



REPORT TO INDUSTRY

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Renewed environmental interest drives '06/07 EFP progress

Alberta farmers and ranchers have been strong supporters of the program the past fiscal year

Each year the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP) sets targets for business progress based upon the goals identified by the Agricultural Policy Framework, a federal, provincial and territorial initiative. These goals are critical and, like most companies, the challenge is to be appropriately aggressive but at the same time realistic in expectations.

It's an important time for this young company. The issue of the environment has been raised significantly in the public profile and AEFP industry stakeholders have high expectations for progress in the program and in the community.

"So as the fiscal year draws to a close at the end of March 2007, we are pleased to report we have reached our objectives in terms of numbers," says Mike Slomp, executive director of AEFP. "Of equal importance, we believe we have laid the foundation for future business progress and opportunities by defining the program value and working to ensure that message reached the farming audience."

Numbers tell the story

Numbers are the clearest measure of AEFP's business success over the past year. By early spring, 2,673 producers had participated in workshops throughout Alberta with 2,212 producers completing the EFP process. That brings the number of producers who have participated in workshops since the program began to almost 9,100.

The progress of the EFP program was driven in part by an aggressive marketing communications campaign. "The number of producers now participating in the program suggests this was an effective strategy," says Slomp.

Structure proves successful

The AEFP approach to program delivery, driven by a grassroots philosophy focused on the needs of communities, continued to play a key role in the success of the EFP program in 2006/07. It's anchored by a structure in which four regional team leaders (RTLs) — one for each of the province's regions — coordinate regional marketing and promotional initiatives. Each RTL works in cooperation with a team of facilitators who set up and manage EFP workshops at the local level.

"This structure allows strong grassroots control of program implementation while ensuring province-wide consistency," says Slomp. "It has proven to be very successful and will continue to form a basis for the future progress of the EFP program in Alberta."

Workshops popular

AEFP had unprecedented attendance and demand for workshops in 2006/07, with 520 workshops held throughout Alberta. AEFP's two half-day workshops are designed to introduce producers to the EFP process and arm them with the knowledge required to develop their own EFPs. "They're a vital component of the EFP process," says Slomp.

Last year saw AEFP promote the fact that workshops can be held at any time of year. "Although most requests for workshops are for the fall or winter, the fact is that we'll hold them any time throughout the year, in virtually any location in Alberta, and will even tailor workshops to the needs of the producers requesting them."

TA interest grows

The EFP program's network of technical



A sign of success, this gate sign lets other know that this farm has completed an EFP.

assistants (TAs) is playing a growing role in the services AEFP provides to program participants. TAs are invaluable sources of information and resources and also offer an ongoing service to producers needing assistance in implementing the environmental improvements identified in their EFPs. Five new TAs were added to AEFP's roster for a total of 65 people representing a strong, province-wide network of technical expertise. The network of TAs is provided by Alberta Agriculture and Food, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada-PFRA, specific conservation groups, certain counties and MDs, along with many others.

Stewardship funding grows

Funding and technical assistance offered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, through the Canada-Alberta Farm Stewardship

EFP FYI

• **New on the AEFP Web.** The AEFP Web site is home to the latest information on many environmental subjects, virtually all of which are available to stakeholders for use in their publications. Some recently posted examples of feature articles under the AEFP *Journal* Web magazine are:

• **www.EnviroAgConnect.ca.** A new Web-based database of Alberta agro-environmental resources (see Home page below) aims to make it easier for industry professionals who work directly with

producers to find the necessary information, instruction, support and funding for their clients.

• **EFP complements organic practices on this farm.** Developing an EFP can have benefits for any producer — including those in organic farming.

• **Backflow prevention devices keep contaminants out of drinking water.** Level of protection depends on the risk to water sources.

Program (CAFSP) increased in 2006. Producers who have developed EFPs can now apply for up to \$50,000 — up from \$30,000 previously — for a wide range of on-farm environmental improvements in 26 Beneficial Management Practices categories.

Alberta producers have applied for more than \$11 million in CAFSP funding to date. The total investment in environmental action (including the producers' share) to date in Alberta is \$33.6 million. Categories that were especially popular among applicants included improved cropping systems; product and waste management; relocation of livestock confinement; improved manure storage and handling; and wintering site management.

A few of the specific projects producers applied for under CAFSP last year included GPS systems to increase crop production efficiency, properly secured fuel storage areas to minimize potential for spills and leaks, fencing for riparian areas and shelterbelts, and decommissioning water wells.


Tracking success

AEFP continues to develop new tools to give program participants and other producers the opportunity to provide feedback on the environmental issues that concern them the most and to comment on the EFP program itself. "Ultimately, though, one of the best ways for producers to provide us with valuable input is by picking up the phone and calling our toll-free number at 1-866-844-2337," says Slomp.

Recognition for leadership

In 2006 AEFP received the Growing Alberta Leadership Award (GALA) for Environmental Stewardship in recognition of its efforts to promote environmental sustainability in the province. Launched in 2001, the industry-supported GALA awards recognize innovation and leadership in Alberta's agriculture and food industry in a number of categories.

2006/07 Annual Report coming

All of this information and more will be included in the 2006/07 AEFP *Annual Report*, currently in development. It will be available in the next few months and will provide a more complete overview of business activities over the past year. The report will again be available on-line as well as limited copies in printed format. 



FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like information on any aspect of the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company, check the AEFP Web site at www.AlbertaEFP.com or contact the AEFP office. We welcome your comments, questions and suggestions. Articles in this Report To Industry newsletter may be reproduced. Acknowledgement of the source is appreciated.

Partners in Progressive Stewardship:



The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company
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The Agriculture Policy Framework (APF)
A FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL INITIATIVE

The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company
801 - 4445 Calgary Trail
Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5R7
Telephone: 780.436.2339
Fax: 780.436.2382
Toll Free: 1.866.844.AEFP(2337)
Web Site: www.AlbertaEFP.com