Heads-up farmers: the number one complaint consistently shared by farm rental landowners is “my tenant takes me for granted and doesn’t communicate with me”. Improving your communication with your landowners or potential landlords can give you a competitive advantage.

If you rent land, addressing and curing this complaint of landowners should be one of your highest business management priorities for 2006. An important economic reality is that it would be easier and cheaper for the landowner to come up with a new tenant – than it would be for the tenant to come up with replacement land. The ironic point is that addressing and curing this lack of communication complaint should not be difficult or complicated.

If you don’t feel comfortable visiting in person or telephoning each of your landowners on a regular basis – consider developing a seasonal or quarterly newsletter. This letter should inform the landowner about:

- happenings since your last communication,
- crop progress and condition,
- weather update,
- new equipment and technology, and
- upcoming activities and events.

Don’t be afraid to share information about your personal or family activities. Remember, a goal of the communication is to develop a feeling of inclusion – that you are not taking the landowner for granted.

On the subject of activities or events – have you considered having a field day for your landowners? This could be an excellent way of expressing your appreciation for the opportunity of farming their land and impressing upon them the significant investment you have made in machinery and new technology. This would also be an excellent opportunity to invite some of your farm service and input representatives to your farm. In fact, they could help communicate to the landowners the need for their company’s services or products. An additional benefit, a field day would give you the opportunity and motivation to cleanup or cleanout the shop and machine shed.

Use your imagination for ways of enhancing your communication with your landowners and approach the task with a positive and creative attitude. The ball is in your hands – don’t drop it!