

Antique threshers prepped to set a record

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There could be an agriculture record broken this summer and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank will be the major benefactor, if it is.

An Arcola area farmer, Allen Fletcher, is expecting to be a part of the record-setting attempt since he will be participating in the world's largest pioneer harvest this summer in Austin, Manitoba.

Fletcher will be taking his antique threshing machine to that Manitoba centre on July 31 for Harvesting Hope: a World Record to Help the Hungry, where volunteers will attempt to break the Guinness World Record of "most threshing machines operating simultaneously," by running 125 antique machines at the same time to harvest a crop of wheat. The current record stands at 111 machines held by a group from St. Albert, Ontario.

Fletcher has volunteered his 1949 International Harvester Co. thresher to help break the record.

"We use the thresher every year," Fletcher told Shalylyn McMahon of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. In fact, he said, he prefers using the antique machine over a combine because of the satisfaction he gets from having restored it back to life. "I fix up all my machines, and I've got ones from 1923 to 1958."

Fletcher will be joined by neighbours, Dave Weightman, Wyatt Hall, Jim Singleton, Wade Van Dube, Gordon Dickison and Kyle Smith who will help him run the machine during the event.

"Restoring and using these machines are a retirement hobby of mine — an expensive hobby," said Fletcher with a laugh.

Proceeds from the event will support the efforts of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to help end global hunger and the Manitoba Agricultural Museum's work to preserve Manitoba's rural heritage.

Despite his interest in antique farm machines, Fletcher said the most threshers he's ever seen operating at the same time is four or five.

"It's going to be hard," said Fletcher, as he acknowledges the 125 threshing machine goal. "But, all we can do is try."

To set the new record, all threshing machines must operate simultaneously for at least five minutes. Harvest Hope's organizing committee plans to run all the machines for at least 20 minutes and thresh 75 acres of wheat. The event will begin at 4 p.m. in the east field at the annual Manitoba Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede.

The event is expected to attract over 500 volunteers from more than 100 Canadian communities for Harvesting Hope.

Those wishing to donate to the Foodgrains Bank, which is noted for their personal delivery of grain to poverty stricken areas of the world, may do so at www.harvestinghope.ca