39 million people.

Nestled within this bustling metropolis, in the Hachioji region, is a dairy which exemplifies the meaning of sustainability. Just minutes from a nearby train station in the middle of suburban Tokyo, it's one of the most unlikely locations to find a dairy that was founded, owned, and operated by the same family over 350 years ago.

The owner, Masanori Isonuma, a 70-year-old dairy farmer, inherited the farm from his father about 30 years ago.



At the time, the farm faced serious pressure from neighbours and residents. Most of them wanted the family to close shop and make way for urban development.

Isonuma took on the challenge and met with people whose views of agriculture and dairy in the area did not align with his family's. Meeting with the concerned individuals and engaging in an open dialogue allowed him to understand the issues and meet them where they were.

He presented several options that addressed their concerns and leveraged the farm to connect and better serve consumers and other farmers in the region.

Those measures included:

1. Bringing coffee grounds onto the farm to be used as part of the manure. This dried the manure out and reduced the odour from the farm.
2. Striking a deal with a local produce processing company so that the farm would receive daily food waste shipments to feed the dairy cows. Excess produce was given to the neighbours at no cost to feed pets such as rabbits.
3. Producing compost from the manure containing coffee grounds and the digested produce. He then sold it to consumers in the area at a reduced price.
4. Building a path through the dairy farm so their neighbours could pass through it on their way to the train or into their local neighbourhood, increasing the local community's connection with dairy farming. Signs were put up on the farm to educate people about where their milk and dairy products came from. He also opened the farm to educational tours, increasing the farm's connection to consumers and selling dairy products right on the farm.
5. Rented the property next to the farm when it became available and put a café and farm-to-fork market in the facility. This popular spot amongst local residents and other regions now sells dairy products from the farm, as well as produce from local fruit and vegetable producers in the region. Creating a true farm-to-fork operation.
6. The set-up of the farm, restaurant, and market has also made it an agri-tourism stop further expanding the city's story.

These extensive efforts resulted in the farm receiving consistent, ongoing coverage from the media that went beyond his farm.

Reporters now regularly interview him to cover agricultural issues.

He was called during the pandemic to discuss food security and how locally grown products were part of the solution.

Isonuma's initiative, ingenuity, and ability to engage with his community have resulted in the farm gaining considerable media attention.

When I set out to visit Tokyo, I wanted to find examples of how and where agriculture stories were shared with consumers.

I did not expect to find a powerful platform born out of a necessity to change to better fit in with the consumers in the region.

This farmer not only found a path forward by connecting with consumers but also managed to save his family's operation and legacy in doing so, simply by going to his consumer and citizen neighbours and finding out their opinions and thoughts instead of assuming what they were thinking.

Mr. Isonuma is a great example of a farmer champion that needs to be showcased to the media, and who the journalists and storytellers should be building relationships with.

4.1.2 SPOTLIGHT: Mort & Co - Australia

Farmers have never had so many options when it came to owning their own story using tools such as social media, websites, blogs etc.



However, the clearest sign we've entered a new phase of communication is that farms are now developing their own communication strategies and engaging directly with peers, consumers, and the industry.

One such operation is Mort & Co, which operates cattle feedlots and crop production, as well as value-added operations in Australia.

One of these feedlots is the largest private feedlot in the country, boasting 70,000 head of cattle near Toowoomba in Queensland. It also has a cotton de-oiler a dehuller as well as a fertilizer production facility.

This operation has a head office located in Toowoomba. It's also where its communications department is housed, making sure both the operation's and the industry's story are being told not only to help educate consumers but further the industry.

4.2.0 Media Champions

From my experience, the number of journalists who are committed day-in and day-out to covering agriculture and food production are rare.

This amplifies the need for the industry to identify the journalists who have access to mainstream platforms that speak directly to consumers.

There is also a need to further attract young people with an affinity for agriculture who want to work in mainstream newsrooms.

An example of a mainstream agriculture champion is Ed White, who works as an agriculture reporter for ¹⁹Thomson Reuters in Canada. Ed has had a long storied career in ag media.

A Media Champion for Farmers is a journalist who has dedicated their career to covering the agricultural industry, deeply immersing themselves in the issues, challenges, and innovations that shape modern farming. With a keen understanding of the sector, this journalist not only reports on the latest developments but also advocates for farmers by highlighting their stories, successes, and struggles. Through in-depth reporting, insightful commentary, and a strong network of industry contacts, the Media Champion serves as a vital conduit between the agricultural community and the public.

4.2.1 SPOTLIGHT: Ireland Dairy Farmers & Mainstream Reporters

During my travels, I had the opportunity to spend a couple of days with the Hynes family near Cork, Ireland.

Being able to hear Pete and Paula's story, while working alongside them on their dairy farm and watching them show their award winning dairy cows at a local agriculture show in Clonakilty was a very rewarding experience..

Pete and Paula are unique in that on top of running the dairy and showing cows with their daughters they also write weekly articles for the two biggest mainstream papers in Ireland, the Irish Independent and Irish Examiner respectively.

¹⁹ Reuters is a global news agency owned by Thomson Reuters, established in 1851, known for its multimedia news coverage and commitment to the Trust Principles of independence, integrity, and freedom from bias.

Media publications such as these two are examples of mainstream media that still include farming sections for the public to read. It's because of the continued investment of time and money into a news reporting position assigned to this topic.

They even had international travel celebrity Rick Steves tours stop at their farm weekly prior to the pandemic. Countless of tourists from around the world learning about where their food comes from.

While helping them milk their 140 cows, we chatted about their start in social media in 2017, the importance of not sugar coating things, the way they have used social media to raise money for charities, including mental health and the international opportunities that have come about because they were telling their story.



(Pictured L-R: Pete Hynes, Craig Lester, Paula Hynes)

4.2.2 Case Study: The BBC's Rural Affairs Champion: Bridging Agriculture and the Public

The BBC has taken a unique approach to making sure agriculture and rural issues aren't left out of the conversation. At the centre of it is their *Rural Affairs Champion*, a role dedicated to advising on all rural and agricultural content across the entire BBC — whether it's a documentary, a podcast, or part of the news.

This person also oversees programs like *Farming Today* and *The Food Programme*, which dive into agricultural stories. But these shows aren't built just for farmers. They're designed for the general public, which has helped *Farming Today* draw in over 1.5 million listeners every week.

It's proof that when media companies create space and invest in these conversations — and build them for a wider audience — people pay attention. Seeing this model in action has sparked ideas on how media can better connect consumers to the people and places behind their food.

4.3.0 Topical Intersections

Bridging the gap between urban consumers and agricultural producers requires pinpointing areas of common interest.

One mechanism that could help create interest from both the standpoint of the media and the public is conveying the story using common topics consumers usually engage with.

Starting a story, conversation, or any interaction with agricultural terms is a fast track to losing any consumer or citizen audience's attention. They simply cannot relate to it for many reasons, including but not limited to the lack of agriculture they see in their daily lives, the food security they enjoy every day and the levels and sophistication of the food system between them and where the food they enjoy is produced.

This is why the conversation must start with mainstream topics, whether it is part of the struggles they face daily or through pop culture which drives their interests, these can be powerful vehicles for driving home the messages in regard to how food is produced.

One of the most powerful tools that agriculture and food have going for it is its ability to Agriculture and food intersect with most, if not all, mainstream topics.

Examples:

Agriculture and Food: The most prominent and frequently used intersection is agriculture and food, as they are part of the same system. Starting a story by appealing to a consumer's stomach and something that ties everyone on this planet together allows the reader, listener, or viewer to instantly relate to the story. Once the reader is engaged, the storyteller can take them on a journey back into agriculture.

Because they are part of the same system, they can always be tied together and create intersecting points that are of interest to the public.

Agriculture and Sport: As discussed previously in this report, in the case study "Swiss Farms Welcomes You". Sport like food has a great power to bring people together and to grab attention. Our favourite sport athletes are in the news all the time. Society is drawn to athletes and celebrities that is why that campaign was a major success in highlighting agriculture. I came across another great example that exemplifies this in New Zealand with Beef and Lamb New Zealand. It can be found in the appendices under 10.0.3.

Agriculture and Innovation: The general public is fascinated with innovation. The advancement of ideas, technology and practices is usually associated with a pique in interest amongst media consumers.

It's only natural that when we tell stories about innovation in the way their food is produced that people are going to be interested.

The following story is an excellent example of mainstream news outlet in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) picking up an agriculture story because of the innovation.

4.3.1 SPOTLIGHT: Reuters Dubai Article

During a visit to the Reuters Bureau in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. I sat down with journalist Abir Ahmar to discuss their coverage of agriculture in the UAE and Middle East.

It was intriguing to hear their excitement of agricultural-related issues they covered at the mainstream media outlet. One such ²⁰article was about a project to grow wheat in soil that is pure sand in the desert.



UAE oil power farms the desert in quest for food security
By Abir Ahmar
February 15, 2023 2:37 PM MST Updated 2 years ago



In this case, innovation, technology, and food security were topics that were intersected with agriculture to create a story that was of interest to reporters and the general public.

4.3.2 Agriculture, Current Events and the News:

Every day, we see stories on digital media go viral, news stories that get multiple news cycles, and issues that remain part of the water cooler talk for days, if not weeks. The momentum from these topics could be seized and used to help bring attention to issues or highlights within the agriculture industry.

Storytellers need to identify and utilize subjects that have traction in the mainstream as vehicles to ensure agriculture stories' engagement from their audience.

This is why anyone working in a communications or marketing role must be able to envision these intersections, while reading about topics in the news, in TV shows, movies, or in digital content.

²⁰UAE oil power farms the desert in quest for food security <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/uae-oil-power-farms-desert-quest-food-security-2023-02-15/>

By creating and promoting content on these intersections will create interest in the agricultural topic and within it.

For example, Rural Roots Canada (RRC), which I own, manage and write stories for, had a story on a solar storm and the effect it had on Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in tractors. The solar storms were the talk of mainstream media, social media, digital media and word of mouth for weeks. Rural Roots Canada tied the story into some online chatter amongst farmers regarding how it affected their ability to use their GPS systems. It resulted in the planting rows not lining up or causing the planter to overlap with a previous pass.

The coverage of the Rural Roots Canada story resulted in the New York Times, USA Today and Yahoo News, publications with three of the top readerships in North America, to pick up the story and quote and link to RRC's story.

The ²¹story covered the effect of the Aurora Borealis on GPS and autosteer systems on farmers during planting season. The northern lights caused a malfunction in the systems causing the tractors not to drive in straight lines.

In this particular case, three topics intersected: the solar storm (the popular mainstream topic), GPS (technology), and agriculture (planting season).

4.4.0 Artificial Intelligence and Algorithms

The world of information is evolving rapidly, driven by the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) which has resulted in the development of media creation tools of unprecedented potential. But, with great opportunity comes significant risk.

We have already seen how quickly AI can create content with a simple prompt and the click of a button. It is far from perfect. Some of its content is fact-based, and others need considerable vetting or rewriting.

Algorithms also present an obstacle in connecting with audiences because they more often than not keep people locked into their interests online.

Algorithms could be seen as the modern-day embodiment of the adage, "divide and conquer." Merriam-Webster defines an algorithm as a problem-solving procedure.

It is commonly used nowadays for the set of rules a machine (and especially a computer) follows to achieve a particular goal.

²¹ Rural Roots Canada Cited by Two Prestigious News Outlets in the US

<https://www.ruralrootscanada.com/rural-roots-canada-cited-by-two-prestigious-news-outlets-in-the-u-s/>

Search engine algorithms custom cater to their audience, feeding people content based on their search history, personal interests, and opinions.

When coupled with surveys and research, the 2023 Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI) public trust report showed that search engines are now the number one way people find and consume information, it presents a challenge in engaging people who either don't have an active interest in agriculture or have views and perspectives that are not in line with current agricultural and agri-food practices.

Given the importance of this topic and the fact that it needs to be addressed in depth, I am using this report to recommend the need for a full Nuffield report to fully research and analyze the topic.

4.4.1 Media Modelling

Are there trends in the way agriculture is covered and portrayed in the media? What triggers these trends? Is there a way to capture the data from these trends to break it down and find better ways to tell its story?

Media monitoring is nothing new; it's been done for years, and the technology behind it has grown and evolved. Tools like ²²Meltwater have significantly moved the needle forward in terms of collecting data regarding the success of different tactics.

This monitoring has led to better practices in how news releases are written and formatted, pitches made to reporters, and how influencers are picked for campaigns, among many other reactive tactics based on tried-and-true practices.

But ask yourselves, what if there was a modelling system that could accurately predict the messages that resonated most with journalists and storytellers while facing the least amount of resistance based on previous data?

In Tasmania, Australia, a team led by Corrine Condie at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) at the University of Tasmania developed a computer modelling system that helped determine the best way to engage the general population in salmon aquaculture, a topic that has become highly controversial in recent years.

In this modelling system, they analyzed a large cross-section of news coverage of the salmon industry and identified public sentiment, perception of the salmon industry, and where it was trending, as well as several keyword trends, use of sources, and presentation of the information.

²² **Meltwater** is an online media monitoring company that was started in 2001 in Oslo, Norway.

It also allowed them to refine their focus and identify strategies to better engage the public that uses wording and phrases in messaging that mitigates conflict in the general public in Tasmania and Australia.

The full ²³stakeholder communication in the Tasmanian salmon aquaculture report can be found on the University of Tasmania's website.

Why is this valuable?

If the agriculture communications community could build on their media data, particularly a better understanding of the conflict points and how to mitigate them, it could help them get their message across. That said, I see a much more targeted use of this methodology and practice that will help the entire agriculture media and communications community better engage consumers and citizens.

This report has discussed using places where mainstream topics intersect with agriculture. Some of these intersections occur naturally in mainstream conversations, while others require people to connect the dots. To reiterate what was mentioned earlier, these are powerful vehicles that can be used to relate to people through the consumer and citizen lens. According to interviews with various people in the Canadian agricultural communications landscape, little of this is mapped. We don't have a gauge on the intersection points, which are the most successful amongst which audiences, and how the messaging should be delivered. If this data does exist in the industry, it is clearly not being shared, most likely for competitive purposes, whether by companies, organizations, or the communication and marketing agencies that represent them.

More data must be pulled and shared amongst the industry so it can be used to find better ways to connect with consumers and people.

I think we need to question and examine the amount of media analysis that is done by industry, organizations and agencies that is collected and not shared simply for competitive reasons.

The success of the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity and its Public Trust Report is a great example of media coverage on different platforms being researched, analyzed and then shared with the everyone for the betterment and growth of agriculture.

²³Resolving Coastal Tensions or Living with Conflict -What is the fate of Tasmania's coasts?
Corrine Condie B.Ag. Ec. (Hon), M. Ec.

All of this information, could be used to help teach AI tools, such as modelling systems and ChatGPT. The rate these tools are being used is growing exponentially and the industry need to be on the leading edge of adoption of them.

5.0.0 The connection between Agriculture, Media and Mental Health

Farmers face many challenges on the farm, both those they can and cannot control. Dealing with these challenges can create a lot of stress.

A study out of the University College of Dublin in Dublin, Ireland, is delving into the mental wellness of farmers and examining some of the driving factors that lead to them struggling with mental health illnesses such as depression and anxiety, amongst others.

The study, 'Dying to Farm: Developing a suicide Prevention intervention for farmers in Ireland', (Russell et al., 2023), led by Dr. Tomas Russell, has shown that out of the farmers surveyed, 23 percent showed a "risk of suicide", where a risk of suicide is defined as someone who may have had a thought of suicide at one point or another.

The three top contributing factors were government policy, climate change, and media coverage.

Part of the research is diving into the wording coming out of the Irish Government's policy and news releases and the impact it has on agriculture.

One of the biggest things Dr. Russell is hoping this research will lead to is helping politicians and bureaucrats better understand the effect their words and policies have on farmers.

This knowledge can be used to develop more empathetic and effective communication strategies from governmental bodies.

So why do farmers struggle to deal with what government officials, the media or the general public have to say about them?

According to Dr. Russell's work, the reason lies in the farmer's 'attachment to place'. In this report, attachment to place has been defined as the connection someone has with their home, work, or something close to them. In this case, it relates to their farm.

This research has revealed that the farmer's attachment to place is much higher when it comes to a place of work than in any other industry.

The reasons are clear:

- Home
- Work is not 9 to 5
- Farming is a lifestyle
- Farm is their livelihood
- Take pride in the food they are producing

- Money Invested

That's why negative comments from the public, media, and government officials can cause emotional distress for producers who take great pride in working night and day to produce food for a growing global population.

'Attachment to Place' makes it critical for psychologists, counsellors and behavioural scientists to get training on the impact of how attachment to place works for farmers. This would help farmers deal better with some of the not-favourable coverage they see in the media.

There is a lot more work needed in this space, but it is clear you need to look to leaders in this research space such as Dr. Tomas Well and the University College Dublin.

6.0.0 CONCLUSION

The gap between the people producing our food and the ones telling the stories continues to grow. As laid out in this report, there are a lot of reasons for that media cutbacks, shrinking rural coverage, changing news habits, and the growing disconnect between urban centres and rural life. All of it makes it harder for agriculture to stay part of the conversation.

As pointed out by the research done by the Swiss Farmers' Union, consumers are looking for food security, price and choice when they are buying food. The coverage agriculture receives in the media plays a role on informing and influencing consumers, policy makers and others, who are making decisions every day that pave the path forward for the industry.

The opportunity is there, but it doesn't just happen. It takes time, space, and support and that has to come from within the industry. Organizations and companies need to step up and create the room for farmers and media champions to do this work properly. That means giving farmers

the headspace to tell their stories, supporting media to build relationships with producers, and backing campaigns that connect with consumers where they are. We've seen how this plays out with programs like New Zealand's *Country Calendar*, *Japan Agriculture News*, and Switzerland's *Swiss Farms Welcome You* campaign. These didn't happen by accident they happened because the time, resources, and effort were there to make them happen.

At the same time, it is important to note that the agriculture industry not fall back on negative anecdotal back talk about the media. When identifying issues in media coverage, make sure there is data to back-it-up, such as the research being done by the *Canadian Centre for Food Integrity* and the *Canadian Cattle Association*. Too often we hear speeches at conferences, in the media and conversations around the farm about how the industry is under-represented or misrepresented in the media, but little in the way for data or the source of information.

If agriculture is going to stay in the media, we have to meet people where they are on their phones, on the radio, on their TVs, and in their communities. That means tying the story to topics people already care about, whether it's innovation, food security, pop culture, or the environment. It also means recognizing that the way media covers agriculture matters not just for consumers, but for the mental health of the farmers and ranchers living it every day. The bottom line: the space for agriculture in the media isn't going to make itself. The industry has to invest in it, support it, and build it because without that, these stories won't be told.

Media will play a role in shaping the future of agriculture and the industry needs to be at the table otherwise someone else will tell our story.

7.0.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of things the agriculture community can do to better engage consumers.

1. The agriculture community needs to better influence Urban Information Landscapes to ensure agriculture is more top-of-mind for story-tellers, journalists, influencers and anyone in the media space; alongside consumers.
2. To support farmers' mental health, it is crucial to encourage and promote responsible media coverage that prioritizes accuracy and empathy. Communication professionals in the agriculture and food industry should work to better inform journalists and story-tellers of the impact their words have to reduce harmful stereotypes and narratives. A shift in language towards more compassionate and solution-focused storytelling can foster greater understanding and provide emotional support to farmers facing challenges.
3. Investing in media and storytelling is essential to ensure that the agriculture community's voice is heard. Companies and organizations should advocate for and

allocate resources to support media coverage, both traditional and social. They should also be advocates for more investment in mainstream media companies.

4. Companies, organizations and individuals need to be continuously identifying opportunities to create time and headspace for farmers to develop and share their own stories on both traditional and social media platform, that will empower them and promote a more authentic narrative of agriculture.
5. Communication experts in the industry need to leverage mainstream pop culture and real-time issues in media as a platform to engage consumers with agriculture and food topics. By connecting these issues to widely discussed trends, the agriculture sector can increase visibility and relevance to a broader audience. There should also be more Identify, map and utilize topical intersections with agriculture and mainstream trending topics.

8.0.0 GLOSSARY

Advocate An advocate is a person who advocates for agriculture.

Competition for attention refers to the challenge organizations, brands, or individuals face in capturing and maintaining the attention of audiences in an environment saturated with information and stimuli. Source: Davenport and Beck, 2001

Contextomy involves taking a piece of information or a statement from a larger context and presenting it in isolation, which can distort its intended meaning. Although the information is still true in itself, removing it from the broader context can create a misleading or incomplete impression. Source: The Fallacy Files

Disinformation involves deliberately spreading false information with the intent to mislead or deceive others. Disinformation campaigns are often orchestrated to manipulate public opinion or obscure the truth. An example includes the deliberate creation and dissemination of fake news stories to influence elections. Source: britannica.com

Food safety in Canada involves ensuring that food is prepared, handled, and stored in ways that prevent contamination and foodborne illnesses. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) enforces standards and guidelines established by Health Canada to maintain the safety and nutritional quality of food. Source: Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

Food security is defined as a situation where all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Source: Statistics Canada

Food Transparency refers to the openness and clarity with which information about food products, including their ingredients, production processes, and regulatory status, is provided to the public. This concept encompasses the clear communication of food safety standards, compositional guidelines, and the regulatory decisions that affect food products.

Source: Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

Local News Local news focuses on a specific area — whether it's a city, town, or region — and covers the stories that matter to people living there. That includes everything from local politics and business to community events and human interest stories. Unlike national or international news, the goal of local news is to keep people informed about what's happening right in their own backyard. Source: Wikipedia

Mainstream Reporter/Journalist is a member of the media who works for traditional or legacy media companies, which includes but is not limited to: radio, TV and newspapers.

Malinformation pertains to factual information shared with the intent to harm, often by taking information out of context or by emphasizing certain details to mislead. For instance, releasing private information about an individual to damage their reputation is considered malinformation. Source: humanrights.ca

Meltwater is an online media monitoring company that was started in 2001 in Oslo, Norway.

Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information shared without the intent to deceive. Individuals may unknowingly spread misinformation, believing it to be true. For example, sharing a news story without verifying its authenticity can contribute to the spread of misinformation. Source: britannica.com

Newsycle refers to the process by which news is produced, disseminated, and consumed and how quickly replace the old ones. Source: Wikipedia

Place attachments are the positive bonds people form with places, arising from affective, behavioural, and cognitive ties between individuals or groups and their sociophysical settings. Source: Research Gate

Quoting out of context is a broader term that involves a similar idea—when someone uses part of a statement or fact that, in isolation, could lead to a different interpretation than it would have in its full context. The intent behind this could be unintentional, or someone might not realize the importance of the surrounding context. Source: "The Elements of Reasoning" by Ronald Munson

Information landscape is all of the information that makes up a landscape. It can include: signs on the side of the road, signs in a grocery store or mall, stories in a newscast, shows on TV connecting food to agriculture or on social and digital media. These are all things that can make up an information landscape.

Weather refers to the current atmospheric conditions in a specific location, including temperature, precipitation, and other short-term phenomena.

Source: Environment Canada

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10.0.0 APPENDICES

10.0.1 CASE STUDY: Homeland NZ



A Food Embassy.

Homeland NZ is a restaurant and cooking school in Auckland, NZ, owned by Peter Gordon.

It is a model platform for connecting the dots between agriculture and food, rural and urban, teaching and learning. It uses food to bring together diverse cultures and talks about ecosystems that can connect urban and rural audiences.

The cooking school has a community night once a week, during which the area's diverse communities can come to the restaurant, make, and show off a variety of dishes from their countries to an audience as well as chefs from the restaurant and the region.

This makes it a true learning environment where everyone contributes. This initiative is sponsored and supported by Beef and Lamb New Zealand, which also brings in farmers to participate so they can learn about the many ways their products can be used.

At the restaurant, Homeland’s menu contains information about all the farms that supply it with food. Taking it one step further, the restaurant provides information on how consumers can connect directly with the farms and buy their products.

What does this have to do with media? It’s a great example of connecting food back to a farm information ecosystem that educates and influences consumers in an urban setting.

By doing this, it has resulted in ongoing media and social media coverage through various platforms.

Homeland utilizes the intersection between agriculture and food, food security, and food safety, and as illustrated in the Beef and Lamb New Zealand case study, even sports and celebrities to carry its message to the public.

10.0.2 CASE STUDY: Gulfood – The World’s Largest Food and Beverage Expo



Food brings people together.

There may be no larger example of this saying than Gulfood, the largest advertised food and beverage event in the world, held annually in February in Dubai, UAE.

The event brings buyers, sellers, importers, and exporters of food from around the globe. It's so large that the event centre is made up of no fewer than a half dozen massive exhibition halls and continues to grow to neighbouring properties as each year passes.

Gulfood features a speaker series focusing on food production practices, food security, and feeding a growing population. Journalists from around the globe attend this event every year and this year was no different.

During the 2023 event, Saskatchewan played a significant role as both a sponsor and participant. It spent its talks emphasizing Saskatchewan's sustainable practices. By doing so the officials from Saskatchewan were able to tell its story and make connections that would result in growing its market presence in the region.

Their panel discussions achieved multiple intersections of topics within agriculture including food, food security, and environmentally sustainable production practices.

In comparison, Canada's presence at the event was minimal with only one small aisle in the exhibition hall that saw many countries with several rows. The Canada exhibition was largely filled with Saskatchewan-based organizations and companies.

10.0.3 CASE STUDY: Welcome to Wrexham

During my time in New Zealand, I was in my hotel room, reflecting on what I had learned from the day of farm tours and discussions around my study while binge-watching the documentary series Welcome to Wrexham on Disney+. <https://www.wrexhamafc.co.uk>

The documentary series (and global phenomenon) follows the rise of the Wrexham Football Club in Wrexham, Wales, United Kingdom, through the purchase, backing, support of, and consistent promotion by, Hollywood superstars Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney.

As I watched, I had an epiphany. I realized the two celebrities made this documentary series because of the incredible story of the club and the community that supports it. At this moment, I fully realized the power of storytelling.

I also realized that communications play a big part in the running of a business. Communication is where businesses and organizations thrive or die, no matter which CEO or board of directors is in charge.

In a world with fragmented audiences, the series brought together people who would not normally follow the sport. It helped resurrect the economic fortunes of the city of Wrexham.

Unlike other real-life sports documentaries and programs, it doesn't just follow the soccer (football) players and their staff. It embraces the entire community. Reynolds and McElhenney understand that community support is just as important as the players. It is the heart and soul of the team.

Everything that 'Welcome to Wrexham' touches turns to gold within the community, whether it's the football stadium, a nearby pub, or a local park.

Leveraging the power of story, the two took a small, relatively unknown and forgotten team to international stardom. Their support, both socially and financially, resulted in the team earning a promotion within the ranks of the football leagues, up two divisions as of the end of August 2024.

Why are the fortunes of a small, Welsh football club important to this study?

The power of storytelling is the power to lift people and connect them; something that it has in common with food and agriculture by extension. It all comes back to the way it is used.

It should be noted that, once again, there is a topical intersection between sports and celebrities, both of which are powerful vehicles for connecting with people.

10.0.4 CASE STUDY: New Zealand Beef and Lamb:

Food serves as a great vehicle to start a conversation and drive engagement about agriculture. When you mix in a celebrity that message is amplified.

Case in point: Beef and Lamb New Zealand has an ambassador every year that promotes the eating of beef and lamb.

In April of 2023, the organization unveiled international rugby star Stacey Waaka as its ambassador.

Waaka won a gold medal at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, amongst many other national and international awards. Her journey to international superstar rugby player serves as an inspiration for many young girls.

Ahead of the release of a new TV commercial, Beef and Lamb NZ coordinated a TV interview with a popular talk/cooking show where the host and Waaka discussed her sports career, life, the nutritional value of beef and lamb, and her role in promoting these products. This on-air

discussion took place while enjoying fondue. The interview ran on the same day the commercial premiered on TV.

This is a fitting example of the power of food, story, sport, and conversation to engage audiences about where their food comes from.