



REPORT TO INDUSTRY

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New details released on Stewardship Plans under Growing Forward

Key information for producers for the year ahead

Important new funding and program information has been released on the Growing Forward programs that will have a direct effect on Alberta farmers and ranchers applying for financial support to make on-farm environmental improvements.

This is good news for producers who have been awaiting the details. The following is a summary of the Growing Forward program areas.

There are 12 separate program areas under the Growing Forward framework. They include: Bio-Security; Business Management Skills and Tools; Energy Efficiency; Entrepreneur Development; Food Safety; Leadership; Lean Manufacturing and Automation; Livestock Welfare; Product and Market Development; Stewardship Plans; Traceability; and Water Management.

Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs) are a requirement under Stewardship Plans. This program area under Growing Forward is designed to help producers manage their

natural resources and strengthen their competitive position by demonstrating environmental responsibility and planning for operational improvements that will reduce their environmental impact.

Stewardship Plans are targeted at Alberta taxpayers who make at least \$10,000 of their gross income from farming. Producers will be required to complete an EFP and a risk report based on their EFP which will direct them to one of three management programs that best suit their operation. Opportunities to complete an EFP will be available through Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD). Assistance will be funded on a 50/50 cost share basis. Funding will not be available until the fall of 2009.

EFP delivery changes

The EFP program delivery has changed in Alberta. Delivery and technical assistance for the delivery of EFPs will be provided by local Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESAs) funded staff, some municipal Fieldmen, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) staff, or

certain commodity groups. This list, when complete, will be available through the Growing Forward website and the Ag-Info Centre. The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP) has worked with AESA during the transition to the new phase of the program, but AEFP will not be involved in EFP delivery in the future.

More information on Growing Forward is available through the website www.GrowingForward.Alberta.ca or by calling the ARD toll-free information line at 310-FARM (3276).

New funding details

ARD is working on the financial support details which producers have been very interested in. The process will include the requirement for producers to complete a work plan for the appropriate management issue and submit it to ARD for approval. A template for the work plans will be available through the Growing Forward website in the fall.

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The Stewardship Plans program area is composed of the following three management areas:

Grazing and Winter Feeding

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

Grant funding for this category is to a maximum of \$15,000 with a cost share of 50 percent of eligible expenses. This category includes (but is not limited to) funding for watering systems, fencing (to protect sensitive areas and enhance grazing management), portable wind shelters, and native upland range establishment.

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

Grant funding for this category is to a maximum of \$20,000 with a cost share of 50 percent of eligible expenses. This category includes (but is not limited to) variable rate technology, improved pest management, wetland restoration, and improved seeding systems.

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

Funding under Manure Management is the highest of the three Stewardship Plan areas, set at a maximum of \$50,000 with a cost share of 50 percent of eligible expenses. This category includes (but is not limited to) improved manure storage, groundwater-monitoring systems for manure storage, and run-on / run-off controls for livestock facilities.

More information

Each of these funding support opportunities will have specific additional information available outlining what is meant by this particular Beneficial Management Practice (BMP), specific details on what are eligible costs, as well as specific details on what costs are not eligible.

There will be additional general information such as how the application process will work and the process producers will be required to follow to qualify for support, as well as what happens when information on an application is incomplete.

It is also important to note that some of these improvements may fall under provincial legislation such as the Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA), Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, or the Alberta Water Act. It is expected that grant recipients acquire all appropriate licenses, permits or approvals prior to initiating projects. In some cases projects may require an environmental impact assessment conducted by a qualified professional, prior to project initiation.

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



An enviable track record of environmental progress

Building farmer trust opens producer doors for TA Murray Green

He's been called "the dean." Veteran extension specialist and Technical Assistant (TA) for the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program in Alberta, Murray Green has worked with many producers over the past few years in Rocky View County.

Thanks to funding from the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESAs) program and strong County support, he's made the most of that opportunity. Today EFPs have good profile among producers and the county has a high percentage of farmers and ranchers with completed Farm Plans, well positioned to take advantage of the next generation of Growing Forward programs for environmental improvement.

Green has a lifetime of experience working with producers and he believes the secret to reaching them has always been building trust.

"In my years of extension, I never went out and told a producer what to do," he says. "That would be a mistake. They are familiar with their business and very often you were simply there as a sounding board, someone from outside to run an idea past. Once you got through that stage then they needed to fill in some holes and you could offer suggestions and do research.

"Sometimes it wasn't an issue of right or wrong, it was a matter of deciding to move ahead with something. If it was apparently wrong you offered more information for consideration, but it was ultimately their decision. My whole career has been that approach and I don't think it was too far off."

Building on EFP strength

One thing that Green believes has been a key to his success in Rocky View is the respect for the fundamentals of the EFP approach.

"No one that has gone through an EFP workshop has said it was not worthwhile," he says. "In fact, quite the opposite they



Murray Green (left) introducing Larry Dugdale on a tour of Landale Farms.

have all gone out of their way to say it was time well spent. That sets the stage for a good relationship. They have identified 25 or 30 things they want to do on their operation, so we review them."

Number one priority is their family and visitors' health and safety. Number two is the financial viability of their operation. Number three is anything that could impact the environment in which they live.

A key to his success in Rocky View is the respect for the fundamentals of the EFP approach.


"If you look after those three areas, you will solve most things. You are not there to solve worldwide issues. Once people think in manageable terms, they get more sophisticated. They may start with GPS to get a better handle on inputs, avoid overlap or spraying into waterways. Or protect their calves with shelters. Those things were pretty easy to do. Then they started

to look at broader issues, like how their livestock operations could affect a riparian zone."

Investment in people

Green says he never questioned investing time in people because he knew he would recoup that investment. "We have a very high percentage of completed EFP workbooks and plans in this county and a lot of that was because I was afforded the opportunity to go back out after the EFP workshop, sit down at their kitchen table, understand why the plan wasn't progressing and work with them to get it completed."

It's so important to work with producers to build a trust. They have to feel that you are as interested in their operation as they are. If they have that feeling then you are part of the operation and you are sort of expected to show up.

"It took a bit to generate that level of trust but today I can drive out to any one of those 300 farms and ranches that have an EFP and stop for a coffee and they are only too happy to have someone stop by. And that's really a good feeling for me." 

Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta


EFPs link directly with this issues-based organization

By its own definition, the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta (AEPA) grew out of a need identified by many agricultural organizations for a transparent partnership between government and the agricultural industry, and for a collaborative approach to resolving agri-environmental issues.

Today the 15 member AEPA board provides direct links to 24 agricultural organizations, as well as government agencies, agri-forestry and others. AEPA is jointly chaired by Alberta's agricultural industry and the provincial government.

AEPA is working to building a positive policy framework by which Alberta producers can become premium stewards of the environment. This effort is gaining support, which is positive for the agricultural industry and the province in general.

It is also a positive message for the many Alberta farmers and ranchers who have completed Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs) and for those considering their own plan in the future.

The next issue of the AEFP *Report to Industry* newsletter will examine in more detail this important relationship and how the two efforts complement one another in the new EFP program year ahead. 



New on the AEFP website

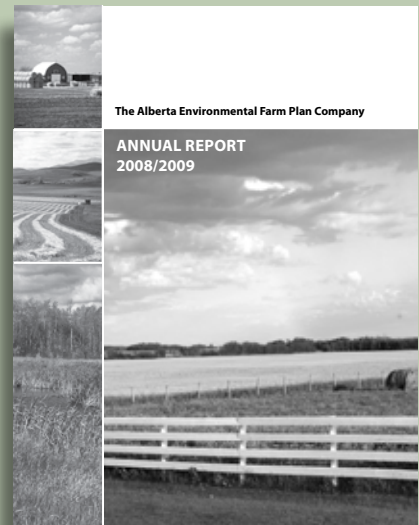
The AEFP website at www.AlbertaEFP.com is being updated with new information, all of which is available to AEFP partners and others for use.

Growing Forward information. Check the Growing Forward website for recently released details on funding support for farmers. This is the best place to get information and contact links on program information. The AEFP website contains a direct link from the Home page to the Growing Forward website.

New newsletters. This *Report to Industry* newsletter is one of several planned for this year. Available on the web, they provide important details of how the new generation of the EFP program will be managed.

Editorial and technical resources. The articles and other resources materials produced over the past several years of the program continue to be available on the AEFP website.

New Annual Report. The 2008-2009 AEFP *Annual Report* is now available in electronic form on the website. The link is directly from the Home page. This past year was a transition year for AEFP and the Report outlines administrative and financial details of the fiscal year.



Partners in Progressive Stewardship:



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