



REPORT TO INDUSTRY

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Industry stakeholders provide planning input to AEFP

Discussions form basis for planning for the coming years

Late June provided somewhat of a milestone for the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP). The company received industry input for moving ahead with an action plan heading toward the next generation of environmental farm planning efforts.

As most AEFP stakeholders will know, the first stage of this was a position paper developed by AEFP on options for proceeding with a next generation of the EFP program. Entitled “A look into the future – Continuing the greening of Alberta’s agriculture,” that paper laid out alternatives for consideration and asked for industry input on several specific questions that relate to industry sustainability and the natural resources on which it relies.

AEFP members were then invited to a day-long discussion in June designed to get additional collective feedback from stakeholders as a group to determine opportunities in the agricultural industry related to sustainability, to determine the need for specific programs and the infrastructure required, and to provide direction to AEFP.

Many AEFP member organizations provided written perspectives to AEFP and a broad group of representatives joined together with other observers for the June input session.

The June meeting was chaired by Jerry Bouma of Edmonton-based Toma & Bouma Management Consultants. Bouma, who has acted in an advisory capacity for AEFP in the past, has also been involved with analyzing options for building value added opportunities for Alberta’s agriculture and food industry around environmental sustainability.

The day-long meeting was structured so that wide-ranging and open participation was encouraged. The day began with an overview from provincial government representatives, followed by other industry representatives expanding and elaborating the views of their organizations.

Responses to each question posed in the strategy paper were shared with all in attendance with further discussion encouraged. Then the group broke into smaller groups charged with answering

several specific questions. What are the immediate, mid-term and longer-term priorities for AEFP?

The complete group reconvened and those results were shared with everyone.

Moving ahead

“At the end of the day, we emerged with solid input and what we considered to be enough clear information to use as a basis for moving ahead,” says Glenn Logan, AEFP Chair. “While there was a difference of opinion on many issues, as expected given their complexity and the current challenges in agriculture, we received what we felt was the support to put the meat on the bones of a new generation of efforts in the ‘greening of Alberta’s agriculture.’”

Here’s an overview of key points from the meeting that will form the basis of those ongoing discussions with government partners.

Broad support. One clear message from those attending the planning session was that there was support for the general

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Glenn Logan, AEFP Chair

success that has been accomplished with Environmental Farm Plans. All in attendance and those who provided input to the discussion paper felt that the efforts to date had provided value, and no one suggested that the effort be aborted. There was discussion on best approaches for the future and further analysis of the differences of opinion.

Education role supported. There was also strong support for AEFP playing a key role in education and extension. Many felt that a key part of any effort to build a

new Alberta brand around higher, more integrated environmental standards would be directly linked to improved information flow. There was a clear role for AEFP in that area working with industry partners in a shared responsibility.

Maintain current focus. One option suggested was whether there was an opportunity for AEFP to grow the capability it developed in delivering the EFP program into a broader program delivery service for other areas. There were differing views on this and at the end of the day, the clearest message was that AEFP should “stick to the knitting” and focus on its environmental mandate first.


Engage past participants. There was general agreement that it was important to engage past participants in the program and build on their knowledge and experience for the future.

Consider a needs analysis. A point brought forward that garnered strong support was to build on a needs analysis that more accurately reflected current industry requirements, especially given the range of new value added opportunities being considered.

Continue to offer EFPs. There was general support for continuing to provide EFPs to the farming community although the program delivery will have to be altered significantly. In the meantime, communicating with the industry on this is critical.

Process will continue

Following the extension of the programs under a transitional agreement, a new federal-provincial-territorial agreement was signed on July 11. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will now work towards a bilateral agreement to develop and implement new programs that meet Growing Forward objectives and commitments made in July.

In the meantime, if there are questions on the planning session or the program needs for the future, AEFP welcomes them as always, says Logan. 

EFP FYI

2007/08 Annual Report now available

The 2007/08 Annual Report of the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP) is now available to stakeholders, participants and others. The easiest way to view the Report is to visit the AEFP Web site at www.AlbertaEFP.com, says Mike Slomp, AEFP executive director.

“There’s no doubt that the 2007/08 year was a transitional year for the EFP program as federal and provincial partners worked with industry in an effort



to define the next generation of on-farm environmental programming,” says Slomp.

“Despite this transition, over the past year the EFP program in Alberta has seen good producer participation

and increased stakeholder involvement. The new Annual Report reflects this.”

One thing that has been extremely important to the EFP program in Alberta has been the contributions of workshop supporters such as agribusinesses, farm organizations and many other groups around the province. “Until last year a complete list of workshop supporters has been featured in Annual Reports. However, this list has become so large that it is now available on the Web site,” says Slomp. “It can be found on the site by clicking ‘The Company’ followed by ‘Partners and Members.’”

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 Agricultural Policy Framework (APF)
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