

**MacDon**<sup>®</sup>

The People • The Passion • The Product

# PERFORMANCE



## Yeah, Buddy!

Because of Keith Reeds' rolling, rocky, and uneven terrain, he was happy to make friends with Contour Buddy!

### Professional Strength Harvest Performance

When researching his decision to purchase a MacDon FlexDraper<sup>®</sup>, Eric Wright found out it is the header of choice among the Custom Cutter community

### Field Level Design Thinking

MacDon Design Engineer and farm kid Andrew Bell has found a rewarding career in the customer focused process that MacDon brings to the field.

### Class Of MacDon 2020

Country boy Connor Fehr wanted his grad photos to be a tribute to his family's farming history and his future.

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# Yeah, Buddy!

Because of Keith Reeds' rolling, rocky, and uneven terrain, he was happy to make friends with Contour Buddy!

*Keith Reeds*

**J**ust 90 minutes northeast of Toronto, Ontario's Kawartha Lakes district with its 250 lakes and rivers offers a convenient escape from the congestion of Canada's largest city. But tourism is only part of the region's economic story. Agriculture is also an important contributor, and almost 1300 farms can be found scattered throughout the area.

It is here on the farm of Keith Reeds that MacDon demoed its new Contour Buddy, a FlexDraper® attachment that allows the header to be held off the ground at a steady height, while still permitting it to fully float and flex. Now, for the first time, operators can reliably achieve a consistent stubble height over rolling, uneven terrain.

Reeds, who has now owned five FlexDrapers with his purchase of a new FD140 last year, says that his farm may have been selected for the demo because of his willingness to trial new ideas.

"I say yes to everything, which is why I think my MacDon rep Joel Woods thought we were a good place to try the Contour Buddy," joked Reeds. "Previously, I had been using gauge wheels and I never really did care for the job they did for us. That's why I think Joel suggested that we try the attachment. Plus, he also knows my combine operator really well so he knew he would get some good feedback from us."

A strip-till farmer for the last eight seasons, Reeds crops about 3,500 acres (1400 hectares) near the town of Lindsay. Up to 2,000 of his acres (800 hectares) are set aside for soybean production with the remainder split 50/50 between corn and wheat.

"The land around here is gently rolling with some hilly ground to the south of us. The soil is variable, ranging from clay loam to sandy loam,



*Consistent stubble height on rolling terrain.*



*Contour Buddy on Keith Reeds FD140 MacDon FlexDraper®*



so we've got a bit of everything plus lots of stones."

It was in his wheat that Reeds first deployed the Contour Buddy last summer, hoping that the attachment could help him achieve more precise control of his stubble height as residue management always plays an important role in strip-till farming.

"We set our Contour Buddy on its lowest setting because we wanted to get as much straw as we could. We've got some rolling ground with some dips and dives, so cutting really low is usually a challenge for us."

While Reeds admits that he made only a few passes himself with the Contour Buddy, he says that his combine operator gave it a thumbs up simply by not reporting any issues with the attachment.

"He's a super employee for me, but a man of few words. If something is not working he will tell me 'it's not worth [the money].'" But Reeds

the head if you need to go from wheat into soybeans and go full flex on the ground"

"I would recommend the Contour Buddy to anybody with rolling fields, even if the sticker price seems a bit high. It's the same story as when I bought my first MacDon head; everyone said that MacDon's are a lot of money, but to me they are worth every penny you spend. It's been the same with every new MacDon head I've bought."

Reeds' first experience with MacDon started about 10 years ago when he purchased a FlexDraper to cut his wheat and soybeans for his Case IH combine. This was shortly before he started strip-tilling on his farm and both decisions are in keeping with his willingness to explore new ideas for his farm.

"When it comes to new practices and technologies I'm not always on the leading edge, but in this area I guess you could say I'm an innovator. I got into strip-tilling because the idea kind of intrigued me. I had gone to a few

## "I would recommend the Contour Buddy to anybody with rolling fields."

didn't need to hear a vote of approval from his operator, as he could see the results for himself.

"Overall, the Contour Buddy did just a phenomenal job for us. The height of our wheat stubble was the same all across our entire farm. Operation of the combine was also way easier for my operator because he could just drop the head and go, kind of like being in FlexDraper mode. It not only helped the combine run smoother, he was a lot less grumpy."

Both Reeds and his operator were also pleased at how easy it was to install the Contour Buddy, which they did themselves.

"There are not too many bolts to install it. We originally had it on our FD75 at first, but then we moved it over to our new FD140. There were just a few adjustments to make switching it, but it wasn't a big deal. It is also very simple to take on and off once you have the hardware on there; like only 10 minutes to take them off

demonstrations and I liked the idea of being able to do minimum tillage as well as being able to put fertilizer right in the ground. At the time we had been doing some no-till vertical tillage, but I just didn't like having to broadcast the fertilizer and maybe losing some of the nutrients. It felt safer putting the fertilizer right in the ground with strip-till."

While Reeds believes strip-tilling has been an overall benefit for his farm, he says he doesn't have any strong numbers to confirm it one way or another.

"I've either seen benefits or I am really stubborn," chuckled Reeds. "It's really hard to tell because we don't do head to head comparisons. On our strips that have been established for a number of years, grid and soil sampling indicates that our potash levels have come up. Yield wise it's harder to say because we don't really measure side by side in the same field. When I listen to the



coffee shop talk and what everyone else is getting for yields I'm thinking I am not leaps and bounds ahead for what I have invested,

But when it comes to his decision to move to MacDon drapers, Reeds is much more confident it was the right one.

some new innovation so I never have any reason to switch. In fact, my dealer seems to want to sell MacDon heads more than their own heads. They must feel that MacDon is a good quality product for them to stick with them like that."

**"MacDon headers have proven themselves to me over the years."**

And some of his dealer's confidence in MacDon likely comes from his own farm's experience with the product.

but then again are they telling me their best yields while I am only reporting my average yields? That's something I am not sure of."

"MacDon headers have proven themselves to me over the years. Every time I look at a new flex head they keep seeming to come up with

"My local salesman works for me a bit after hours. Luckily, he likes to work late at night so that allows us old guys to go to bed. For him he likes the work because he gets to see the performance of the equipment that he is selling. His opinion has definitely played a big part in



*Contour Buddy in action on Keith Reeds' farm*

swaying me over to the MacDon side.”

That sales influence must also be having an impact on other farmers in the area as Reeds says he has seen more FlexDrapers in use on neighbours' farms.

“I would say that most of the guys that are innovative around here are buying FlexDrapers, but it has taken a while for that to happen. Price has been the major barrier. These are the same people who said back when I bought my first FlexDraper that they couldn't see themselves spending the extra money. But in the end the FlexDraper is just one of those things that you have to bite the bullet, sign the check, and then be happy.

One of Reeds' most recent MacDon purchases is MacDon's new C Series corn head. Despite a lighter than normal corn yield last season, he reports that the header has lived up to his high expectations for MacDon equipment.

“Overall, the build quality seems to be very good and maintenance has also been pretty straight forward. There are some nice grease banks to grease with and there's not too much maintenance to it actually. To be fair though, we have only run it one season, but it did perform just fine.”

In purchasing his C Series Reeds decided not to go with a key feature on his previous corn head.

“We decided not to go with a chopper on C Series because right now we are strip-tilling in the spring and then planting our corn on the strip. Then, when we harvest in the fall, we move the strip over 15” to go to the center of the row to avoid pulling up root balls and stalks of corn. If we were using a full chopping head to harvest we would put too much residue across those rows, and that would give us problems if it was wet.”

“I was a little bit nervous using the new C Series head without the choppers on it, but we haven't had any issues. It's done a terrific job.” 



# Professional Strength Harvest Performance

When researching his decision to purchase a MacDon FlexDraper®, Eric Wright found out it is the header of choice among the Custom Cutter community.

*Eric Wright*



**W**hen Eric Wright and his father Bill Wright of Wright's Agriculture – a U.K based family farm and contracting business – was considering investing in MacDon FlexDrapers to amp up his harvesting capabilities, the first thing he did was turn to the internet to do some research.

He looked at the equipment that Custom Cutters most often used in the United States and Australia – two countries that make up much of the world's harvest – and noticed one glaring similarity.

"They've got different colored combines on the back, but then all of them on the front have black (MacDon) headers," he says. "So, if every custom combine is running these, that's saying one thing."

Initially Eric was skeptical of purchasing from a Canadian-based company with a parts warehouse in Germany and a limited dealer network, but it was a demonstration by MacDon that fully convinced Eric the MacDon FDI40 FlexDraper was the right product for the job.

"We had an amazing demonstration from a MacDon FlexDraper; it was just a complete turning point in harvesting for us because where we'd struggled, we didn't realize how much we struggled until we put a FlexDraper on and it just made the whole operation effortless," says Eric.

"We were doing a good job, we were going quicker, the combine was always full, and we just couldn't believe the improvement in productivity by putting this on the front of the combine."

And the customer service Eric experienced throughout the purchase process and beyond only further increased his belief and trust in MacDon and its products. He only has positive things to say about his interactions with the company and its staff as they guided him through the demonstration, purchase and installation and was impressed by the knowledge base of everyone he encountered along the way.

"Right from sales all the way through service, everybody that you deal with has got experience with the products and you've got the confidence that if you have a problem -- and touch wood it's been amazing so far, we haven't needed any real support -- that we know there's the people and the parts available to us to get us back up and running and it's just been amazing to see that," he says.

Wright's Agriculture has now replaced the last auger header for a third MacDon FDI40.

The addition of the FlexDrapers to Wright's fleet has made all the difference in the world for this past fall's harvest, especially on uneven ground and in uneven weather. The header allows his team to start earlier and work longer without issue, and to push through conditions that would normally bring progress to a halt while the product's flex-float technology helps the header glide across the fields without clogging the knives up.

Eric says the spring barley, spring oats and peas, in particular, have benefitted greatly by the use of the FlexDraper.

"We wondered exactly how we were going to get it up; it had

flattened badly, the ground was uneven, we just wondered how much we were going to leave on the floor," Eric explains.

"But when we put the FlexDraper on, it just effortlessly hoovered it all up. We were travelling 3 km/h (2 mph) faster, we're picking it all up and we're getting another one of our big square bales (0.5T) extra to the acre as well which was just completely amazing."

**"It would be raining or it would be snowing, but I was really impressed that the header was able to cut through everything that it did."**

"And we know that if we're coming up to some bad weather, if we wanted to run through the night we've got more chance of being able to do it with the MacDon FlexDraper than we would anything else that we've had before."

Wright's Agriculture, established in 1946 by Eric's Grandfather Mr J.N.Wright, primarily grows wheat, rapeseed, winter barley, spring barley, spring oats and some combinable maize on 7400 acres (3000 hectares) of land in Leicestershire and South Nottinghamshire in the East Midlands of England.

Sustainable farming is a priority for Wright's Agriculture, and the farming company has been an early adopter of techniques and organic products that work toward more environmentally friendly farming.

In 2018-19, Eric and his team started "Project Sheep," which saw 250 acres (100 hectares) of budget cover crops sown and then grazed off by sheep. If the harvest results from the next spring barley crop are successful, more cover crops will be planted.

On the flip side, Wright's also has the facilities to store, dry and sell the grain they grow for their customers and take pride in their fleet of modern machinery and wide range of cultivation equipment and techniques that are used to "make the best of the unpredictable weather and ground conditions," and that now includes the FDI40s.

Wright is still running some auger headers as well and says they are more limited in terms of when they can run and for how long. But the real difference between the auger and FlexDraper becomes especially apparent when they run alongside each other.

"When we've been running the MacDon and the auger head together, it's really noticeable in the straw row as to how the crops have been fed into the front of the machine," says Eric.

"We'd see lots of little lumps all the way through the straw row out the back of the auger head, whereas the straw row out the back of the MacDon header is just completely smooth. And you hear that in the engine, you see that in the performance in the machine, everything has just run so consistently.



"Our harvest used to be wheat and rape, it was easy, auger heads were not a problem... spring barley, spring oats, winter barley, all these crops, they are so difficult to get through an auger head, you need perfect conditions. The difference with the FlexDraper is that in less than perfect conditions you get a perfect result and awesome output."

The combine operators who work for Wright's Agriculture love the new headers, too. As Eric says, there was no hesitation and only "pure excitement" after seeing what the FlexDraper was able to accomplish during the previous harvest.

And even though the assumption would be that a 40-foot auger would be easier to handle than a 40-foot FlexDraper, Eric has found the MacDon "effortless" to use in any situation.

"The two operators on the MacDon FlexDraper were over the moon; not once have they ever said, 'There's a problem with the header, it's not feeding well,' or, 'We've got to stop because it's not going in.' That has completely transformed and revolutionized this business in the sense that the header is now not the restriction factor of the harvest," Eric says.



This past year proved to be a particularly challenging one in terms of the harvest. A higher-than-usual rainfall throughout the summer and into the fall brought many harvests to a complete standstill as soggy ground continued to get wetter.

Without the FlexDraper in his arsenal, Eric is confident he would have lost crop, as they would have been unable to pick it up off the floor or wouldn't have been able to work as long or as hard on those few good-weather days.

Because of the FlexDraper, Eric was able to recover all of the crop, as well as the straw.

"We were looking at some of the flat crop fields and worrying about what we were going to do, but then you put the MacDon in there and once you've pulled out the field with the combine it looks like a perfectly stood crop that you've raised off the floor with nothing left behind. Nothing else we've tried was able to do that so consistently as the MacDon FlexDraper," says Eric.

"I can't quantify the extra output and the extra crop that we've got

that we would have lost on all these laid crops if we hadn't have had the MacDon," he continues.

"The whole harvest goes so smoothly; where you're normally worried about what the header is doing holding the combine back, now it's the combine that is the holdback, because it's got a constant feed and we've been able to make the most of these poor conditions with the FlexDraper."

For Eric, using the MacDon FlexDraper has proved it's not necessarily what's behind the header that makes the most impact; the header itself is key, and now that he's gone MacDon, he can't imagine going back.

"It's so important, it's completely transformed the combine; how it performs, what we're able to deliver with it. I love coming to see how our operators are getting on in the day and seeing perfectly level stubbles that ourselves, our customers, we can all be proud of," says Eric.

"And knowing you're able to get that extra productivity out of it as well and finish the block and get moved even if it's early hours of the morning, that to us means everything because it's keeping customers happy and just getting the harvest done as quickly and as efficiently as possible." 



# Field Level Design Thinking

MacDon Design Engineer and farm kid Andrew Bell has found a rewarding career in the customer focused process that MacDon brings to the field.



Andrew Bell

**S**ometimes the smallest thing can have the biggest impact on the course of one's life. In the case of Design Engineer Andrew Bell, it was not something small, but something downright tiny, that would set him on a path to creating products for MacDon.

The year was 2004 and Bell was in his first year of mechanical engineering at the University of Manitoba. He had entered university pursuing a degree in computer engineering, but had switched to mechanical with the idea of perhaps finding work with a major automotive manufacturer someday. Then, Bell heard about a team that was being formed to enter the ASABE (American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers) 1/4 Scale Tractor Student Design Competition.

"It was kind of word of mouth hearing about the team in 2010 and I just joined it," recalls Bell. "The big draw for me was it was similar to the SAE (Society of Automobile Engineers) type of competition where they build race cars. While that competition is more established with lots of people involved, this one was fairly new so I could just jump right in. What was appealing to me; it wasn't a race car and more on the ag side of things, but there was more freedom to design at the time."

The annual 1/4 scale tractor contest was created by ASABE to provide students with practical experience working on projects that could better prepare them for careers as professional engineers. Bell says that he

enjoyed the competition so much that he also participated in 2011, his graduation year.

“Because you are still in classes, the big challenge with the competition is getting everything done on time in addition to your regular school work. It’s a fair bit of work because you have to do almost everything yourself from scratch. You have to have manufacturing abilities like welding, plus procurement and financing skills to find parts and sponsorships to pay for all the stuff.”

But Bell found that he thrived under the added pressure, and enjoyed being able to work on designing a complete machine from start to finish.

“I really liked the full machine aspect of it. That competition is probably where I really got a taste for design engineering.”

The final piece for Bell’s career path fell into place with him getting a summer job at MacDon as a test technician. Coming from a farm background himself (he grew up on a family farm near Deloraine, Manitoba), the work would spark in him a growing appreciation for the challenges involved in building agricultural equipment.

“When I started into mechanical engineering the thought that I wanted to design cars was always part of it. But the more I got into it the more I understood that if I went to work for a big company like Ford or GM that I would likely get stuck working on only a small part of the final product. Whereas, working at a company like MacDon you get to work on the whole thing, and you’re not just stuck in your own little niche area.”

“The agricultural side of the project also kind of grabbed me because it’s close to home. I felt I understood the customer a bit more than if I was designing products for use in another sector. The pride in your work goes a little bit further when you’ve grown up around the customer.”

Following his graduation in 2011, Bell transitioned his summer work experience into full-time employment at MacDon. Initially, he was tasked with working on a lot of “proof of concept type of stuff,” all of which was eventually abandoned or shelved for a later date. Bell says that his early experience is a common one in the design department.

“At MacDon we are constantly looking at new ideas. I can’t say how many different prototypes we might work on in a given year but we have a whole office of people working on new concepts.”

Eventually, Bell was assigned to the team working on the next generation combine adapter, which would eventually become today’s FM100 Float Module.

“That was kind of a milestone for me to get to work on something that made it to the market and people could buy.”

Bell says that working on the FM100 gave him a front row seat to just how intensive MacDon’s R&D process is.

“In working on the adapter we traveled to various parts of the U.S. to test different prototypes with farmers there, as well as went to Germany a couple of times to test the equipment under the most challenging conditions that we could find.”

Bell says that his R&D work with MacDon has also brought him to places like New Zealand (four times) and even once to Brazil to test a prototype.

“I guess I have seen a decent chunk of the world working here. Getting to the field as much as possible is something that the company has always pushed us to do as designers. I firmly believe, along with many people at MacDon, that most really good ideas come from being in the field and not necessarily the office or shop. Especially if you can be out there with the customer, then it becomes a whole different game.”

“The pride in your work goes a little bit further when you’ve grown up around the customer.”

“In fact, we get quite a few of our ideas from the farmers that we test our equipment with, as well as from the dealers we work with. For example, just this last year we finally got around to putting something together based on an idea that a farmer had been pushing us to look at for a while. In the end it didn’t work as well as the customer thought it might, but at least we tried it.”

It’s MacDon’s willingness to try new things that impressed Bell from his very first days working for the company.

“The big thing that really grabbed me when I first started here is that if you have a good idea that has potential to add value for the customer, then we will probably develop it far enough to test it in the field. MacDon doesn’t shut things down quickly. In fact, just the opposite; we’ll build something just to see if it works. It would be hard for me to say for sure, but I suspect that at most other companies you would have to work much harder to justify the investment to get an idea to move forward.”

Beyond MacDon, Bell also draws on his experience on his family’s farm when he thinks about machine design, as both his father and grandfather spent a lot of time rebuilding or adapting older equipment.

“The whole family is not afraid to build things. My grandfather would take old machinery and reconfigure or repurpose it. I don’t know if a lot of his ideas were original to him, but he was featured on an episode of the Inventors Series for the Prairie Farm Report.”

Bell says that what he learned watching his father and grandfather plus his own experience tinkering with the family’s equipment, keeps him focused on designing the best equipment possible.

“MacDon’s number one objective is performance, but if you can also design something to be mechanically simple, that’s a plus because something will always go wrong. Thanks to my experience, either in the field with MacDon or back home, it’s easier to put myself in the shoes of the guy who is going to own the machine I am working on. I know what it is like to be working on a product and start swearing at engineers who put it together. I try not to be one of those guys.” 

# PERFORMANCE MINUTE

Helping you get the most Harvesting Performance from your MacDon!

## MacDon's Spring Check-Up Check List:

1. Review your Operator's Manual to reacquaint yourself with your MacDon machine.
2. Follow any pre-season recommendations in the Operator's Manual.
3. Contact your dealer for any suggestions he may have relating to your local area and product. (If required, your MacDon dealer can perform your pre-season check for you. They can also supply you with any necessary parts not replaced at the end of last season.)
4. Check the machine over for any storage damage that could be caused by such things as other equipment impacting it, rodents, etc.
5. Retighten all belts loosened for storage. While doing this, check for cracks or wear and replace any suspect components.
6. Replace any worn, broken, or damaged parts; especially cutting components.
7. Reinstall the battery if necessary.
8. Check the pressure of the tires to be sure they are correctly inflated.
9. Lubricate all fittings and make sure they take grease. This would have also been done in the fall, so don't over-grease.
10. Check all fluid levels to ensure that they are correct.

### Additional Steps For Windrowers:

11. Put fresh fuel in the machine.
12. Warm the machine up and check that all systems are operating properly.

**You should now be ready for the upcoming season!**



**SCAN HERE!**

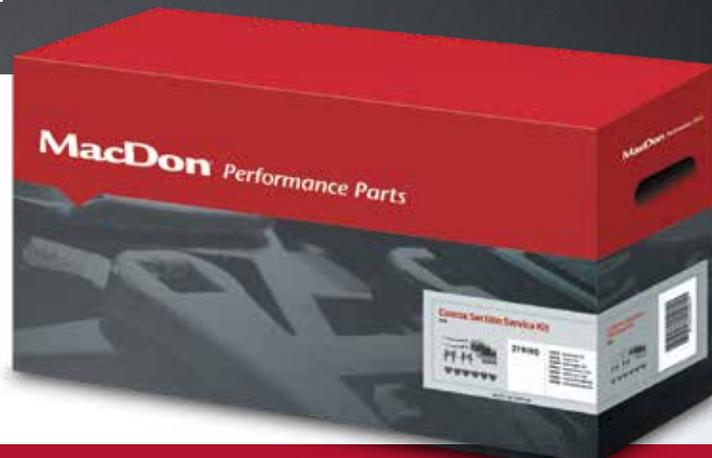
Scan here to watch set-up videos for your MacDon machine! Or visit [MacDon.com/Support](http://MacDon.com/Support)

## MacDon® Performance Parts

Keep your MacDon at peak performance with MacDon Performance Parts.

### Be Prepared for Performance!

MacDon Performance Parts Kits are designed for convenience. Choose from a variety of kits packed with common high wear items for your MacDon Drapers and Windrowers. Keep them on hand and ensure a smooth running harvest, every time.





# Class Of MacDon 2020

Country boy Connor Fehr wanted his grad photos to be a tribute to his family's farming history and his future.

Connor Fehr

**T**ypical senior pictures are filled with bright-toothed teens in their football jerseys and band uniforms, or posing on a chair with a rose or in front of a city skyline with a blurry, glamour-shot background.

These photos are meant to capture a specific moment in a teen's life, when things are about to change more than they ever have before as most head off to college and begin their adulthood.

But for 18-year-old Connor Fehr, what he does now is very similar to what he'll do later; he loves his family's farm and the work he will continue to do there and wanted to include that in his senior photo.

And so Fehr, who is being forced to finish out his senior year at home due to the coronavirus pandemic, cleaned up and waxed the family tractor for the occasion, deciding that would be the ideal backdrop.

When the time came to actually take the picture, Fehr also saw the combine nearby, complete with a MacDon header, and thought that may make for an even more memorable image.

"Well, I'm just a country boy and my brother took a picture with the tractor and I loved that picture, so I wanted one with the combine, too," Fehr says, explaining some farm staff were working with the MacDon header at the time.

"I pulled it up and we stole it from them for 15 minutes to take some pictures," he laughs.

The photo is a testament to Fehr's dedication for farming and the family legacy that has brought him to this point.

Fehr is the youngest of five siblings, and his family owns and runs a farm just a few miles outside of West Bend, Iowa, where they grow mostly beans and corn as well as some small seeded crops like oats and hay on their more than 2,000 acres (800 hectares) of land.

Fehr has been working these fields since he was a kid, learning how to farm organically from his dad and uncles.

"It's definitely a lot more work, a lot harder work to farm organically," he says. "It takes the whole summer, you're cultivating. You're not just spraying it once, it takes a lot more time. It's more like how they used to do it back in the day."

**"We do a lot of work in the shop, and that is what I love doing. I plan to further my education to better my engineering skills."**

Fehr plans to attend the Iowa State University in the fall to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering, a passion of his he would like to improve his skillset in.

"We do a lot of work in the shop, and that is what I love doing. I plan to further my education to better my engineering skills." Fehr says.

And while college does offer an opportunity to explore a different path, Fehr is happy to stay on the road he's already on and plans to continue to work on the family farm once he graduates in a few years.

"I've grown up raising all of our crops so that's pretty much the plan after university," says Fehr. **M**



***Grateful for those keeping food on our tables.***

*Thank you to the millions of farmers working the land and growing crops. Thank you to the thousands of employees at dealerships and in factories, making sure farmers can do their job. Thank you to the countless food supply chain workers on the road and in stores, ensuring there are food and medicine on the shelves.*

***Thank you for feeding the world.***