



REPORT TO INDUSTRY

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AEFP charts its course in agriculture's bigger picture

Building a plan based on industry feedback and partner expectations

Agricultural producers don't need to be reminded of the speed of change in their industry. It's no different in the companies and organizations that serve this industry.

In the simplest of terms, the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP) was set up to provide tools to make farmers more profitable. The company's main product, the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) has proven very popular since the concept of these free, environmental self-assessments for farms and ranches was introduced.

"Today we are proud to be able to say that nearly 8,000 producers have completed an EFP," says Glenn Logan, AEFP chair. "With the direct financial support and technical assistance support of our partners, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture and Food, \$60 million in on-farm environmental improvements have been made."

Tangible progress

That is real progress, and those benefits are ones that AEFP's core partners and the many other partners who have stepped up to participate in supporting this program, can point to with pride. "Now they are asking

AEFP to consider new options to expand that effort," says Logan, "and we are pleased to report we are systematically doing just that."

Feedback from EFP workshops show that producers realize they are in a new generation of environmental stewardship. They understand that with greater pressure on resources from all sectors of society they have a significant measure of responsibility as anchor players in land management.

They also are coming to realize that environmental stewardship brings with it new opportunity. It may be as basic as helping to ensure that their farm is operated in a sustainable manner so that it is there for the next generation. They realize that stewardship has the potential to directly or indirectly affect land value, ultimately something that affects their own prosperity and that of future generations.

Perhaps nowhere is this new thinking demonstrated more than in the management of wildlife habitat. With potential to affect issues such as watershed management and provide direct benefits such as erosion control and greenhouse gas mitigation, producers



| Glenn Logan, chair, Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company

are developing a renewed respect for wildlife habitat and its role in farming and ranching management systems. Stewardship can also contribute to maintaining or improving their business efficiency.

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The triple bottom line

Likely the biggest factor that affects AEFP's future direction is the emergence of more highly integrated management thinking in agriculture, where environmental sustainability

has become linked to what is becoming known in business terms as "the triple bottom line – environmental, social and economic sustainability."

While environmental stewardship is a pillar of this new thinking, it clearly works in

concert with other pillars. This more sophisticated thinking across society requires a more sophisticated response from those most directly participating in it, such as farmers and ranchers and their supporting industries.

"AEFP is confident it can deliver new value in this new working environment," says Logan. For one thing, we believe our structure and grassroots delivery approach may provide a model for other program delivery. Our success was built on face-to-face contact with producers, completing their plans in local community workshops.

"Virtually every person who has participated in the one-on-one experience of EFP workshops told us they found value in the approach. Perhaps that is something we can build on in other ways."

Broad, multi-industry support


One of the strengths of the AEFP is the broad spectrum of the industry it represents. AEFP covers all livestock and crop sectors, and represents a broad section of the related service industry and nothing has been more gratifying than the continual growth in membership. This year the company added three new members, for example.

"One of the greatest strengths of the organization is the fact it operates in a non-political atmosphere," says Logan. "Many organizations and companies today have specific responsibilities to their stakeholders that put them in opposition with others."

"Our core stakeholders are producers, and our only goal is what is good for them and their industry's future. We believe the fact that this diverse base of players come together in a spirit of cooperation to meet this goal is a core principle on which to build."

Growing the base

With ongoing changes in the EFP program, AEFP's board believes it has a responsibility to explore new options for the future, to build on what has been accomplished with EFPs and to consider broader program delivery options that deliver results for the agricultural industry.

Those discussions will include everything from investigating synergies with other organizations and programs, to building on our already proven strong partner relations to consider new models of building the required financial basis. "We look forward to new progress at a new level." 

EFP FYI



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:

EFP workshops provide lessons on dealing with energy companies. Alberta farmers

completing EFPs are rethinking environmental issues and energy company activity.

Renters or owners – who does the EFP?

It comes down to 'sphere of influence' – who's in control.

Renewed interest in shelterbelts.

Environmental concerns and EFPs drive new generation of interest among farmers.

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:



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Progressive Stewardship



The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF)
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