



Supply Chain Stability and Adaptability Program

New Grain Drying Capacity Expands Markets for Eastern Ontario Growers



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Eastern Ontario has long been an underserved area for grain-drying and storage capacity. Local grains and oilseeds growers have had to ship their canola, corn, soybeans and wheat to elevators at harvest, limiting their market opportunities as well as their ability to take advantage of premium pricing opportunities.

At the same time, labour and trucking shortages during and following the COVID-19 pandemic have limited transport availability and driven up costs.

For Michael and Jennifer Doelman of Bonnechere Haven Farms, a 1,100-acre grain and oilseed farm in Renfrew County, the solution was clear: setting up their own on-farm receiving, drying and storage system would give them more options while also minimizing their exposure to risk.

Cost-share funding through the Supply Chain Stability and Adaptability Program helped the project become a reality last year.

“We chose a Neco mixed flow dryer because it is more efficient than other dryers and can handle a wider variety of crops,” explains Mike. “Before, we had to ship our canola to Quebec to be dried, and there was only one place that accepted wet canola if we weren’t able to get it dried.”

The new storage capacity opens up more market opportunities, as well as off-season premiums, and on-farm drying means the Doelmans aren’t trucking their crops as far, reducing both fuel costs and emissions as well as demand on local trucking capacity.

With the system coming online last fall, they were able to harvest and dry their corn; without the dryer, they would have been forced to wait until spring to finish harvesting as well as dealing with the ensuing wildlife damage to the crop over the winter.

The new on-farm system also offers soil health benefits, which are extremely important to the Doelmans. Previously, they had to harvest when trucks were available, which didn’t always line up with the soil being fit for heavy equipment, leading to soil compaction issues.

But there’s a peace of mind benefit too, that the Doelmans note is an invaluable benefit.

“This definitely reduces stress and lets us sleep better at night, knowing we are no longer in a situation where we have crops to harvest but can’t run the combine because all of our wagons are filled and we’re simply hoping the trucks will show up,” adds Jenn. “Right now, it’s about a better quality of life for us and for our employee – and if our kids will choose to farm at some point, this sets us up to help make that happen.

Storage expansion is already in the works for 2024, and because of the dryer’s multifunctionality, it sets the Doelmans up well to expand their rotation of crops in the future. As well, the added capacity in the regions gives other farmers additional drying options too.

It was the cost-share funding program that really helped bring the project to fruition, and because all the contractors and suppliers were from the local area, it resulted in economic spinoff for the region too.

“This project was a pipe dream until we were able to access this funding. And knowing it was coming let us take advantage of early booking options for construction before steel prices went up – it really let us stretch our dollars to go further,” Jenn says. “We always talk about managing risk and about food sovereignty, but this lets us solve some of those problems while also investing in our neighbourhood.”

The Supply Chain Stability and Adaptability Program is funded by the Government of Ontario to address supply chain challenges in the agri-food sector. The Agricultural Adaptation Council is delivering the program on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.