

ALBERTA ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN

Annual Report 2017-18



Plant a Seed and Help it Grow

Every farmer knows that simply planting seeds isn't enough if you want a bountiful crop. Clean water, nutrients, pest and disease management, and healthy soil are all essential. The seeds for the startup of the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan (AEFP) were planted in 2003 and it has grown, branched out and transformed over the past 15 years.

AEFP's foundation of stewardship for the land created the base, but it is the blending and merging of like-minded "crops" that is producing its strength and resiliency. Alliances with industry groups provincially and nationally have enabled a small organization to achieve a great deal. These united efforts will help producers improve the viability of their land and meet the growing demand for sustainably sourced products.

Partnerships are Powerful

Producers have always known that team work is needed to get the big jobs, like harvest, done. Alberta's industry organizations partner with AEFP on shared goals; we are uniquely positioned to do so since we are the only provincial ag organization that includes all types of industry.

The organizations we've met with during the past year are too numerous to name, but they include the primary ag industry groups, three levels of government, environmental NGOs and more.

Some partner with us on pursuing national standards (most notably Alberta Wheat and all provinces and territories with an EFP program), in sharing knowledge and news, or advising us as we develop or update content (most industry groups have representation on our advisory committees).

Some have made EFP a requirement for their members (Potato Growers of Alberta), while others have used it as a base for their own industry program (Alberta Egg Producers' PEEP).

Some, like Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), are helping us develop new content and they and other organizations are consulting with us on the development of a habitat/biodiversity section.

Other partners work with us to streamline our content and reduce producers' paperwork. For example, during the past year, we've had meetings with Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship program to facilitate the merger of their content with the EFP, so that producers will not have to duplicate the same information.

Online Saves Time

The EFP Workbook 3.0 went online in June 2016 and is being redesigned to make it mobile-friendly. We've also been working with our partners to develop new and updated content. Both features are due for release in summer 2018. The online format offers several benefits:

- It does many of the calculations for you (less math).
- It carries data forward to other parts of the online workbook where applicable (less duplication).
- Future renewals will be easier. Completed EFPs will be stored online on a secure private server and made available for updates as needed.

Online registration was introduced on October 2, 2017. When producers go to the AEFP website (www.albertaefp.com) and click Start an EFP, they get directly to the starting line to complete or renew an EFP— no middle man, no paperwork. Not computer savvy? People in our office are there to help.



Species at Risk Content Coming

The new Species at Risk (SAR) section will be added to the EFP Workbook once fully tested. It has been developed over three years, 2015-18, with funding from the ECCC. Like the rest of the EFP, it will enable producers to self-assess their operations and learn about techniques and best practices. This addition was needed to allow Alberta's EFP to meet international standards on Species at Risk. Another international requirement is inclusion of a broader habitat and biodiversity component; this work is now in the consultation phase.

Resources to support the SAR component were developed over the past two years and include the production of seven videos, four fact sheets, a brochure and a PowerPoint presentation. These materials can be accessed under the Species at Risk icon on the Alberta EFP website. (www.AlbertaEFP.com).

EFP Renewal

Content changes and additions based on new knowledge and practices have made the earliest version of the EFP out-of-date. In response, Alberta EFP introduced a mandatory 10 year renewal period that begins April 1, 2018. That means any EFP older than 10 years old is not considered current; which matters for the new CAP funding and for some commodities. There are several reasons why this is important:



1. Renewing an EFP will increase producers' access to funding. Specific portions of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) funding (formerly Growing Forward) will only be available to producers who have a current EFP. Producers must have proof of completion of an EFP within 10 years of the date of their CAP application to be eligible for funding.
2. Farm practices have changed and improved over the past 10 years, and the EFP has changed with them. With the help of our industry-oriented advisory committee, the current workbook has been revised several times and new sections like Species at Risk will be added. Producers who want to self-assess their operations, adopt best practices and retain the long-term viability of their land will benefit.
3. Alberta was the only province or territory without a renewal period for their farm plan. We need to align with the other provinces as we make efforts to create a national environmental farm plan that will harmonize content, delivery, etc. where practical, and enable Canadian producers to better meet global sustainable sourcing standards.



National EFP

The National Environmental Farm Plan (NEFP) steering committee was formed in 2015 in an effort to harmonize EFPs across Canada and continue to build national credibility in the agricultural community and international markets. NEFP is navigating the sustainable sourcing realm to find EFPs' place by using an outcome-based, producer-driven national standard, which engages stakeholders at each level of the supply chain.



On November 1-2, 2017 the second National Environmental Farm Plan Summit was held in Ottawa. Over 100 participants attended, representing commodity groups, extension services, practitioners and research associations from each province. The four committees established in 2016 (Standards, Data, Verification and Communications) provided updates on their programs over the past year and requested input from the group.

On November 16, 2017 ARECA hosted a NEFP Update meeting in Edmonton to discuss the outcomes and direction of NEFP and what this means for Alberta. Discussion centered around the need to enhance collaboration on impending sustainable sourcing requirements using EFP as a framework for planning. Priorities identified include:

1. highlighting the environmental stewardship that exists in the Alberta agriculture community
2. demonstrating continuous improvement
3. maintaining and building public trust
4. protecting soil health, water quality, air quality and biodiversity

Canadian farmers who complete and implement an **Environmental Farm Plan** have the backing and endorsement of a home-grown network of crop, livestock and food industry professionals who are dedicated to a future where commodities are sustainably sourced and grown with minimal impact on the environment.

The Home Team

Though there have been many changes at Alberta EFP over the past three years, one strength of the program remains constant: the assistance of trained EFP technicians to help producers through the process. More than 50 EFP technicians are found across Alberta and are there to help producers complete their first farm plan or renew their existing plan. They can also assist producers as they implement their action plans.

Producers are assigned to an EFP technician in their region and can connect with them by phone, email or text as needed. When requested, the technician will visit a farm or ranch. These seasoned professionals are an invaluable resource.



The technicians also lead workshops for producers interested in starting an EFP. There were 22 producer workshops held in communities across Alberta in 2017-18.

The contribution of AEFP's advisory and operations committees has been much appreciated and provides leadership to our staff: EFP Director Paul Watson and Program Manager Lisa Nadeau. Lisa joined AEFP in July 2018 and fast became a bedrock for our program.



★ Alberta EFP Technician Locations

Statistics

(April 2016-March 2017)

Alberta EFP by the Numbers	
New user accounts	552 (408 via online registration)
Online workbooks created	371
EFPs completed	179 (143 online)
Technicians	58
Technician training sessions held	6 (1 in person, 5 webinars)
EFP producer workshops held	>22
Visits to the website	3,584 (22% up from previous year)
Social media posts	484
New likes/follows on social media	225

Director's Message Paul Watson, Director, Alberta EFP



The Alberta EFP Program has been very fortunate to have the able assistance of its Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) and Operations Committee (OC). The IAC has provided strategic direction and sound advice for improving

the EFP program. The Operations Committee has provided the operational guidance to minimize disruption in this time of change. Without these committees, and our many dedicated technicians across the province, the EFP program could not be successful. Thanks go out also to the EFP Program Manager, Lisa Nadeau, who has been instrumental in ensuring the EFP vision has been implemented as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The 2017-18 fiscal year was vitally important to the progress of Alberta EFP as we have long considered April 1, 2018 as a new beginning where needed systems would have to be in place. A number of initiatives were started, and some completed. We are

particularly pleased with the progress on the SAR tool and the integration with Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient program. Both these initiatives will help simplify producers' lives.

Not visible, but ever important, have been the ongoing refinements to the EFP WebBook, which houses our online EFP workbook. We have tweaked, changed and modified in response to needs expressed by producers and also our technicians. More will be done as the need becomes apparent.

The next big item that will be visible to producers is our redesign of the online workbook. We anticipate launch in July, 2019. The new format will allow producers to use their mobile devices to access their workbooks. The new redesign will allow us to more easily modify resources as needed, and we will implement a user rating on each question. Producers will have the opportunity to let the EFP program know if they think questions are unnecessary, badly worded or otherwise less-than-useful.

Looking forward to an interesting and productive 2018-19

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