

Partner Profile: Alberta Beef Producers

Submitted by ABP

Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) is a grass roots producer organization that was created in 1969 to be a unified voice for close to 20,000 cattle and beef producers in Alberta. ABP is a democratic representative organization of producers, run by producers, working on behalf of producers to make the cattle and beef industry more sustainable and competitive. ABP is established as a commission under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* in Alberta. The mandate, structure, operations, and funding of the organization are governed by three regulations under this act, along with the ABP by-laws that were created in 2009 and approved by the Agricultural Products Marketing Council.

Our work builds on the long history and rich legacy of the cattle and beef industry in this province and uses the strong family, business, and stewardship values of producers as the basis for our actions. On behalf of cattle and beef producers in Alberta, ABP and our industry partners address issues related to animal production, food safety, animal care, government policy, environmental stewardship, communications, marketing and education. Our vision is that ABP is a strong, clear, and representative voice speaking and working on behalf of cattle and beef producers in Alberta and contributing to a vigorous and profitable beef industry. Our mission is to strengthen the sustainability and competitiveness of the beef industry for the benefit of beef producers in Alberta.

Our core strategies focus on increasing domestic and international demand and market access for Canadian/Alberta beef. We are working to ensure long-term sustainable access to the land and water resources of this province for the benefit of beef producers. Strengthening our government influence on legislation and policy to benefit our industry. Enhancing the competitiveness of Alberta beef producers through research and innovation. All of these core strategies come together through engaging producers in our policy decisions and organizational direction and governance.

ABP is taking a leadership role in further development of industry sustainability and social licence strategies through the support of the McDonald's sustainability pilot project, working to ensure that Verified Beef Production (VBP+) becomes the framework for the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) sustainability verification, and continued work with the CRSB on the sustainability assessment and sustainability indicators.

We are working to protect the interests of producers by providing direction to the Government of Alberta on property rights, water rights, and wildlife impacts through the use of a the *Impact of Wildlife on Beef Producers* study done in partnership with the Miistakis Institute. The results will allow us to develop a policy position on dealing with wildlife impacts. Another ABP strategic objective is to ensure that regional plans and environmental management frameworks under the Land-use Framework reflect the interests of cattle producers. We also need to make progress on development of more effective and comprehensive Ecological Services programs for the benefit of producers.

For more information:

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Alberta Crops Sustainability Pilot Project

Submitted by Erin K. Gowriluk

More and more we are hearing from multi-national companies like McDonalds, Unilever, Kellogg's, General Mills, Anheuser-Busch and a host of others, that their customers are demanding products that contain sustainably sourced ingredients. In response to these demands, these companies have developed key performance indicators or sustainability metrics that will be applied to the entire supply chain, starting at the farm.

So what does sustainability look like at the farm level? How will these sustainability metrics be applied to on-farm practices? How do we know what, if anything, about the way we farm needs to change in order to maintain access to key markets? The answer is, we don't, but we'd like to find out.

In March 2015, representatives from Alberta's four crop commissions: Alberta Barley, Alberta Canola Producers' Commission, Alberta Pulse Growers and the Alberta Wheat Commission underwent on-farm assessments in three major, internationally recognized sustainability certification programs.

These programs include: **the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification PLUS (ISCC PLUS)**. Why? Because the ISCC Plus standard is currently recognized by the global market and used by farm groups across North America. The standard seeks to demonstrate farmer compliance to global sustainable agriculture requirements and is certifiable by independent certification bodies and is recognized by the global market and employed by farm groups across North America. The European Commission recognizes ISCC as one of the first certification schemes to demonstrate compliance with the European Union's Renewable Energy Directives (RED) requirements.

The second program is the **Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Farmer Self-Assessment 2.0**. This platform is the main food and beverage industry initiative supporting the development of sustainable agriculture initiatives worldwide. SAI strives to develop sustainable agriculture through a continuous improvement process that allows for a more flexible adoption by farmers. Relevant members include: Anheuser-Busch, Heineken, Kelloggs, General Mills, McDonalds, among many others.

The third and final program that was included in the on-farm assessments is **Unilever's Sustainable Agriculture Code (ULSAC)**. This scheme was developed in 2010 as part of Unilever's continuous improvement efforts. It was created and tested by a network of practical agronomists, farmers, consultants and sustainability advisors and is applied to agricultural raw materials sourced by Unilever.

The purpose of this project is threefold: our farmer members want to better understand consumer expectations around agriculture and sustainability, and we believe that these consumer-driven programs are the most efficient and effective means to collect that information. Farmers also want to contribute to this important conversation, and this project will prepare them to address consumer expectations in relation to the on-farm practices employed in modern agriculture today. And finally, we want to assess grower readiness. As noted above, these sustainability programs are not about satisfying a niche market. A grower's ability to satisfy these requirements will determine whether or not they can access major markets in the future. Project results will identify any gaps or areas where farmers could consider making some changes. But going into this, we are very confident that Alberta farmers are poised and ready to meet the challenge and that will be demonstrated in the many improvements that have already been made on farms across the province over the years.

Project video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kp5o2dF-n8k>
For more information, email egowriluk@albertawheatbarley.com

Wetland Conservation Offsets

Submitted by Alberta Environment and Parks

What is a wetland?

Wetland is land saturated with water due to by poorly drained soils, has water adapted vegetation, and various kinds of biological activity that are adapted to a wet environment. Wetlands are an important natural asset, and depending on local conditions can provide benefits such as source water, flood mitigation, water quality improvement and habitat for animals.

Wetland Policy and Management

The Alberta Wetland Policy requires avoiding impacts to wetland. However, if impact to a wetland cannot be avoided, the person wishing to impact a wetland must apply to the Government of Alberta for an authorization under the Water Act. That impact could be from residential or industrial developments, highway or road construction, or agricultural uses. The government reviews the application to ensure that wetland alteration do not negatively affect neighbouring property or has negative effect on the environment. Depending on the type of wetland impacted, that impact is required to be replaced. This replacement, also called compensation, is described by the Wetland Conservation Offset Program.

Wetland Conservation Offset Program

Wetland conservation offset is a measurable action taken to counteract an impact from an activity to a wetland. The measurable action includes restoration of previously drained wetland or construction of a wetland where one previously did not exist. This restoration or construction must follow specific rules (protocols) that are approved by the Government of Alberta. These rules are being finalized and will be made available here:

<http://www.waterforlife.alberta.ca/03356.html>

Landowners, if they choose to, can participate in the supply of wetland conservation offset by providing historically drained wetland areas to a wetland replacement agent to undertake wetland restoration work. The landowner and the replacement agent may come to a financial arrangement that compensates the landowner for the lost opportunity cost of restoring or constructing a wetland in land that has been used for agricultural uses.