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Meet Margaret Hansen

For Margaret Hansen, farming is so much more than a job. It's an interesting and challenging profession and a way of life that she'd never give up.

Ask Margaret Hansen, a third generation Saskatchewan farmer, what she loves most about being a farmer and she'd probably have a difficult time picking just one thing. But one thing she knows for sure is that she loves farming for both professional and personal reasons.

After earning a degree in agriculture with a specialization in soil science from the University of Saskatchewan, Hansen spent more than five years working in the oil patch in the environmental consulting industry. However, her natural interest was always in farming. In 2001, she returned to her family farm.

"I've always enjoyed the farm, even from when I was a child," says Hansen. "I have always loved the land and that always called to me."

Along with her brother and cousin, Hansen helps run and operate Woodside Farm Partnership. The farm is located just outside of the town of Langbank, and grows canola, barley, wheat and other cereals.

"About 50 per cent of what we grow is canola and virtually all of it is exported," says Hansen. "Canola has huge potential internationally right now — China is taking a terrific amount of our canola, as well as the U.S. and Mexico."

According to Hansen, being an export-dependent farm in Canada is a huge opportunity for future growth. Her land is ideally suited to productive agriculture, which means her farm can grow — and will continue to grow — more than

Canadians could ever consume. Woodside's success hinges on an international need for the farm's products.

Since 2003, Hansen has been instrumental in operating the farm and helping it grow, remain sustainable and efficient, and change to remain competitive in the 21st century. Hansen credits her uncle, who was forward thinking and began the succession and mentorship process to get more out of Woodside Farm Partnership.

"My uncle did a good job of transitioning down to the next generation and passing down responsibility," says Hansen. "I think I was fortunate to be part of it, but also fortunate enough to belong to a family that encouraged both sons and daughters to have a place on the farm."





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To say she participates on Woodside now is an understatement: Hansen is the farm's grain marketer, financial manager, risk manager and bookkeeper. And during the harvest, she's out on the combine too. She's a business-woman with the farm's best interests at heart.

A few of the recent changes highlight Hansen's entrepreneurial side. The farm has recently expanded its landbase, with a plan to continue to expand steadily over the next five to 10 years. The land use has also changed recently: once a mixed farm, Woodside has specialized and is now focused solely on grain production.

The driving force behind these changes and the basis for the farm's future growth plans hinges on Canada's commitment to enabling exports. Hansen's farm wouldn't have seen the same kind of growth without access to foreign markets.

International buyers appreciate the high-quality and the competitive costs of Canadian grain, but relationships with her customers are also important to Hansen.

"I think travelling and meeting the people you sell to gives the farmers perspective," says Hansen. "One of our Chinese buyers has told me I should come and visit my buyers. It really allows you to see how connected we all are."

Hansen did not only return to the farm because it called to her on a professional level, though. As the mother of three kids, farming also offers Hansen a lifestyle and a work-life balance that she loves and likely couldn't find elsewhere.

"As a mother, working on Woodside is a great opportunity for me to have the flexibility to work part-time," says Hansen. "It's a great way to raise my family."

Hansen adds that an additional appeal of being a Canadian farmer is the chance to live in a small town.

"I think that the happiest people have strong social networks, and you see that in rural communities. Whether it's when you're getting involved in the schools, sports,



community events, churches or with neighbours, there's a real sense of steadiness. As an adult, it's a great support system of people."

The farm called Hansen back and now she has no desire to go anywhere else. Hansen adds, "Farming is just an interesting industry. It's diverse, and there's always something new going on and great people to work with. And I get to be my own boss, which brings lots of its own opportunities, too."

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