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INCREASED INVESTMENT TO KEEP AGRICULTURE STRONG

The Ministry of Agriculture's Budget for 2016-17 will increase by 7.5 per cent for a total of \$389.8 million. This includes \$254.6 million to fully fund business risk management programs, a \$14.6 million increase from the previous year.

"This Budget is a clear demonstration of our government's commitment to the farmers and ranchers of Saskatchewan," Agriculture Minister Lyle Stewart said. "We recognize agriculture's role as a resilient and stable contributor to Saskatchewan's economy and will continue to offer the programs and services producers need to keep their operations and the entire agriculture industry strong."

The Budget also includes \$71.2 million for strategic initiatives under the federal-provincial Growing Forward 2 Agreement, with \$26.8 million for agricultural research, and \$4.2 million to support events and organizations like Canada's Farm Progress Show, 4-H Saskatchewan and Agriculture in the Classroom.

The ministry will also achieve expense reductions from a decrease in amortization costs and operational savings, with no impact on programming, customer service or staffing. One change for the 2016-17 year will be the discontinuation of the 2015 Agricultural Crown Land Sale program. The program, which offers purchase incentives on the sale of eligible Crown Land, will end on December 31, 2016, one year earlier than originally scheduled.

"The uptake of the program has exceeded expectations, making the last year of the program unnecessary," Stewart said. "If a producer has not yet bought any Crown land that they currently lease and is eligible for sale under the 2015 Agricultural Crown Land Sale program, I would encourage them to purchase it. Low interest rates and strong commodity prices, combined with the 10 per cent purchase incentive make it a good time to buy."

The Ministry of Agriculture expects to net \$148 million in revenue from land sales during 2016-17. Any cultivated or previously cultivated land that is eligible for sale that has not been purchased will continue to be subject to rental increases in upcoming years.

"From the very start, our government has been committed to building a strong agriculture industry," Stewart said. "We have been focused on supporting our farmers and ranchers with strategic investments and effective programming. This Budget continues that commitment."

-30-

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