

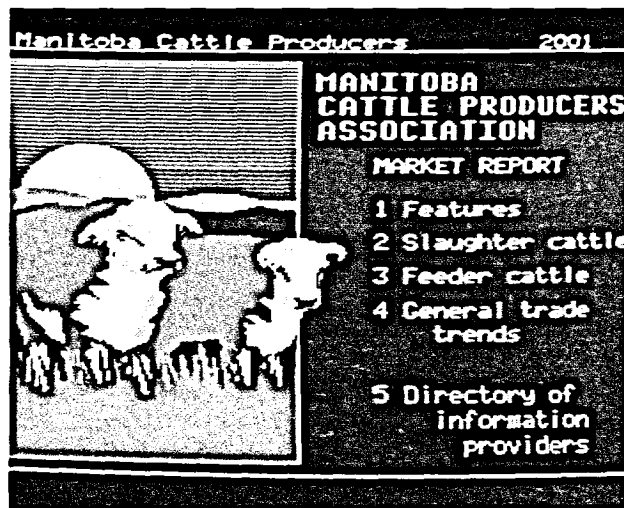
GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT

Grassroots, an agricultural database designed to meet the needs of modern farmers, was the world's first commercial NAPLPS videotex system.

A joint effort of the Manitoba Telephone System (MTS) and Infomart, a major Canadian electronic publishing company, Grassroots was launched commercially in May 1981.

Grassroots offers users information on crops, education, farm labour pools, energy, farm management, supplies and services, market reports, weather, financial news, financial planning aids, food, government services, livestock, money management, mortgages, insurance, products, and many other subjects.

Data that is highly volatile, such as weather, is used frequently. Users can access World Weatherwatch, the most sophisticated, accurate, up-to-date computer-generated satellite weather forecasting service available.



Forecasts are revised three times daily and provide weather information for approximately a 50-mile radius around most farms. In addition, current and long-term forecasts for both the Prairies and North America, as well as daily forecasts for temperature and rain are available. Soon to come are computer-generated maps showing growing degree days and soil moisture content.

Market data seem to be the most valuable information and one farmer says he paid for the first year's use of his system with just one deal he made based on information provided by Grassroots.

Farmers can access the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange for complete price and volume information for all on-board grains traded in the futures market, on a 15-minute delay directly from the trading floor.

Also available is the Herald Grain Newsletter pinpointing current market trends in the futures market, a weekly summary of the supply and movement of existing stocks of grain in Canada, and daily comprehensive information on prices for all grades of cattle for the major markets in Canada and the United States.

In the future, emphasis will be placed on providing comparable service and data, plus an extensive array of business data so that farmers will have access to all relevant information for the profitable operation of their businesses.

The growth of the system has been steady, from 50 terminals in 1981 to over 1,500 paying subscribers expected by the end of 1983. At present, there are 20,000 pages provided by 120 information suppliers.

Infomart, as systems operator, has responsibility for the service: operating the computer facility, a DEC VAX 780; developing and maintaining all software necessary to support it; obtaining and supporting information providers; providing page creation services; and promoting and marketing the service to the user community. MTS provides network support and terminal lease arrangements.

Grassroots was designed to meet the specific needs of the farming industry in Southern Manitoba. However, it has since expanded into Ontario and California and plans are afoot to develop a national service in the U.S.

For further information, contact: Infomart, 164 Merton Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4S 3A8.