



FARMERS ARE KEY TO TRANSLATING FARM TO FOOD FOR ALBERTA CONSUMERS

The Crop Sector Working Group (CSWG) recently launched social media accounts to help start conversations between Alberta farmers and consumers. The hope is that many farmers will join in the dialogue too.

“We really should be working as a whole industry on this conversation,” said Fiona Briody, CSWG Policy Program Coordinator, noting that a 2017 Canadian Centre for Food Integrity survey showed that 67% of consumers trust farmers the most. “We have their trust – we need you to speak about it. You’re not going to convert everyone, but if we can share our story and let them think sometimes, that’s a win.”

The April soft launch of @albertafarmers on Twitter and @abfarmers on Instagram followed months of working with commodity groups including Alberta Pulse Growers (APG) to determine what was currently being done on social media and find common messages.

Briody shared the news with APG Directors and Advisors at their meeting in March, encouraging them to get involved as much as they are comfortable doing on social media.

“You have to think about what you want to win out of that conversation or connection,” she said. “Maybe it’s just to get a follower or put a face on it. Some people think ag is big business. We aim to show them that we are real people with real families.”

In December, CSWG presented a workshop called Translating Farm

to Food in Our Social World featuring author and agriculture advocate Michele Payn.

“Agriculture needs to be more pro-active in sharing our story, interacting on a human level,” Payn said. “It’s about taking time to share your personal story so we can protect our right to farm as we best see fit. The motivation is that there is a bottom-line impact to consumers understanding what we do and allowing us to continue with the products or practices that we know best to raise food. That is relying upon our ability to share our story more effectively, which includes social media. It’s not exclusively social media but it definitely includes social media.”

Payn shared the tips below for successful social media interactions with the representatives of Alberta commodity groups at the meeting.

Some Ground Rules in the Social World

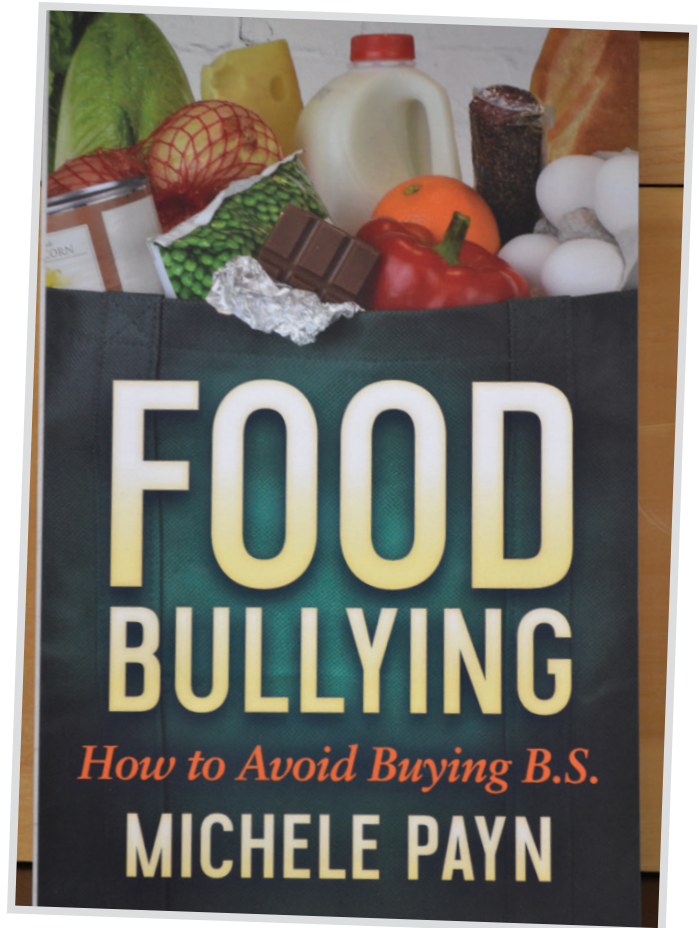
- Know your purpose in social media
- Build a community around your purpose
- Be authentic & transparent - your updates are a novelty to 98% of the population
- Expand community - test

messages and ideas in new circles of connections

- Engage in conversation with your community
- Establish boundaries
- Don’t waste time on negative conversations

Building a Social Media Hub

- Know your purpose
- Build a community around that purpose
- Serve your social community as a resource



Michele Payn's most recent book looks at how people get misinformation stuck in their heads.

- Stay consistent to your policy and purpose

Payn also drew on her own experience to help farmers deal with negative comments they may receive on social media.

“The first thing that you need to do is evaluate who made the negative comment,” she said. “Know that you’re operating in a fishbowl and that your response is being monitored by the fishbowl. Really, it’s about knowing who’s making the comment, what the platform is behind them, and going more than you need to go for the fishbowl. As an example, on Twitter if someone makes a negative comment and they don’t have a lot of followers, so they’re just going to be a lurker or nasty person, they’re not going to get a response because it’s not worth my energy. Evaluate the

source, evaluate the fishbowl, evaluate whether it’s worth your energy or not.”

She advised not to let negative people steal your platform. Her general rule is that if you make a rude remark to her and you have 30 followers or less, her 30,000 followers don’t deserve to hear from you. Sometimes, Payn said, she will take the conversation private.

When to comment on posts from others is another question many farmers or commissions looking to start engaging more on social media may have.

“I think that’s different based upon everybody’s philosophies,” Payn said. “There are a lot of posts that I don’t agree with and I could spend my entire day on Facebook commenting on those. I don’t. I will

if it is egregious, or if someone asks me to do something, I will try to help them out. But likewise, I will also appoint people to do that. For your members, decide what’s worth your time. Time management is a large part of social media. It’s important to be there and show the important side of agriculture.”

Payn addresses questions like these on podcasts available at causematters.com, as well as in her latest book, called *Food Bullying: How to Avoid Buying B.S.*

“*Food Bullying: How to Avoid Buying B.S.* basically takes a look at the neuroscience and psychology of how people get misinformation stuck in their heads,” she said. “It offers some tips on what we can do to overcome that so that we can hopefully protect our right to farm as we best see fit.”



CCGA: 35 YEARS OF HELPING FARMERS SUCCEED

There have been many developments in Canadian agriculture over the last three and a half decades, but one thing has never changed: Canadian Canola Growers Association’s (CCGA) vision of Helping Farmers Succeed.

The CCGA story started in 1984, when a group of canola farmers from Western Canada came together to give farmers access to the same financing program that had been available on cereal grains for many years.

35 years later, more than 10,000 farmers across Western Canada look to CCGA to support their grain marketing and farm financing plans with a cash advance through the Advance Payments Program.

The Advance Payments program is a federal program delivered and administered by CCGA. Under the program, the Government of Canada

provides the loan guarantee, funds the interest-free portion of advances, and helps to make low interest rates on the remainder for Canadian producers.

“Our devoted team is constantly striving to deliver better customer service to our cash advance customers, including improving our phone and online services, as well as streamlining the application process and making the program more accessible for those who use it,” says Rick White, President and CEO of CCGA.

The experience that CCGA has cultivated over the last 35 years, coupled with a grassroots farmer voice at the CCGA board, helps the organization affect policy changes for the benefit of canola farmers.

Winnipeg Office

T: 204.788.0090 TF: 1.866.745.2256

F: 204.788.0039 ccga.ca