



REPORT TO INDUSTRY

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Alberta's EFP program transitions into new model

Alberta's extension network takes over as Environmental Farm Plan managers

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program in Alberta received some clarification with the signing of the Growing Forward agreement between the Federal and Provincial governments.

For those with a direct interest and involvement in this program, such as the stakeholders in the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP), this is welcome news.

The key point is that EFPs will continue to play an important role in Alberta's farming and ranching community in the future under the Growing Forward program, but the delivery and funding assistance model has changed.

"Our stakeholders can take some pride in the fact that more than 12,000 producers across Alberta have begun the EFP process and more than 8,300 have completed their own Farm Plan as of the end of our fiscal year in March 2009," says Mike Slomp, executive director of AEFP.

That commitment on behalf of producers speaks to the value of the ongoing EFP as a primary risk assessment tool, and to the importance of it being integrated into environmental programming of the future. As well, the investment in resources materials will be of value moving forward.

This newsletter provides stakeholders with an overview of the Growing Forward program and how producers will access information on EFPs in the future.

Alberta's Growing Forward Programs

There are 12 separate programs under the Growing Forward framework, which interrelate to meet overall program goals. Here's a snapshot of those programs.

Bio-Security. These are programs designed to prevent disease from entering Alberta's agricultural industry.

Business Management Skills and Tools. Designed to enhance competitiveness, these educational programs for agri-business managers.

Energy Efficiency. Programs for Alberta agri-businesses are designed to realize cost savings through energy efficient technology.

Entrepreneur Development. Networking opportunities, education programs and tools will help those who are new to the Alberta agriculture industry. In fact, many of the Growing Forward programs are available for new entrant participation.

Food Safety. A key component of Alberta's food production future, Certification programs will ensure the safety of Canadian food products, building consumer confidence.

Leadership. In today's world, leadership is a key and these educational programs will help Alberta leaders and managers to take their business to new levels.

Lean Manufacturing and Automation. These programs to implement technology and systems will enable Alberta producers and processors to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

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Livestock Welfare. Programs to implement processes and technologies that ensure the humane handling of Alberta livestock.

Product and Market Development. Introducing value chain information systems to make Alberta food products more unique, competitive and profitable.

Stewardship Plans. Programs and resources to protect Alberta's food chain and position Alberta agri-business as a world leader in environmental responsibility.

Traceability. Supply chain traceability and technologies that ensure Canada's leadership in animal health and food safety.

Water Management. Support for programs and projects that enhance Alberta agri-business' long term water supply.

EFPs fall under Stewardship Plans
The EFPs will fall under the Stewardship Plans program area. The Stewardship Plans program is a Growing Forward initiative to help producers manage their natural resources and strengthen their competitive position by demonstrating environmental responsibility.

Stewardship Plans are designed to help producers demonstrate their

environmental practices and plan for operational improvements that will reduce their environmental impact.

The process to access the incentives within the Stewardship Plans is new and more rigorous. Producers will be required to complete an EFP and a risk report based on their EFP which will direct them to complete one of three management plans that best suit their operation. Opportunities to complete an EFP will be available through Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

Grazing and Winter Feeding Management Plan. The grazing and winter feeding management plan is designed to help producers develop a work plan that maximizes use of their grassland resources and minimizes the impact on the environment.

Integrated Crop Management Plan. The integrated crop management plan is designed to help producers develop a work plan that maximizes use of their crop inputs and minimizes the impact on the environment.

Manure Management Plan. The Manure Management Plan is designed to help producers develop a work plan that maximizes the use of their manure resource and minimizes the impact on the environment.


Program details and available funding

Stewardship Plans are targeted at Alberta taxpayers who make at least \$10,000 of their gross income from farming. Individuals must have completed an EFP, a risk screening tool, and an approved work plan. Assistance will be funded on a 50/50 cost share basis, however funding will be limited. Beneficial Management Practice (BMP) and application process details have not been finalized. More information will be available before the program start date of September 1, 2009.

EFP delivery details

Delivery and technical assistance for EFP support will be provided by local municipal and agricultural organization extension staff (who are associated with the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) program), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) staff, or certain commodity groups. ARD will provide a coordination role. AEFPP has worked with AESA during the transition, but as indicated, AEFPP will not be involved in EFP delivery in the future.

More information

The best place for producers to get more information on the Growing Forward Program is the program website www.GrowingForward.Alberta.ca. Alternatively, they can call the ARD toll-free information line at 310-FARM (3276). 

Key information on the 2009-2010 EFP Program

Producers will have new questions about Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs) as they move through this transition year. Here is key information on the program as it moves through the upcoming months.

Where to get EFP information

With the switch of the EFP program to the extension service of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), the best place to get information on EFPs and related support under the Growing Forward Program is the program web-site www.GrowingForward.Alberta.ca.

AEFP 08/09 Annual Report coming


The 2008/2009 Annual Report from AEFPP will soon be available.

As in past years, the Annual Report will be provided on the AEFPP website at www.albertaEFP.com. This year, with the Company in transition, a very limited print run will be produced, but in the interest of cost effectiveness, all others will be directed to the website to download the electronic version and print a copy if they wish.

AEFP website available

The AEFPP website, www.AlbertaEFP.com, continues to be available, updated with essential information during this transition year.

Program information no longer relevant has been removed and links to key resources such as the Growing Forward website have been added. However, the many extension articles completed in past years have been retained, and new articles are being added featuring environmental success stories from Alberta's farming and ranching communities.

Two examples of these stories are provided in this newsletter. All these articles are available to AEFPP partners for use in their publications as they wish. 

How we tackled water quality on our ranch

Northern Alberta family places long-term sustainability over short-term gain

It's a question a growing number of producers are asking today when it comes to water quality: what if something I'm doing on my operation could cause harm to myself, my family, my neighbours, or my community? Am I doing everything I can to make sure an accident doesn't happen, and if it does do I have sufficient records which show that I did everything I could to prevent it?

Count St. Paul, Alberta ranchers Andrew and Erin Yaremko among the producers who are asking those questions and following up with action. Using their Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) as a guideline, the Yaremkos have taken a number of steps to protect water quality on their second-generation cow-calf and stocker cattle operation.

Although some things they have done have driven short-term economic gain, Andrew Yaremko says their main focus is on the long-term sustainability of their operation. "We don't want to pass on something to our children that isn't financially or environmentally sustainable. We, or even our children, may never see a direct financial return on some of the stuff we're doing, but we know it will pay off in the long run. It doesn't always have to make you a dollar today."



Andrew and Erin Yaremko and family.

Cattle and dugouts don't mix. Dugouts on the Yaremko property are fenced off to prevent cattle from having direct access to the water and animals watered via a solar-powered watering system. As well wintering sites are placed where they will not present the risk of runoff into sensitive areas.

Secondary containment. To provide protection against contamination from fuel, chemical and nutrient runoff chemicals that are stored are held in a tub intended to capture the product in the event of a leak or a spill, and dikes around their wintering pens to capture runoff from manure.

Managing fuel. Shutting off the valves on their fuel tanks makes refueling a bit less convenient but in the event of a leak, prevents fuel from draining onto the ground.

How an EFP has helped

The Yaremkos' Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) has helped offer them direction on most of the above efforts and others as well. They consider their EFP a resource they will return to as they continue to improve their management practices. It has already laid the foundation for future planning. While designing their new house, for example, they decided to place their new well on higher ground than their septic system in order to avoid cross-contamination issues.



Check out the full Yaremko article on the AEFP website www.AlbertaEFP.com. 

Bottom-line focus drives environmental gains on hog farm

For Jaco Poot, what makes sense for the environment usually makes sense for his pocketbook as well

With all of the effort being invested to demonstrate agriculture's image today, Northern Alberta hog producer Jaco Poot has a remarkably simple tool for developing goodwill among his neighbours. Every year when it's time to work manure into his field north of Barrhead, he makes an effort to find out how he can work around his neighbours' schedules. In the fall or around Christmas, those same neighbours often receive gifts of smoked ham and bacon produced on Poot's operation.

Though simple, Jaco Poot, his wife Jacqueline and their family believe these neighbourly actions drive a long-term payoff by giving their neighbours a positive impression of both their operation and the hog industry in general. In the process, Jaco says they're helping ensure the long-term sustainability, and by extension profitability, of their operation.

EFP has helped

The Poots approach environmental stewardship on their hog and grain operation in much the same way. Jaco says environmental policy in Holland led the Poots to think about environmental sustainability many years ago. So when they had the opportunity to develop an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) in 2004, in many ways it was a natural fit. Although they had made a number of environmental improvements on their operation both before and after developing an EFP, Jaco says the program caused them to look at their farm from a fresh perspective and drive new ideas for the future.



Hog farmer Jaco Poot.

"I think of EFP as an awareness program," he says. "Sometimes when you look at things from a different direction, you really see how you can improve things. I think it's a matter of attitude and how much you are willing to do. We borrow this world from our kids and they will borrow it from the next generation. I'm not a tree-hugger, but I believe we should all play our part so everyone has a chance to enjoy it."


Using hogs to heat. Newly weaned pigs in the Poots' four-room, 2,000 head barn are heated by energy from the grown pigs. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Jaco says the system has saved them thousands of dollars in heating costs over the past 10 years.

Strategic manure placement. Over the past couple of years the Poots have started to do more soil sampling. In the process, they have switched from a flat manure application rate of 3,000 gallons per acre to a more strategic application approach. This has reduced the need for commercial fertilizer and minimized the risk of excess nutrients leaching into water bodies.

Buffer zones around creek. Over the past couple of years, however, they have maintained a 100 ft buffer zone around a creek that runs through their property. This has helped protect the quality of the water body and has driven a new level of biodiversity on the farm.

Future plans

The Poots continue to think outside the box when it comes to saving money and reducing environmental impact and their EFP will also continue to be a resource. They have completed a feasibility study on a project in which they would run water lines through a composting pile to save on heating bill and reducing the operation's overall environmental footprint.

The full story on the Poot operation is available at www.AlbertaEFP.com. 

Partners in Progressive Stewardship:



The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company
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