

## *4.2 Analysis of the Case Studies*

***Business Form.*** Agricultural diversification projects come in many sizes and configurations. While some are family enterprises formally organized as a sole proprietorship, a partnership, or a family corporation, others involve more elaborate business arrangements. These range from production co-operatives, to local consortia of farmer investors and managing partners, to joint ventures involving local investors and transnational corporations. Some of these arrangements are quite complex and break new ground in terms of innovative strategic alliances and multilevel shareholder participation. While no one business form predominates, it is clear that diversification often requires a familiarity with organizational options that go beyond the traditional family farm, and a willingness to work with others with different backgrounds and strengths. Partnerships of various kinds and sizes are commonplace. Scale of diversification enterprise is positively correlated with complexity of business organization, but this relationship is not automatic. Some larger enterprises are organized as traditional proprietary firms.

***Household and Labour Relations.*** Farm diversification projects typically involve more than one household member, which means that the quality of familial working relationships becomes a factor in success or failure. In some instances, farm diversification projects are organized specifically in order to provide on-farm economic opportunities for spouses, grown children, siblings, in-laws, friends, or neighbours. Successful sharing of responsibilities, resources, and rewards typically requires “people skills,” but likewise frequently hinges on appropriate organizational arrangements. The various kinds of know-how and experience that contribute to the development of a new venture are quite often learned through off-farm educational or work activities. Education in diverse fields combined with a history of high-quality employment off the farm are key factors in some of the most successful rural enterprises we studied. This off-

farm experience may facilitate diversification projects by contributing capital, cash flow, contacts, confidence, and collaborative skills (the “5-Cs”).

Rural people juggle a mix of employment and business activities. Off-farm work is one increasingly common category of household livelihood diversification. It is clear from the case studies, however, that many farm households are involved in off-farm employment even as they seek to diversify the farm business. When rural enterprises hire employees, moreover, it is common to turn to people with farm connections. The availability of seasonal and/or skilled full-time employees can be crucial to the success of rural, agriculturally based diversification projects. As the scale of some enterprises has increased, the attraction and retention of a suitable workforce has become a constraint. A number of enterprises reported that the presence of one or more skilled, long-term employees had been crucial to viable diversification. The hiring of labour (both family and nonfamily) can play a crucial role in facilitating expansion and/or smooth intergenerational transfer of the enterprise.

Traditional views on the gender-based division of tasks still prevail in many enterprises, although there are growing numbers of exceptions to this rule. While some enterprises are run exclusively by male managers and utilize an all-male labour force, several of the enterprises we studied were owned and managed by women, or included women as owner-managers. It was also notable that several of the firms studied ran plants with multiple shifts, sometimes on a 24-hour basis. This has implications for work life–family life interactions, and for the ability of certain people to hold such positions.

***Organizational Innovations.*** The firms documented in this series of case studies all exhibited some kinds of innovation—minimally, the decision to initiate a new enterprise or activity in which they were not previously involved. These innovations can be categorized as social, economic, or technological. Many of the enterprises were advanced in at least some aspects of each of these areas, but it was most common to find that firms excelled in two of these areas—for example, technical and economic innovations. Some firms were only innovative in

one of these areas, but the innovation may have been significant enough to affect other important aspects of the firm's operation and performance. Like entrepreneurship, diversification, and success, innovation is a multidimensional phenomenon. Firms may not exhibit a high "score" in each of the three dimensions of innovation we have identified, but it is important that they meet certain minimum conditions in each of these management areas. The successful firms were those that excelled in one or more of these areas without falling seriously short in any. It is noteworthy that the most innovative firms in our sample, as measured by a crude scoring of advanced or innovative practices in each of these areas, tended to be midsized or smaller operations.

***History and Context.*** Each of these enterprises arises out of a specific local context and a particular set of household and farm circumstances. These constraints and opportunities shape the development of the enterprise. The history of any diversification project involves a dynamic interplay between structural conditions and human motivation. The exciting possibility demonstrated by many of these cases is that outcomes are far from predetermined. Innovation gives rise to new opportunities and possibilities. Diversification tends to lead to more opportunities for diversification. Skills learned in the process are applicable to new activities.

Diversification springs from many different roots, and develops by many different routes. In some instances, the foundation was put in place by earlier generations, who provided capital and land, and established the pattern of combining multiple farm and/or off-farm activities. A factor in many of the cases was the innovative application of knowledge and skills gained in other work or business activities, or through formal education. These prior or simultaneous activities provided both the financial and human capital necessary for agriculture-based diversification.

While some farmers are pushed to try new options because all other approaches have failed, others are searching out opportunities to invest in the regional economy. The starting point may be financial stress or financial success. This has important implications for the availability of startup capital, and for the scale of projects. Some must start with limited capital and

look for less capital-intensive options. Others are building on a diversified portfolio of investments, which allows them to spread risk and raise capital more easily.

Successful diversification typically takes a number of years to implement. It may be a strategy associated with expansion or contraction of a farm business. It may come about to facilitate the entrance of a younger person or spouse into farm-related employment, or it may smooth the exit or semiretirement of a more senior household member. It can be associated with entering or exiting farming. It can be a short-term transitional strategy or a long-term approach to enterprise development. Given the character of family farms and rural communities, it almost always involves the intertwining of social and economic agendas.

***Public Agency and Industry Links.*** Although it is fashionable to discount the contribution of government agencies and public servants, it is clear from the field data that Saskatchewan remains, in important ways, a mixed economy. No projects get underway without some form of government support or intervention, even if the contribution is indirect or relatively minor. The entrepreneurs in our sample have often been entrepreneurial about enlisting various kinds of technical and material assistance from federal or provincial sources. The support ranged from simple loans to multiple forms of technical, marketing, and financial assistance. Some of the larger projects had found ways to tap into as many as half a dozen programs designed to finance infrastructure and promote new business development. Most had accessed publicly funded research. Some had used government employment programs to defray the cost of employees. While some complained about bureaucracy, many more spoke of assistance received from civil servants who provided advice and guidance. Local, regional, provincial, and federal agencies were mentioned with considerable frequency. The most commonly mentioned federal agency was the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, while the most frequently cited provincial agency was Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food.

Some of the managers and operators involved in diversification projects had gained useful skills and contacts in public employment, or as members of public boards and committees.

Many respondents reported belonging to industry organizations that provided services ranging from certification, to advertising, to production and market information. Diversified businesses connect extensively with networks of suppliers, brokers, customers, and fellow producers. However, while most of these entrepreneurs were well networked in their sub-industries and regions, some reported difficulties finding and interacting with peers and other crucial counterparts.

***Local Linkages and Challenges.*** Neighbouring was, and remains, an important social institution/practice in rural Saskatchewan. Diversification can strengthen links with neighbours, especially where some form of collaboration or partnership is involved. Specialized production for niche markets may, however, reduce the similarity of neighbouring farms and businesses, and thus reduce some of the potential for sharing or mutual assistance.

The formation of diversification projects that involve more than one household or individual investor often depends on pre-existing links through kin networks, local community or service organizations, local government organizations, churches, or sports and cultural activities. These links involve mutual knowledge, trust, and other social ties that encourage co-operation and reliability. These are all characteristics of community, and elements of what some researchers call social capital. Diversification projects often rely on coexistence and mutual assistance that have been built up through years of community connections and allegiances. Starting a new business or making an investment locally only makes sense if one has attachments to a place and its people, and has confidence that others will contribute and act in good faith.

Many of the larger initiatives we studied involve complex organizational structures and multiple linkages arising out of long association (among family members, neighbours, business associates, organization members, or community members). Stable communities seem to be a factor in diversification. Networks multiply in healthy communities and are, in turn, factors in the creation and reproduction of community. Networks and networking are important social factors in diversification. Personal and organizational connections are used to raise capital, to

link up with partners, to find suppliers and clients, to learn about programs and regulations, to gain industry-specific knowledge, to recruit key employees, and for reciprocal exchange of social support. The presence of others in the same business is often crucial. These “competitors” are also a network for locating important information, for exchanging inputs and product, for dealing with crises, for negotiating with governments, and for funding joint ventures in research or marketing. For female entrepreneurs, the presence of other women as enterprise managers, as business representatives, as key actors in industry organizations, and as scientists and officials in public service, can be vital both to personal survival and to success in diversification.

Newspapers, including the farm press, local papers, and larger circulation dailies, are important local links. A number of our informants commented favourably on the role of the print media in publicizing their initiatives. This was important in terms of visibility, marketing, and pride. It likely also serves a useful purpose in reminding other rural residents what is possible—and what it takes. While journalists may not systematically analyse the social and organizational factors involved, many articles provide information that reveals the centrality of co-operative social relationships, community in its various forms, and organizational innovation.

Local resources and conditions are sometimes a challenge to be overcome. While isolation and low density of settlement are advantages for certain kinds of activity, location and access are frequently cited as difficulties in rural Saskatchewan. Distance and road conditions affect the sourcing of inputs, the shipping of products, and the potential for building a business that provides a service to people. Moreover, distance and density factors may also come into play as a business grows and requires a larger workforce. Small communities may lack the appropriate workforce, the housing, and other amenities necessary to attract such employees. Too often, rural industries depend on a disciplined and low-cost labour force, eager to have a job to supplement other household livelihood strategies. There is little innovation in labour relations.

Some of the managers interviewed for the case studies pointed out that their enterprises depended on a rather fragile and endangered infrastructure. While cellular telephones, improved

distribution of electricity and natural gas, and well-maintained roadways were important, many worried aloud about the potential loss of a post office, bus service, affordable freight service, rail lines, banks, and other infrastructure necessary for their particular business—and for the general prospects of the local region.

*Other Issues Arising from the Case Studies.* Diversification can be risky—socially and financially. A supportive family and community, and strong networks with other entrepreneurs and with advisors, reduce these risks to manageable proportions. Diversification leads to further diversification both at the level of the individual or household, and at the level of the community or region. Diversification is often found in “pockets” or “clusters.” This is a reflection of a supportive local social context and political climate, the presence of appropriate human and natural resources, and the effect of mutual learning, modelling, and mentoring. Once appropriate links have been created with various players, including supportive government officials, further diversification and value-added production can be undertaken more readily. Success builds confidence, connections, and organizational resources that can be applied to other opportunities that become more obvious once one has initiated something new.

Diversification can change the image and opportunity structure of a local region, making it more attractive to a broader range of people. Diversification attracts attention from residents, potential new residents, governments, visitors, customers, and investors. This includes, for example, young people who might otherwise leave, new immigrants, retirees, and others potentially attracted to small towns and villages as a living environment. Diversification can also strengthen linkages with other communities in the region as it creates new patterns of commuting, provides new vocations for settlements that had little obvious future, and new opportunities for collaboration. Reorganization, restructuring, and innovative resource sharing become much more palatable and positive prospects when the local economy is not perceived as a zero-sum game or as a shrinking pie.

A notable finding from our case studies was that a number of agriculturally based diver-

sification projects involve joint ventures or collaboration between Aboriginal and other rural communities and entrepreneurs. It is noteworthy that successful rural development and diversification in this area will require a new spirit of co-operation between reservation communities and other settlements. Diversification, in some of the cases we documented, has involved progress on race and ethnic relations, as well as progressive orientations towards working relations within household and enterprise. Diversification and value-added production can become an arena for intercommunity ventures that bridge historical divides. This is a social dividend and can only augur well for the future of all concerned.

Diversification and value-adding activities can help to counter the fatal (for rural development) equation that has undermined the sustainability of farm and associated rural communities. The dominant formula has placed competition ahead of co-operation and has equated progress, efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness with reducing the labour associated with farming and rural working landscapes generally. Typically, this formula has involved several closely related steps: increasing the size of the enterprise; specializing; and replacing labour with machinery, specialized buildings and equipment, and agrochemicals. This formula pursues economies of scale but neglects economies of scope (those savings in costs and resources that arise from a synergistic mix of activities). This has been a winning strategy for a small number of successful farmers. As an unavoidable aspect of the same logic, however, it has created many more losers than winners and has led to depopulation, dependency, and stagnation in rural economies. In addition to problems of social and economic sustainability, this formula has led to serious problems of ecological sustainability. It focuses narrowly on labour productivity rather than overall resource productivity, concentrates livestock in a few locations, separates animals from cropland, and relies heavily on agro-industrial inputs imported from elsewhere. While diversification does not automatically address all of these issues, and is itself by no means easy or assured, many of the cases we have seen here illustrate how, with appropriate technical, social, and organizational arrangements, diversification can be a central component of viable, sustainable, and sustaining rural development.

### *4.3 Pathways to Diversification*

While diversification projects come in various sizes and forms, it is also clear that they come about for a wide variety of reasons. Such projects are responses to many different kinds of opportunities and challenges. While some farmers have looked to diversification as a strategy to deal with financial stress or crisis, others are building on a long history of diversification to increase their income. Some farmers who are now quite diversified were once leaders in specialization. Diversification typically addresses a mix of social and economic agendas. We can learn more about how to encourage successful diversification by considering the diverse routes by which farmers and other rural entrepreneurs come to implement their own strategies for enterprise development.

The following list provides a summary of some of the enterprise histories that we encountered in the case studies and in other materials pertaining to community and regional economic development in rural Saskatchewan. This inventory illustrates the great range of actors involved and the many kinds of resources and motives that contribute to diversification. If there is a lesson to be drawn from this material, it is that programs and policies that aim to encourage rural economic diversification should recognize the need to support many kinds of entrepreneurship. There is no one formula that fits all conditions and locations. Many successful outcomes are the result of unexpected combinations of talents, experiences, and stimuli.

#### **Pathways**

- Successful farmer adds diversification project, next step in on-going enterprise diversification strategy initiated by previous generations.
- Successful farmer seeks to diversify portfolio/to generate better return on investment/to valorize management skills.
- Farm family needs to increase income, but has limited capital for land or intensification. Seeks innovative diversification options.

- Young people return to farm with education/work experience. Seek innovative ways to save family farm/generate livelihood. Alternative to intergenerational transfer under difficult financial conditions.
- Mature individuals return to farming with business skills and capital gathered elsewhere.
- Female, adult member(s) of household seek opportunities to generate income and to reclaim position as decision maker and producer. May be woman with nonfarm background. Opportunity for women and children to achieve autonomous management roles.
- Locally initiated diversification to create new employment. Public-minded community and economic development project—without promise of high returns.
- Diversification to achieve livelihood/ lifestyle/philosophical goals. Farmers seeking alternative models find technical/social support in networks. Urban linkages often important.
- Technical innovation to solve household or farm problem. Leads to manufacturing/distribution business.
- Outreach/extension/promotion activities of local/regional/transnational firms selling inputs, services, specialty crops. Diffusion and adoption.
- Local entrepreneur/middleman develops processing facility. Provides market outlet. Recruits/educates producers. Off-farm employment opportunities created.
- Neighbours/business associates/community economic development organization initiate joint venture. Opportunity to join/invest via social network or public meeting.
- Postsecondary institution or government agency outreach workers introduce innovative organizational/technical models for diversification. Form close working association with individuals, community entrepreneurs.

## 5.0 UNDERSTANDING DIVERSIFICATION AS DEVELOPMENT

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### *5.1 What States and Local Communities Hope to Gain from Diversification*

**A**GRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION has attracted support from a wide range of governments and agencies, as well as from local development authorities and communities. It is attractive to states and community economic development actors for a range of reasons. It is a promising strategy in that it has the potential to address many of the requirements of sustainable rural economic development. As a strategy it is also broadly consistent with the contemporary ethos of restructuring, re-regulation, and government austerity. However, some of the reasons for supporting the concept may be mutually contradictory given the tradeoffs involved, and given that costs and benefits can be allocated in many ways. The strength of the attraction for civil servants and politicians may stem, in part, from the generality and ambiguity of the concept, and from the lack of explicit discussion of the processes and impacts entailed.

#### **Senior governments want agricultural and rural diversification to:**

- stabilize rural economies characterized by short booms and long busts.
- increase rural employment and incomes.
- increase tax bases for all levels of government.
- address political and social liabilities of rural depopulation and decapitalization.
- reduce the need for subsidies and increase the volume of exports.
- respond to resource management and environmental issues.
- shift responsibility for development onto communities, individuals, and private firms.
- help redefine farming as a business, and farmers as business people.

Governments see agricultural and rural diversification as a response to multiple economic, social, and political problems. Diversification of regional economies has long been one strategy for stabilizing and expanding rural economies, incomes, and employment. Inasmuch as it involves adding value to commodities and developing or accessing new markets, it is also a way to stabilize or increase the tax base, and reduce the need for transfer payments and subsidies. Diversification allows governments to address the problems and liabilities of rural depopulation, decapitalization, and unemployment, even as they refocus responsibility for development onto local communities. Moreover, diversification is consistent with a vision of government support for “self-help” and “private” entrepreneurship in that it stresses the primacy of the private firm, the need for partnerships with corporations, and the business character of contemporary farming. Finally, governments see diversification as a potential vehicle for addressing agricultural resource-management problems, and the environmental politics that arise around these issues.

Despite any risks or costs involved, local communities, administrators, and economic development officers also tend to see diversification as a promising strategy. It is one way to respond to fiscal pressures and to garner assistance from senior governments—given restructuring and reorientation of programs. Diversification is one strategy for stabilizing or increasing the population and the tax base, as well as business activity and property values. Diversification-based development creates local employment opportunities. Of course, the employment generated through diversification may bring local communities face-to-face with certain realities of labour markets, including the pressure from businesses to maintain a low-wage regime, the social and individual costs associated with low-wage industries, and campaigns for and against unionization. Communities and community organizations may see economic diversification as a way to promote social diversity: providing opportunities for marginalized and excluded groups, and for newcomers. Of course, such initiatives may also elicit certain kinds of resistance, especially where long-standing community dynamics and power relations are challenged.

**Local communities and organizations want agricultural diversification to:**

- stabilize or increase the population and tax base.
- stabilize and promote growth of existing businesses, and of property values.
- provide a greater variety of jobs/employment opportunities.
- garner assistance from governments given reorientation of programs.
- provide economic opportunities for newcomers and marginalized people.
- create advantageous linkages with other communities, agencies, or businesses.
- build on or reinforce traditions of local self-reliance and mutual assistance.
- build organizational capacity and augment social networks.
- increase solidarity and social capital.

Communities and local development actors have also perceived in diversification strategies an opportunity to build community and develop social capital. Diversification projects are often a venue for reinforcing traditions of local self-reliance and mutual assistance. Projects involving several individuals, organizations, or communities present opportunities for augmenting social networks and solidarity. Sharing experience and working in partnership may increase local entrepreneurial capacity and create interesting possibilities for additional initiatives.

### ***5.2 What Individuals and Households Hope to Gain from Diversification***

While states and local communities have complex agendas with respect to agriculturally based rural economic diversification, individuals and households may also have complex reasons for committing to such strategies. The mix of economic and social motivations for diversification have their obverse in the reasons why some individuals and households will not pursue such strategies. Reasons for not pursuing agricultural diversification are discussed further below.

Farm families pursue diversification strategies for purposes that reflect the many stresses and pressures of farming. The logic reflects the double character of family farms. On the one

hand, these farms are commodity-producing enterprises immersed in market relations and concerns. On the other hand, they are also living places, where lifestyle, raising children, passing on farming traditions, neighbouring, and community may assume a pivotal importance. Diversification may be employed as a strategy to increase income, reduce risks, and capture available commercial opportunities. It can be part of an aggressive strategy of expansion, with or without additional investments in land. It can also be a defensive reaction to financial crisis or to significant changes in the costs associated with participation in traditional commodity markets.

**Individuals and farm households opt for diversification to:**

- increase and stabilize income.
- capture available commercial opportunities and economies of scope.
- reduce risks associated with specialization.
- increase cash flow without investing in additional land.
- adjust to changing transportation costs and regulatory environment.
- deal with the threat or reality of foreclosure or forced sale.
- escape regulated, mature, oligopolistic, or oligoponistic markets.
- reduce dependence on purchased inputs, increase independence and flexibility.
- respond to changes in government subsidy and regulatory programs.
- secure tax benefits, grants, subsidized credit, technical and marketing assistance.
- implement ecological/sustainable farming systems.
- valorize skills, experience, training, and education.
- avoid working away from the farm and/or the local community.
- provide livelihoods for family members, and use labour of extended family.
- allow household members to direct their own enterprise.
- facilitate successful intergenerational transfer.
- provide full-time, year-round employment for key hired personnel.
- earn community and professional recognition as successful innovators.
- develop and reinforce social networks.

- gain the opportunity to build something, individually or collectively.
- stabilize local community by creating new economic activity.

For some farmers, diversification may be motivated by a desire for greater independence and flexibility, reduced reliance on purchased inputs, or escape from regulated, oligopolistic, or saturated markets. Diversification may also be motivated and encouraged by the availability of certain kinds of tax benefits, grants, subsidized credit, or technical and marketing assistance. In other words, farmers may be responding to opportunities instituted by governments to promote diversification, or in support of other political/administrative or economic development agendas. Farmers may also adopt a more diversified production plan when they implement certain aspects of sustainable or ecological farming systems. Examples of this kind include the rotations and new crops adopted by producers opting for organic systems of production.

There are a large number of individual-, household-, and community-related social factors that also come into play as reasons for diversification, or as conditions that facilitate success with particular approaches to diversification. Diversification may be a stratagem for deriving economic value from the skills, training, and education that family members have accumulated working off-farm, taking special courses, or from study in university programs. Diversifying the farm operation by entering certain kinds of high-value and management-intensive crop or livestock operations, or by establishing a farm-based business not only valorizes and further develops these capacities, but allows individuals to avoid working away from the farm or the local community. This is important for personal social and economic reasons, but it is also significant for the future of the local community and region, inasmuch as skilled and entrepreneurial people can thereby access remunerative employment without leaving the area.

The social and familial logic of diversification also comes to the fore in that it may be a deliberate scheme for creating opportunities for additional family members (a daughter or a son-in-law, for example). It can also be a way for entrepreneurial individuals to profitably employ

“surplus” family labour available at certain stages of household development, or through extended kinship networks. Diversification often figures as a key component of an intergenerational integration and transfer strategy. Its economic importance derives from the increased cash flow that can be generated. Its social significance also derives from the opportunity it can provide for members of the household to have greater autonomy in directing their own subsidiary enterprise or farm-based business. Diversification can thus be a household strategy invoked to provide greater opportunity and independence for grown children or for spouses, i.e., for women living and working as farmers.

The availability of management and labour are both key factors in diversification decisions. Beyond family labour and management, diversification may also be related to concerns about hired labour. While the potential problems associated with relying on hired labour for a diversified agriculture are discussed below, it is important to acknowledge that the inauguration of diversified activities may be undertaken out of concern for creating adequate employment opportunities for hired workers. This could include efforts to provide employment for a neighbour or community member. More often, however, it is a strategy to provide full-time, year-round employment for key hired personnel. Diversification into fabrication, processing, transportation, or livestock, for example, may allow a farmer to retain and make economical use of a full-time employee. The employee gains from the arrangement via increased stability, security, and income.

Diversification can have social and psychological dividends for farm operators. Managers of a successful diversified farm operation or off-farm business earn community and professional recognition as innovative and skilled entrepreneurs. Certain kinds of business and community networks are reinforced as an enterprise is developed, furnishing the individuals involved with access to new resources, and increasing their capacity to effect change. Starting a small or large agriculturally based diversification project allows people to be pioneers once again, to build something new individually and collectively, and to contribute to the stability and growth of

rural communities. These are all motivations that go well beyond narrow calculations of economic self-interest.

### ***5.3 Why Individuals, Households, and Communities May Not Diversify***

The factors that limit or prevent diversification by individuals, farm households, or local and regional economies are at least as complex as those that enable or encourage a greater range of activities. These factors are often closely related to the conditions that promote diversification, but they are not necessarily easy to reverse or to rectify. Nor is this always desirable, whether from the personal, family, or local community perspective. Much economic, managerial, and development theory, after all, has focused on the need to concentrate resources and energies on those things that one can do relatively well, and not to invest too heavily in long shots or risky undertakings.

#### **Reasons individuals and households may not diversify:**

- too young, too old, or in ill health.
- lack of capital or credit, or carrying too much debt.
- lack of skills, confidence, or connections to produce and market alternative products.
- off-farm employment restricts time/energy available for farm enterprise.
- distance from markets and input suppliers, lack of local markets or processors.
- farm too small given economies of scale and “lumpiness” of technical inputs.
- sunk costs/fixed investments in specialized machinery/buildings.
- farm operating successfully as a specialized grain or livestock operation.
- family labour availability a limiting factor.
- no apparent heir, or family disinterested in farm and farming.
- family dynamics a limiting factor.
- reliance on hired labour requires cash flow and simplified management scheme.

- cannot attract or afford skilled, dedicated, hired labour.
- relying on custom farming or farm management services.
- lack of specialized farm services or transportation.
- lack of security re tenure, or the character of the landlord-tenant relationship.
- lack of solidarity, cohesion, or facilitating leadership locally.
- a declining local economy inhibits private and public investment.

Individual circumstances may preclude diversification. One may be planning to exit farming for reasons of age or ill health. One may lack the capital or credit necessary to finance additional new activities, especially if one is already labouring under a heavy debt load. One may lack the skills, experience, and connections necessary to successfully produce and market new products. One may be committed, for perfectly rational reasons, to livelihood strategies that preclude greater diversification of the farm enterprise: for example, a career or full-time employment off the farm.

The situation and circumstances of the farm itself may constitute a barrier to many kinds of diversification. The farm may be distant from markets and suppliers, and there may be no local market or handler/processor for many kinds of agricultural commodities. The farm may be too small to support additional activities at a commercially viable scale, or more people. The farmer may have invested heavily in specialized machinery or buildings. These represent sunk costs or fixed costs that must be taken into account when considering options for developing the enterprise. Until these investments have been amortized, the most reasonable option may be to continue with the present enterprise mix. Success may also inhibit diversification. Perhaps the farm is operating quite successfully as a specialized crop or livestock enterprise. Expansion using the current mix and approach may prove to be the surest and most lucrative option for increasing income.

As with factors enhancing the prospects for diversification, family and labour issues figure prominently among the social and economic factors that may restrict diversification.

Whether because of off-farm employment, age, health, or family size, the availability of family labour can be a limiting factor. Diversification is not supported where there is no apparent heir, or where the family is disinterested in farming or rural living. This may reflect excellent off-farm opportunities, but it may also reflect difficult family dynamics that reduce the likelihood that spouses or young people will become involved in the enterprise in any way, shape, or form.

Reliance on hired labour or custom farming services may also constitute barriers to diversification of the farm enterprise. Here again, the relationships are complex and certainly not deterministic. Heavy reliance on nonfamily hired farm labour may require a somewhat simplified farm management plan, and a closer eye on both cash flow and the bottom line. All of these constraints may reduce the flexibility to experiment with new commodities, processes, or activities, especially when there are start-up costs and greater management complexities involved. In many cases it may not be possible to attract or pay for the kind of skilled and dedicated employees who would be required. Those who are unwilling or unable to farm on their own account may also find it difficult to institute a regime involving a complex crop mix, specialty crops, or exotic livestock. Custom farming services do not want to deal with unfamiliar or management-intensive crops. Nor are they likely to get involved in specialized livestock operations, beyond custom feeding of cattle or management of large hog barns. On the other hand, certain kinds of specialized farm services may be necessary to support a more diversified operation. The absence of such services locally can be a barrier to successful diversification. Examples range from specialized transport services, to veterinarians experienced in exotic livestock, to natural gas or three-phase electrical service.

The changing structure of agriculture and the operation of local real estate markets can also affect the propensity of farmers to diversify their farm operations. Some 40 percent of Saskatchewan farmland is rented or leased from private parties, or from government agencies. The pattern for arrangements between private landlords and tenants has moved towards greater cash rent as opposed to crop-share arrangements. Both these tenure arrangements tend to be

short term, at least in terms of the legal arrangements. Annual rental agreements are typical. This means that neither the tenant nor the landlord is assured that the relationship will endure. Moreover, the tenant generally has little incentive to make investments in soil building, or in improvements such as irrigation, fencing, or livestock facilities. Where the landlord has little personal connection to agriculture, it may also be hard to negotiate sharing of costs on new initiatives.

Conditions in the local regional economy and the character of local community life can also affect willingness to invest on-farm and in agro-industrial projects such as processing or equipment-manufacturing facilities. Lack of solidarity, cohesion, or facilitating leadership can also inhibit collective and individual action re such developments. Moreover, where there has been a long-term decline in the local economy in terms of population, business activity, services, or real estate values, this may tend to restrict both private and public investment in diversification projects.

#### *5.4 Some Concluding Observations*

The research reported here is exploratory in a number of senses. It has been designed to uncover new issues in agricultural diversification, to combine old and new ways of examining these questions, and to attempt some innovation in the conceptualization of the problems and possibilities. It is also exploratory in that the resources available were modest in relation to the large and complex topics broached. Nevertheless, the effort has yielded a good harvest in terms of evidence, insights, and provocative questions for further study. While neither the issues nor the contemporary context lend themselves to easy prescriptions or prognostication, several observations bear restating. These are, in some sense, a synthesis of the literature reviewed, the cases studied, and the other analytical exercises involving census data and the construction of a typology.

First, diversification requires people who are engaged, committed, creative, and both willing and able to experiment. People provide the motivation and the muscle for diversification; they also provide the meaning and the measure. Agricultural and rural diversification is

something done by and for people, not merely for some abstract calculation of competitiveness or financial return on investment.

Second, diversification in rural Saskatchewan requires cultural diversity in terms of vision and approach, organizational arrangements, and investments of many kinds. The organizational innovations required include appropriate policies and institutional arrangements at the macro end of the scale, as well as appropriate ways of doing business and working together, both in the household and in other work and decision-making contexts. There is need for arrangements that equitably share the costs and the benefits. There is a need also for holism—an integrated and multifaceted approach that simultaneously addresses a range of societal objectives. Projects should be evaluated in terms of potential for long-term regional economic multipliers, but also for the likelihood of a good “social multiplier” and “environmental multiplier” (Gertler 1999).

Last, but not least, agricultural and rural diversification requires high levels of co-operation, collaboration, and partnerships with many kinds of contributors. This points to the importance of social capital and its reproduction. We are talking here about circles and networks of various kinds that function well thanks to a history of reciprocity, inclusion, and trust. Rural diversification requires communities that are communities both of interest and of place, people who care enough about each other, about their collective future, and about their neighbours, to make the kinds of investments necessary. Without mutual interest and some sense of shared possibilities, nothing durable or worth calling a legacy can be built.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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ACS	Agriculture Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan
ADF	Agricultural Development Fund
AIMS	Agriculture Institute of Management of Saskatchewan Inc.
B & B	Bed and Breakfast
CSA	Community Shared Agriculture
CU	Credit Union
CWB	Canadian Wheat Board
FCC	Farm Credit Corporation
IRAP	Industrial Research Assistance Program
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NFU	National Farmer's Union
NRC	National Research Council
OCIA	Organic Crop Improvement Association
PARD	Partnership Agreement on Rural Development
PAWBD	Partnership Agreement on Water-Based Economic Development
PFRA	Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration
PIMA	Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association
PMU	Pregnant Mare Union
RDC	Rural Development Corporation/Co-operative
REDA	Regional Economic Development Association
RM	Rural Municipality
SAF	Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
SEDCO	Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation
SIBED	Saskatchewan Irrigation-Based Economic Development Program
SPI	Saskatchewan Pork International
SRC	Saskatchewan Research Council
TISASK	Tourism Industry of Saskatchewan
U of R	University of Regina
U of S	University of Saskatchewan
WED	Department of Western Economic Diversification
WDF	Western Diversification Fund

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# APPENDICES

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## *Abstract*

This study combines several methodologies to investigate agricultural diversification in Saskatchewan. The intent is to understand and conceptualize the historical development of diversification and specialization, and to investigate social, organizational, and institutional factors. The first approach is an analysis of key developments in the evolution of farming systems, and the creation of a typography featuring three models of farming that capture crucial changes. The second approach employs agricultural statistics to produce historical indexes of provincial diversification in crops and livestock. This is complemented by an analysis of farm-level diversification, which examines the relationship between the number of types of commodities produced, and key social and structural variables. This draws on custom tabulations of the 1981, 1986, and 1991 Census of Agriculture. The third approach is an analysis of twenty-five case studies. Interviews were carried out with key actors in enterprises selected to represent a range of situations with respect to location, scale, organization, and type of initiative. These interviews were combined with other evidence to create a summary profile of each enterprise.

Successful projects demonstrate several forms of technical, economic, and social innovation. Partnerships, joint ventures, and other advanced forms of organization are common. Some diversification projects are organized specifically to provide opportunities for family members. Various kinds of education and experience, including high-quality off-farm work, can be invaluable.

Diversification springs from many roots. The starting point may be financial stress or success. Most of the enterprises profiled have received technical or financial help from governments. Entrepreneurs may gain skills in public employment or as members of public boards and committees. Many belong to industry organizations. The formation of diversification projects frequently depends on links through kin networks, local organizations, and cultural activities. These involve mutual knowledge, trust, and social ties that are elements of “social capital” and characteristics of stable communities. Personal and organizational connections are used to raise capital, to link with partners and customers, to gain specialized knowledge, to recruit employees, and for social support. Competitors may function as a network for exchanging information, for negotiating with governments, and for funding joint ventures in research or marketing. For female entrepreneurs, the presence of other women as managers, business representatives, organization leaders, and professionals, can be crucial.

Diversification is often concentrated in clusters, which points to the importance of appropriate infrastructure and supports, as well as a climate of confidence. Diversification requires diversity in terms of vision, approach, organization, and contributions. Diversification requires communities of interest and of place to make the necessary investments. The organizational and social innovations required include appropriate policies and institutional arrangements, as well as suitable ways of collaborating in the household and in other contexts. There is a need for integrated approaches that address economic, social, and environmental goals. Diversification can be assessed in terms of its “multiplier effect” in each of these areas. There is a need for sustainable diversification at all levels rather than pseudo-diversification that squanders resources, community, and long-term development.

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