

Moving Forward

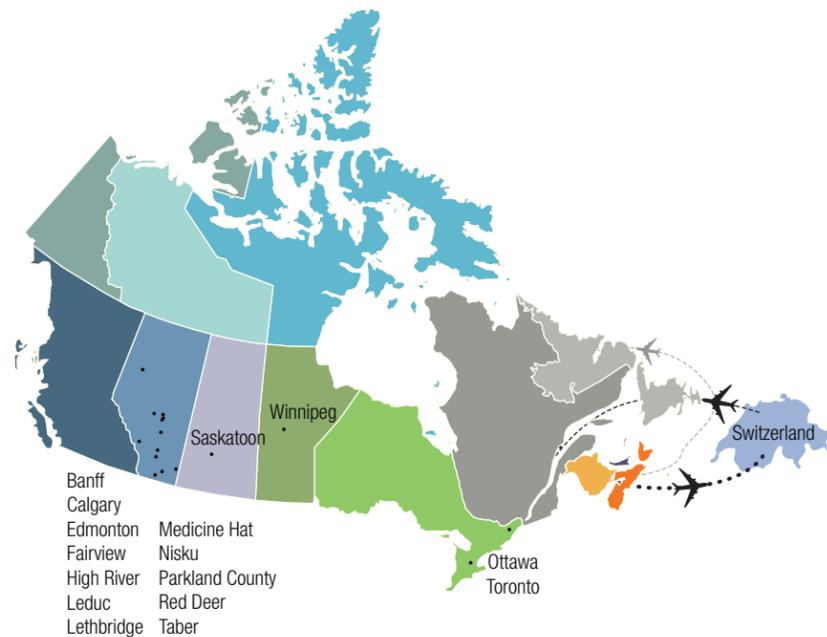
The coming year will see Alberta EFP go fully digital with the advent of online registration. It will also see the completion of the Species at Risk project. The push toward Sustainable Sourcing is expected to see most savvy producers apply to work on an EFP or upgrade the one they have. And the impetus for the provincial/territorial EFPs to work together on common projects and issues should move forward. Alberta EFP looks forward to the challenges and opportunities in the year ahead, and hopes that you will become more aware and involved in our work.

Director's Message

*"Well, I've been everywhere, man,
Breathed the prairie air, man
Travel, I've had my share, man
I've been everywhere."*

I've been to 12 locations in Alberta;
4 across Canada and even to
Switzerland.

I've connected with AAMDC, AB
Agriculture, AB Barley, AB Beef,
AB Milk, AB Wheat, ABIC, AIA, ALUS,
APMT, AWC, CFA, CRSB, Environment
and Climate Change Canada, Grey
Wooded Forage Assoc., Olds College,
Nutrient Management Program, PGA,
Potato Sustainability Initiative, SAI, SEAWA, SFFI, UFA, 10 other provincial/territorial EFPs, and more.



But the work of Alberta EFP is not only about Places and People – it's also about Products, Promotion and Partnership. The success of the EFP program is dependent upon building relationships and partnerships with stakeholders across the value chain. I see myself as a conduit, linking everything together and creating some sparks. The electricity comes from many.

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ALBERTA ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN

Annual Report 2016-17



Preparing Producers for a New Reality

Sustainable sourcing is fast becoming a reality that will change the way producers, markets and consumers act. There's a dizzying amount of information out there that can cause confusion or uncertainty. But one thing is definite: having an Alberta Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) will help producers prepare for this new reality.

Alberta EFP's work in 2016-17 focused on creating and cementing relationships with agricultural industry groups and government, so we could share or support sustainable sourcing initiatives. We also improved and expanded the EFP to better meet emerging international standards, formed strategic alliances to prepare producers for the increasing demand for sustainable sourcing, and provided information to a broad section of stakeholders.



Sustainable Sourcing

Alberta EFP was actively engaged with most of Alberta and Canada's ag industry groups and helped support initiatives to prepare their members for the increasing worldwide demand for sustainably-sourced agricultural products. Examples include the Canadian Roundtables on Sustainable Beef and on Sustainable Crops, the Dairy Farmers of Canada proAction program, the Potato Sustainability Initiative and ADM's Sustainable Growers program (canola).



The first step was gathering information and identifying which factors are likely to impact Alberta producers. Alberta EFP commissioned a study that captured key features, commonalities and differences among emerging programs. The Sustainable Sourcing Activities for Agricultural Products in Canada report was released in May 2016 with a great deal of interest from industry groups, agricultural media and others. It is available at albertaEFP.com.



National EFP

One thing the study revealed was the need to coordinate the various programs with an aim to present united Canadian market sustainable sourcing standards to the world. Since each industry group is concerned primarily with only one primary product, none seemed ideal to represent the whole. The provincial and territorial EFPs whose work spans all sectors seem the likely leaders. However, there is no national EFP or association that unites them. Alberta EFP's director Paul Watson initiated discussion with colleagues across the country and a steering committee to explore options of mutual interest was formed.

Watson was initially de facto chair and was subsequently named co-chair of the committee. The committee expanded its reach beyond the EFPs: industry groups and government soon got involved.

Their work led to the first National Environmental Farm Plan Summit, held in Ottawa on November 1, 2016. The Summit was chaired by Erin Gowriluk, government relations and policy manager at Alberta Wheat, and attracted a diverse audience from differing but complementary organizations. The Ottawa visit also enabled Watson and Gowriluk to meet with senior officials in the federal government who see this initiative as a potential component, not only for agriculture, but also the federal carbon tax plan. Discussions have continued since the Summit and various options are being explored.

EFP Workbook 3.0

Not only has EFP Workbook 3.0 become fully digitized, it has also had a content overhaul, guided by the feedback provided by Alberta EFP's advisory and operations committees. Producers will now be able to complete their EFP online at a time and place that is convenient for them. EFP technicians are available to guide them through the process, if needed, and to help producers reduce their environmental risk.



Species at Risk Initiative

Hand-in-hand with the workbook overhaul was the development of a new Species at Risk (SAR) component for the EFP to bring it up to international standards. The SAR initiative is a multi-pronged partnership with the federal government to develop and deliver education and self-administered evaluations that, just like the EFP, capture producers' best practices as well as areas needing improvement.

This project had an active communications thrust too. Key tasks in the SAR communications plan developed in Year 1 were implemented this year and included the production of a brochure and four new videos, and sharing key messages through presentations, the website, social media, mainstream media and partner industry organizations.



Tech Training

Preparing our trained technicians who administer the EFP for both technical changes and an expected increase in demand was also critical. Former program manager Sharon Faye created a data base of technicians and surveyed/interviewed as many as she could reach. Her results were presented to Alberta EFP's committees and guided changes in delivery, training and communications with and for EFP Technicians.

The survey showed that technicians wanted more information and they got it: an online resource called Tech Tool, which enables them to have whatever they needed at a click of a mouse. They also received training to bring them up to speed (train the trainer sessions with senior techs, followed by tech training in several communities across Alberta). Online registration is nearly ready to launch and it will free the nearly 60 techs from startup paper work, enabling them to concentrate on sharing their knowledge and expertise with producers.



Statistics

(April 2016-March 2017)

Alberta EFP by the Numbers	
EFP inquiries from producers	209 to ARECA (additional inquiries went directly to technicians)
EFPs completed	298
Technicians delivering the Alberta EFP program	<60
Technician training sessions held	10 (6-8 in person, 3-4 webinars)
Social media posts	626
New likes/follows on social media	36% increase