



REPORT TO INDUSTRY

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EFP fall program in full swing

Here's a snapshot of what AEFP has planned for the coming year

Farmers and ranchers will soon be streaming into Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) workshops in Alberta as the program gets into action this fall.

The AEFP Company and its partners have approved a business plan for the coming year. The goal is to maintain the company's presence and deliver a streamlined EFP program over the next year as part of its maintenance and transition strategy, says AEFP executive director Mike Slomp.

"The plan sets the stage for an exciting year and gives us a chance to shape the program to meet new needs while maintaining the strengths of the past," says Slomp, adding, "It also sets the stage for building, testing and planning new opportunities that we hope will lay the foundation for a strong on-farm environmental program over the next four years of the federal-provincial Growing Forward agreement."

The new EFP process

The biggest change for this year is a revised delivery program, says Slomp. "New budget and program realities have given us the opportunity to revisit the entire program. As a result, our program has been adjusted."

Workshops streamlined and standardized.

The previous program's two workshops have been combined into a single workshop which will be hosted according to producer demand. The EFP workshop delivery team has been aligned to meet new budget requirements. Four District Program Coordinators will conduct the workshops jointly with Technical Assistants (TAs).

"One thing that has not changed is that TAs will continue to play an integral role in EFP workshops and are resources for producers making on-farm environmental changes," says Slomp.

New review process. The EFP review process has also been streamlined. Instead of submitting their finished EFPs to a local review committee, participants will now submit them to the workshop TA and District Program Coordinator, who will make comments and recommendations on the plan and, if necessary, suggest additional options for addressing specific risks.

Standardized delivery process.

"One thing we want is to ensure that the workshop will always be a quality experience for participants and to do that we need a 'quality assurance' approach," says Slomp. "A new, four-day intensive training program has been developed and all TAs and AEFP staff in the new program are required to take it. The goal is to create the same experience for each producer at every workshop that's held under the EFP brand."

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Stewardship funding update. The Canada-Alberta Farm Stewardship Program (CAFSP) has been an overwhelming success. In fact, its success has meant the number of applications the program received from farmers has exceeded the capacity of the program to approve. The program is fully subscribed and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will no longer be accepting new applications for CAFSP funding. If you have already received written approval from the program, you will be paid upon the satisfactory completion of your project.

New partnership initiatives between the Governments of Canada and Alberta are currently being developed under Growing Forward. These new partnership initiatives will build upon successful programs such as the National Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Initiative and National Farm Stewardship Program (NFSP) – programs which meet the needs of Canadian producers and continue to create a sector that thrives at home and abroad.

Marketing and communications

As in past years, marketing and communication efforts are underway, says Slomp. “Promotional tools will include an advertising campaign focused on community newspapers; editorial contributions to media, member publications and the EFP Web site; display booths at selected industry events; the *Report to Industry* newsletter; and the *Annual Report*.”

Some key points of focus this year include:


AGM. The AEFP 2008 Annual General Meeting will be held October 17 in Calgary. Besides the AEFP annual business meeting, the event will feature keynote speaker Matthew Buck, assistant director for Food Alliance, a U.S.-based non-profit organization that certifies farms, ranches and food handlers for sustainable agricultural and business practices. “Food Alliance is a highly successful initiative that boasts benefits for the future of on-farm environmental programming in Alberta,” says Slomp.

New workbook CD. The coming year will also see the launch of a CD version of the EFP workbook that will include all of the information available in the current workbook. Workshop participants will have the choice of using the workbook, the CD, or both.

Rural Emergency Plan. The Rural Emergency Plan (REP), launched by AEFP and the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association earlier this year, is an emergency response map for rural landowners. “It has been very successful and will continue to be promoted under the updated EFP program,” says Slomp. “REP is a very valuable program and one we want to make sure stays on the radar as we go forward.”

Focus on member relations

“So much of the success of the EFP program hinges on relationships with our industry partners. That will continue to be a focus this year,” says Slomp. “Our

communications program will focus on member relations, with EFP articles over the coming year placing a greater emphasis on the success stories of EFP participants. We look forward to meeting the communications needs of our partners and delivering information of value that can be delivered to their memberships.” 



EFP FYI

Reminder: 2007/08 Annual Report now available

The 2007/08 Annual Report of the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP) is available to stakeholders, participants and others. It can be viewed on the AEFP Web site at www.AlbertaEFP.com.

“Over the past year the EFP program in Alberta has seen good producer participation and increased stakeholder involvement. The new Annual Report reflects this,” says Mike Slomp, AEFP executive director.

Watch for workshops.

New workshops are being planned for the fall and one of the fastest ways to get details on dates, times and locations of upcoming EFP workshops is the AEFP Web site at www.AlbertaEFP.com. Watch the site for updates.

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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