



NEWS RELEASE

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NEW SUSTAINABLE SOURCING STUDY IDENTIFIES KEY INFORMATION FOR ALBERTA PRODUCERS

The market for agricultural products is increasingly influenced by activities aimed at measuring and communicating information related to sustainability. The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) recently commissioned a study to compile the latest requirements and trends for sustainable sourcing in Canada. It was conducted by Global Ecologic Environmental Consulting and Management Services Ltd. between January and March 2016.

“We want to prepare Alberta producers for this emerging market demand,” said Paul Watson, EFP Director. “Though there is a lot of information out there, it is difficult to wade your way through it and find those kernels of fact you need to make yourself market ready. It is also important to know which factors are likely to impact Alberta’s producers.”

Results showed that though many major purchasers have value statements related to sustainable sourcing, implementation of specific activities has been limited in Canada. The exceptions are the Potato Sustainability Initiative, ADM’s Sustainable Growers program for canola growers and animal welfare audits in the livestock industry.

However, a number of important sustainable sourcing initiatives are underway in Canada, including the Canadian Roundtable on Sustainable Beef, the Canadian Roundtable on Sustainable Crops and the Dairy Farmers of Canada proAction program. As well, many international commodity purchasers already have requirements for sustainable sourcing in place.

The recent study documents the key features, commonalities and differences among 18 of the more advanced initiatives to provide a blueprint for producers that spans most agricultural sectors.

Some of the more mature schemes, e.g. Unilever’s Sustainable Agriculture Code and the International Sustainability Carbon Certification system, provide detailed requirements and supporting guidance. The most prevalent model is the compliance checklist approach whereby farmers demonstrate compliance with a set of required outcomes or best practices and continuous improvement over time. Alberta’s EFP is designed in a checklist format.

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“Completing an EFP is a natural fit for these requirements,” said Watson. “It is a self-assessment tool for producers that increases their knowledge of environmental risks. It shows where their operations are environmentally sound and where improvement might be desirable, and contains information on how to make improvements.”

Alberta’s EFP covers many of the criteria covered by most sustainable sourcing schemes: water management, energy use/efficiency, climate, soil management, waste management, crop protection management, nutrient management and biodiversity conservation. Alberta EFP is continuously adding and improving the content in areas that are not yet covered in-depth. A study to compare how Alberta’s EFP compares to international standards was completed in partnership with Alberta Wheat and Alberta Barley in August 2015. Alberta fared well but a few gaps were revealed. One was the need to include biodiversity sections. In response, a species at risk component is being developed and will be added in 2016.

To get more information about sustainable sourcing or to [download the report](#), go to www.albertaEFP.com.

The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan program began in 2003 and has been delivered by the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta since 2013. Financial support comes from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through Growing Forward 2.

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