



REPORT TO INDUSTRY

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AEFP annual meeting brings new leadership, new support

Positive signs at AGM anchor transition year for AEFP

It's a time of change for the Environmental Farm Plan program (EFP) in Canada. The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP), the company that carries out the program in Alberta, ended its official annual business meeting in Edmonton, October 26 with enthusiastic endorsement from the agricultural community it represents and open praise from its core partners.

Those attending the AEFP annual general meeting were keenly aware that details have not been announced for the much anticipated Growing Forward initiative, the next generation of the Agricultural Policy Framework program that launched the Environmental Farm Plan program among other efforts. However, that did not dampen the spirits of those in the room.

"While that level of uncertainty is on our minds, our organization's leadership will take as positive signs of the EFP program's future the support this organization has received from industry and our partners," says Mike Slomp, executive director of AEFP. Key among that support, he says, are three new member organizations which have come on board, and the fact the federal minister of Agriculture and Food, Hon. Gerry Ritz, and Alberta Agriculture and Food, Assistant Deputy Minister, John Donner, both attended and provided warm support.

Business report

AEFP is coming off a strong year, says Slomp. "The past business year saw 4,000 farmers attend EFP workshops, with over 7,000 completing an EFP since the program's inception. These completed EFPs cover almost a quarter of the agricultural land in the province. As well, over



Hon. Gerry Ritz,
Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

11,000 producers have participated in workshops. That's about one in four Alberta producers."

New member organizations

Slomp says growing support from the agricultural industry is particularly gratifying. "Our two newest corporate members, the Potato Growers of Alberta and the Natural Resources Conservation Board, as well as the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association, which joined earlier this year, are an indication of the increasing profile of the EFP program and its growing reputation in the industry.

"This company is a direct reflection of the agricultural industry," he says. "Each of the 26 AEFP corporate member organizations is entitled to one delegate and the delegates elect seven of the nine-member board of directors. Two members of the board are *ex officio* representing AEFP partners, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (AAFC – PFRA) and Alberta Agriculture and Food.

"Our new members add to our support base and enhance our ability to reach producers," says Slomp. "They will provide direct guidance on the AEFP business direction. They help carry the EFP message to their members, encourage producers to participate in workshops and generally bring added value to our message. It is one thing for AEFP to speak, but when that message comes from organizations that have



John Donner,
Assistant Deputy Minister of Alberta Agriculture and Food.

built a trust with producers and industry, the value is multiplied."

New chair, new board members

There were several new faces and a bit of a changing of the guard at the board level, says Slomp. AEFP has a new chair, two new board members and a new executive.

Glenn Logan of Lomond, representing the Alberta Barley Commission, replaces long-time chair John Kolk, while Shelley Morrison of Debolt, representing Alberta Beef Producers, becomes new vice-chair. Somerlee Bennett of Strathcona County, representing the Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldmen, becomes new secretary-treasurer.

New board members include Harry Schudlo of Sexsmith representing Alberta Canola Producers and Don Sundgaard of Standard representing Alberta Chicken Producers. They replace outgoing directors John Kolk, who represented Alberta Chicken Producers and Robert Filkohazy, who represented Wild Rose Agricultural Producers.

Kolk and Filkohazy, both of whom have been involved with the program since its inception, were honoured with a presentation of paintings and messages of thanks for their years of effort.

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New on the AEFP Web. The AEFP Web site at www.AlbertaEFP.com 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:

Tech Talk: Controlling the fire risks in shelterbelts. Give the fire as little fuel as possible.

Tech Talk: Options when dealing with discharge from iron filters and water softeners. It can cause problems in septic systems, but other options are available.

Tech Talk: Why are there questions in the EFP workbook where the only option is a '3' rating with no way to change? It's a matter of managing inherent risk.

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Speaker support


The meeting's speakers presented a strong statement of recognition for the growth of the EFP program, says Slomp. Feature speaker Hon. Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, congratulated AEFP on its success and outlined his support for environmental sustainability programs as a key part of the next generation of federal agricultural policy.

John Donner, Assistant Deputy Minister of Alberta Agriculture and Food, reiterated the Alberta government's support for the program saying the EFP process has helped engage the industry in a more systematic identification of new stewardship opportunities to manage their practices and to lessen the impact on the environment.

A sign of growing marketing support for the EFP program came from Ernie Van Boom, chair of the Potato Growers of Alberta (PGA). He outlined the PGA's decision to encourage development of an EFP from its producer members as part of the organization's brand for Canadian quality.

Another clear indicator of support for the EFP program is environmental improvements made at the on-farm level. The majority of producers with completed EFPs have also applied to the companion Canada-Alberta Farm Stewardship Program (CAFSP), to implement on-farm actions that address risks identified in their EFP. When currently approved stewardship projects are completed, Alberta farmers will have invested more than \$40 million in beneficial management practices. These investments will have in turn leveraged an investment by the federal government of more than \$20 million for more than \$60 million invested in on-farm action.

Fiona Briody of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (AAFC – PFRA) presented a preliminary analysis of the EFP and CAFSP programs which showed that the strongest improvements have been made in the areas identified as having some of the highest risk to the environment.

"The upcoming months will bring a clearer indication of the role of this program in overall policy framework," says Slomp. "We are gratified for the support we have received to date and proud of the progress that has been accomplished." 

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.

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