



WHEAT REPORT



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Kent Erickson
Chairman

It may seem like there are more producer events and meetings than you can possibly get out to over any given winter, but of course there's a lot of potential value in attending as many as you can.

Since time is always of the essence, there are two meetings that I would recommend setting aside time for in early 2015: FarmTech and Alberta Wheat Commission's (AWC) annual general meeting (AGM). Both are happening this month at Edmonton Expo Centre at Northlands. FarmTech dates are Jan. 27-29, and our AGM is taking place on Wed., Jan. 28.

In the off season, events like FarmTech give you the opportunity to meet with your peers to discuss the most important issues in our industry, take in reputable speakers and learn something new. Not to mention FarmTech has a social environment that I look forward to every year—it's a bit like the Super Bowl of grower conferences.

As one of the host groups, AWC has a big stake in the success of FarmTech, and this year's speaker lineup reflects that with a lot of valuable speaker sessions tailored to wheat producers. Growers can look forward to hearing from organizations like Cereals Canada and the Canadian International Grains Institute (Cigi), as well as sessions on topics such as marketing strategies, wheat quality, soil fertility and more.

And, of course, this year you can look forward to a keynote speech from news anchor Peter Mansbridge

and an evening of improv with Canadian funnyman Colin Mochrie. But amidst all the excitement, don't forget to visit us at the AWC booth.

Our AGM is the other event to mark on your calendar. Since it coincides with FarmTech, you won't have to travel farther than down the hall to make it to both.

The AGM is a great opportunity to come out and meet with our staff and directors. We look forward to telling you more about the initiatives we have led and collaborated on this year, and letting you know how we've put your check-off dollars to work. But in true forum style, this is also a great opportunity to participate in the direction of our organization—we'd love to hear from you about what you would like to see from AWC in the future and get your feedback about what we've been doing to date.

As you make plans for the 2015 growing season, why not come out to these events and get involved with your industry? See you there!

GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE



Tom Steve
**General
Manager**

A producer says to a railroad employee, "What's the point of publishing a train schedule when trains run late more often than not?" The railroad employee replies, "If schedules didn't exist, how would we know exactly how late the trains are?"

While rail service is a joke to some, it lost the comic factor long ago for western Canadian farmers.

Transport Minister Lisa Raitt has initiated a complete examination of the Canadian transportation system with the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) review, mandated to develop long-term solutions to meet global demand for Canadian cargo. The review panel promises an emphasis on agriculture, which is extremely positive from the Alberta Wheat Commission's (AWC) viewpoint.

Representatives of AWC were among the first to meet with members of the CTA review panel. Our message was clear, and guided by growers. We believe the best way to improve rail service in Canada is to hold the railways accountable for their service. With the current legislation, this is difficult. AWC supports reciprocal penalties, wherein holding the railways financially accountable for poor performance would result in better execution of their business. AWC, in collaboration with other commodity groups, industry and government, is

investing grower dollars to generate data on more than 90 per cent of the rail grain volume in Western Canada. The plan is for this data to be used in the creation of service level agreements, which will ultimately allow for standardized terms of service—the basis for penalties to railways.

We need a system of commercial accountability for all parties with clear definitions of service. A transportation system that meets global demand for all Canadian cargo will enable our industry to grow.

We look forward to continuing to meet with the CTA panel throughout the review process, where we will reinforce our message. We believe the positive results of this work will result in rail service that helps promote growth.

WHEAT WORLD

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AWC AGM AT FarmTech 2015™

Join the Alberta Wheat Commission for our
Annual General Meeting during FarmTech 2015™

Meet with AWC Directors, Regional Representatives and staff to learn
more about how we're putting your check-off dollars to work.

Wednesday, January 28th, 2015
Edmonton Expo Centre at Northlands
Hall E

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

For more information and an AGM agenda, visit albertawheat.com

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

The importance of being early



Lauren Comin
**Research
Manager**
(currently on
maternity leave)

Every year, producers gamble with the weather. While an open fall is ideal, in Alberta the weather can be unpredictable as early as the first week of September. A cold spring can prevent producers from getting seed in the ground early enough to allow for enough frost- and snow-free growing days. Dean Spaner, a wheat breeder at the University of Alberta, makes early maturity a priority for his program, which targets the parkland. As Spaner explains, if the cold is your biggest battle, earlier varieties may be something you should consider.

Alberta Wheat Commission: Why is “earliness” important in your breeding program, in the context of its location?

Dean Spaner: A great deal of bread wheat grown in the northern regions of the Prairies is downgraded because of frost damage before maturity. Most regions north of Calgary have quite a small window between the last frost of the spring and the first frost of the fall. Because we are the most northern wheat-breeding program in Canada, early maturity is one of our most important breeding objectives.



Dean Spaner, professor and wheat breeder at the University of Alberta.

Photo: Anne Pratt

AWC: What components go into earliness and what makes a variety earlier than others?

DS: Other than environmental factors, drought and temperature, three genetically controlled mechanisms regulate the timing of wheat growth and development. These mechanisms include vernalization genes, photoperiod response genes and earliness genes. For the last 10 years or more, my graduate students and I have been trying to understand how these genes work and how to manipulate them to create varieties that are early and have high yield with high protein.

AWC: Are there any trade-offs to achieving earlier varieties?

DS: In general, higher-yielding wheat is later to mature and has less protein content. Breaking this triangular link—developing cultivars that are early maturing and high yielding, with elevated protein—is the challenge of plant breeding. An example of this linkage is Soft White Spring wheat. It is the highest-yielding class, but

matures about three to six days later with between three and five per cent less protein than Canadian Western Red Spring.

AWC: What do you have coming down the pipeline that producers should watch out for?

DS: PT769 was registered in 2014 and appears to be one of the earliest-maturing lines in Western Canada, with yield higher than the checks in the Parkland Co-operative test (Katepwa, Splendor, CDC Teal and CDC Osler). Mastin Seeds of Sundre has purchased the rights to this cultivar. Lines developed from our program are generally early, as this is one of the biggest selection pressures we have in our growing region and one of our main breeding objectives.

The Alberta Wheat Commission supports Dean Spaner’s programs in Canadian Prairie Spring and General Purpose, as well as Hard Red Spring wheat. For more information on these programs and others, please visit www.albertawheat.com/research

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY



Erin K. Gowriluk
**Government
Relations
and Policy
Manager**

Early in 2014, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) initiated a stakeholder consultation on the issue of crop variety registration in Canada, proposing alternatives to the current system. The majority of producer organizations indicated a preference for either the status quo or adding some flexibility to the current system through alternative options. As a result, Assistant Deputy Minister Greg Meredith and his colleagues from AAFC and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) Variety Registration Office held a meeting in Winnipeg, MB on Oct. 2, 2014, to outline the government's proposed changes.

The current registration system classifies crops in three parts. Part I includes major crops such as wheat, barley and canola, and these are subject to merit assessment by a

crop-specific Recommending Committee as well as two to three years of pre-registration or co-op trials. Safflower is the only crop currently included in Part II, which limits requirements to pre-registration trials. Part III crops, which include potato, sunflower, oilseed soybeans and forages, require only basic variety information in order to verify claims.

The new model proposes changing Part I to *Enhanced Registration* and Part III to *Basic Registration*—Part II would be eliminated. This would allow for the movement of crop kinds from enhanced to basic registration, and vice versa, and several stakeholders at the meeting—including Alberta Barley and the Alberta Wheat Commission—expressed interest in the potential to move classes within a specific crop.

The CFIA's Variety Registration Office would facilitate the movement of crop kinds (classes), but as part of that process, crop value chains would be required to demonstrate value chain consensus as well as a clear benefit to producers.

Stakeholders had until the end of last November to provide feedback on the proposed changes. Varieties recommended for registration under the modernized variety registration system could be ready as early as the 2016 planting season.

MEET THE AWC STAFF



Hannah Konschuh
Interim Research Manager

Hannah Konschuh joined the Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC) as research manager this past November. Raised on a grain farm near Cluny, her passion for agriculture led her to the University of Saskatchewan where she obtained a B.Sc. in agriculture and a M.Sc. in soil science.

Konschuh draws on her experience in agricultural research from both the public and private sector. Along with her research experience, Hannah also taught an undergraduate soil science course for a number of years.

Konschuh says her favourite season is harvest. She has been known to use her holidays for long days spent on the combine—though like most, she found the 2014 harvest to be particularly difficult. She is excited to be the newest addition to the AWC team, allowing her to return home to Alberta and to officially re-join her family farming operation in Cluny.

In her spare time, Konschuh enjoys hiking, snowshoeing and outdoor adventures with her dogs. A former college volleyball player, Konschuh has since retired from the hardcourts due to knee surgeries.





**Alberta
Barley**

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



**Mike Ammeter
Chairman**

This is my first chairman's message for Alberta Barley, and let me say that I am truly honoured to be representing our province's barley growers.

I'll take a brief moment before we get started to introduce myself. My name is Mike Ammeter, and I am a third-generation farmer born and raised in the Sylvan Lake area. I've been involved with this organization for over 15 years—and I've been a director since 2011. During my time with Alberta Barley, I've seen this organization grow and evolve into the

credible, relevant and important voice in agriculture that it has become.

I believe that our industry thrives when farmers have a voice, and that is why I am eager to represent our members and our views. I am also an elected regional representative for the Alberta Wheat Commission, which gives me interesting insight into the cereals industry in both Alberta, and nationwide.

Quarterbacking Alberta Barley is a privilege, but also a huge responsibility. Filling our outgoing Chairman Matt Sawyer's shoes is going to be a tough job, but one I'm up for. After spending the past year as our vice-chairman, I've seen up close the challenges, opportunities and exciting initiatives that we deal with on a day-to-day basis. I know that this job will be a big responsibility, but I also know that the

rewards of representing the barley industry will make it well worthwhile.

Over the coming year, I will remain committed to my work on the executive and policy committees, and will also work with our strong staff team to pursue solutions to the issue of a shortage of barley acres in Canada. Agronomically, we all know that barley makes sense. Let's help make it work economically, too, so that we can continue growing the best malt and the best beef in the world.

As you're reading this newsletter, listening to the radio or watching the news, keep in mind that Alberta Barley plays a key role in advocating for you as a barley farmer, but also as an Alberta farmer who grows many crops, and, in turn, feeds the world. We've got a big job, and your board of directors at Alberta Barley is here to help you with it.



GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE



Lisa Skierka
**General
Manager**

When BSE hit Alberta in 2003, it was the last straw for many smaller cattle producers. My dad was one of many ranchers who left the business after years of fighting the good fight and waiting for business to improve.

I think about this in years like 2014 when Canadian farmers were hit by one problem after the other, from bru-

tal weather and transportation issues throughout the winter and spring, to widespread unpredictable weather during harvest and a "fair average quality" crop at the end of it.

Whether it's good times or bad times, the farmer's job is often just to keep on keeping on.

At Alberta Barley, our goal is to support the work you do on the farm by providing value for your check-off dollars. In 2015, we will continue to work on transportation at the provincial level, while also working nationally via the Barley Council of Canada (BCC) and the Grain Growers of Canada.

At the BCC, we work with farmer groups and corporate industry from across the value chain to provide a fully formed analysis of the transportation issues that must be addressed in order for the entire value chain to succeed. We also work with like-minded farmer groups like the Prairie Oat Growers

Association, and industry groups like the Coalition of Rail Shippers, to ensure that we promote realistic solutions.

In comparison, we work with the Grain Growers in partnership with other commodity groups from across the country to ensure that farmers' voices are being heard. Through Grain Growers, we lobby government, impact industry and provide a united voice on issues that affect all crops and commodities.

Investing in groups like these isn't about duplication; it's about strategically impacting the work of our provincial and federal governments by creating a better business framework for farmers. And that framework helps us all keep on keeping on.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

By Kara Barnes

It's a new year and time once again for farmers to shift their focus to seeding intentions and marketing plans. With barley acreage declining across the Prairies, one of the questions Alberta Barley works on daily is, "Why should farmers grow barley?" In partial response to this question, here are some developments in the marketplace to consider as you plan for your 2015 crop.

Malt demand continues to be "stable to rising," with expectations of continued increases in malt barley

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**Alberta
Barley**





demand as more craft breweries come online. Alberta's elimination of minimum production requirements makes it easier for entrepreneurs to start small breweries. This is driving growth, combined with continuously evolving consumer preferences. We are also beginning to see interest in the creation of "craft malthouses" to serve the booming craft brew market.

In late 2014, the federal government announced support of \$2.37 million for B.C.-based Macaloney Brewers & Distillers to establish a new premium whisky facility, further highlighting the growing demand for products made from Canada's high-quality malt. The project is estimated to increase malt barley demand by up to 500 tonnes annually over the next four years.

Over the past two years, global customers appear to have reached a clearer understanding of what marketing freedom means for barley production in Western Canada. Representatives are now actively seeking out Canadian barley producers and suppliers. While these may currently be "tire kicking" missions, the potential opportunity cannot be ignored. China, for example, has seen a decline in domestic barley production of about 15 per cent annually since 2011, but a steady increase in the demand for malt and beer—resulting in the need for three million tonnes of malt barley imports a year. The majority of this demand is currently met by fair average quality (FAQ) barley from Australia, but Chinese importers are now revisiting Canada as a potential source of quality-controlled barley that can meet delivery specifications and timelines.

Food barley continues to be a small market with big potential, though caution should be taken to ensure a complete understanding of the produc-

We are also beginning to see interest in the creation of "craft malthouses" to serve the booming craft brew market.

—Kara Barnes

tion challenges and quality standards required. The continued success of the GoBarley consumer campaign has resulted in a better-informed public and an interested food-manufacturing sector, both of which are driving demand for food barley.

Barley supply and processing capacity are currently the limiting factors in the food barley market. The highly competitive retail environment has put pressure on the milling industry, reducing the margins for processors of barley flour, and thereby limiting production capacity. The growing demand and limited processing sites open the door for not only local production of food barley, but for new value-added investment as well.

Feed markets continue to be available, though malt quality concerns, and the supply of competitors like feed corn and wheat, will continue to influence price in what some see as barley's "default market." Conditions have been right to encourage herd growth, though the Canadian livestock industry continues to be faced with challenges in the areas of market access and labour. Advancements in yields and production technologies ensure feed barley remains a top rotational option in areas servicing the livestock industry.

Barley is a good rotational crop because it provides diversity within a crop and within a farm plan, which helps to manage market and production risk. Diverse rotations aid in pest management, control disease, preserve soil health, and expand a farm's investment portfolio.

MEET THE STAFF



Garson Law
Research Manager

Garson Law is the research manager for Alberta Barley. He has been with the organization since April 2013.

As research manager, Law oversees Alberta Barley's project portfolio and works with the Research Committee (comprised of farmers and industry experts) to identify research priorities. He also works closely with industry stakeholders, government organizations and private companies to ensure that Alberta Barley's projects are informed by industry trends, regulations and laws.

Originally from Toronto, ON, Law studied at the University of Toronto, where he received a bachelor's degree in pharmacology and toxicology. He continued his studies at the University of Guelph, working towards a master's degree in nutritional sciences. One year later, he moved out west to complete his master's at the University of Alberta.

In his free time, Law volunteers with Scouts Canada as a troop leader with the 72nd Strathearn Scouting Group. Law also plays hockey and softball and enjoys hiking.