



## Netherlands to Canada

Thousands of miles from family, an immigrant couple gets a helping hand from their new neighbors.

### MICHEL AND HANNEKE CAMPS

**AGES:** 31 and 31, respectively

**CHILDREN:** Kevin, Lisa, Kim and Nick.

**OPERATION:** CP Farms, Barnell, Alberta; 1,750 acres of potatoes, sunflowers, small grains, sugar beets and corn. "We grow potatoes for French fries, corn for whiskey, sunflowers for the confection industry, sugar beets and small grains," says Camps. Average value per acre of farmland and buildings in Alberta in 2007: \$1,221; in 2010: \$1,506.

**MASSEY FERGUSON® EQUIPMENT:** MF8680, MF8670, MF7499, GC2400, MF4880

**DEALER:** Hanlon Ag Centre

**GOALS:** Grow the farm more, but not so large he won't have a hand in the day-to-day management.

### HAVING IMMIGRATED FROM HOLLAND,

Michel and Hanneke Camps bought their first row-crop farm on the plains of western Canada nearly 10 years ago. The couple has thrived in their new home at Barnwell, and their operation has grown to 1,750 acres of rented and purchased ground, the latter now valued at some three times the price of the average for Alberta.

Farming was a natural choice for Michel since he grew up in a family of row-croppers in The Netherlands. But living thousands of miles from his mom and dad taught him to seek help from many sources as he grew. He had to jump some hurdles and learned plenty of lessons along the way.

"I've learned to listen to people who've been doing this a lot longer than I have," Camps says. "I've listened to neighbors and colleagues, people I've trusted," he notes, adding that there are "a lot of Dutch immigrants in this area. It was nice that people could explain things to us in our own language when we needed it."

He gives credit to numerous others, including, he says, the previous owner of his farm, who "helped us hang on until we proved to the processors that we could do what we said we could do."

Another friend, Wayne van Giessen, a former boss, has also been a great mentor and source of information. "He had farmed here 25 years. Still, once in a while, we meet for coffee."

Michel settled on his crop mix for highest potential profit and to have some control over timing of harvest and payment. "We grow frying potatoes because that's

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Average age of a U.S. farmer in 1978: 50.3 years /// Average age of a Canadian farmer in 2011: 52 /// Average age of a Canadian farmer in 1991: 47.5