

# WHEAT REPORT

PULLOUT



## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



**Kent Erickson**  
**Chairman**

**A**ny wheat producer knows the challenges associated with marketing and maximizing the value of a crop. You need access to timely, accurate information on cash grain prices, as well as data on grain transactions and movement.

Unfortunately, not all of this information is readily available to farmers, making it difficult to make well-informed marketing decisions. Having better control over cash flow is an exciting and necessary change in the post-CWB era, but without complete access to a transparent marketplace, it can be difficult to fully capture the opportunities.

Think of how much easier your life would be if you had access to up-to-the-minute information from a single source on what buyers are paying in your area for all the crops you grow. The Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC) is working with FARMCo, a grain-marketing consulting firm, to do that and more.

We were thrilled to have Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Gerry Ritz attend our AGM this past January to announce Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada funding of \$742,725 through the AgriRisk Initiatives program for the AWC to develop the Crop Data and Price Reporting project. The project will lead to the development of a web-based solution that offers timely, accurate information on cash market prices for a broad range of commodities across Canada. It will also provide historical crop data and trending market infor-

mation that influences commodity prices.

The web-based tool, called PDQ (Price, Data and Quotes), is currently in development and we've established a website at [www.pdqinfo.ca](http://www.pdqinfo.ca) that includes some basic pricing information. The site will be used to share more information about the program, update you on our progress and gather input on what you'd like to see in the final product, which we expect to launch in the spring of 2016.

The ultimate goal is a more transparent market that will support better decision-making and efficiency. This is not a new concept for our international competitors (the U.S. Department of Agriculture makes pricing information publicly available), so this project will help build our competitive edge.

Having up-to-date information available to marketers in a neutral, public place will benefit all participants involved in the agricultural commodity trade in Canada, and we are pleased to have played a leading role in bringing this concept to life.

# GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE



**Tom Steve**  
**General  
Manager**

One of the things I enjoy most about working with farmers is how well you understand strategic planning. To sustain profitable farm businesses you require cropping plans, marketing plans, expansion plans, capital investment plans and succession plans, to name a few. Each year, the strategy needs to be refreshed before you decide what to

seed and invest in your crop. As you read this, you are no doubt finalizing your seeding decisions for 2015—subject, of course, to such variables as the markets and Mother Nature.

The Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC) was established on the basis of a strategic plan created in 2011 and updated by the board of directors in 2013. So, in the fall of 2014, the management group of the AWC decided it was time to take a fresh look at things as we entered our third year of operations.

At the core of the AWC's strategic plan is our mission: "To increase the long-term profitability of wheat and Alberta wheat producers through innovative research, agronomic support and extension, market development, communications and policy development." We've added the words "agronomic support and extension" to the statement, reflecting our intent to focus more of your check-off dollars on those areas in the coming years.

Management's recommendations for a strategy that will take us to the end of 2017 have been presented to the board of directors, and the dialogue will continue with a planning session in March 2015. This will help us in determining our program and budget priorities for 2015/16 and beyond.

In the interim, you can gain a better understanding of how your check-off dollars are being invested in the AWC's 2013/14 annual report, *Leading Alberta's Wheat Industry Forward*. The report is posted on our website at [www.albertawheat.com](http://www.albertawheat.com), or request a printed copy by emailing us at [info@albertawheat.com](mailto:info@albertawheat.com).

Spring is a time of optimism and renewal as we look forward to the coming season. I wish you safe seeding and all the best for a prosperous crop in 2015.

*Tom Steve*

## WHEAT WORLD



The 2013/14 annual report is available now on [albertawheat.com](http://albertawheat.com) and features highlights from the past year as well as our financial statements. Email [info@albertawheat.com](mailto:info@albertawheat.com) to receive more information.

## AWC BOARD MEMBERS 2015



Shot at the Alberta Wheat Commission AGM, January 28, 2015. From left to right: Henry Vos, Warren Sekulic, Greg Porozni, Kent Erickson, Kevin Bender, Kevin Auch, Lynn Jacobson, John Wozniak, Gary Stanford, Terry Young and Gerry Good.

Photo: Bryce Meyer



## SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

### *Cold-tolerance research project explores how to extend growing season*

By Cullen Bird

**F**armers wanting an earlier start on seeding their spring crops could benefit from the latest research project coming from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The four-year project means to determine if early plantings of cold-tolerant spring wheat, combined with the right agronomics, can extend the growing season without compromising yield or quality.

“We’re trying to develop a more sustainable system around early planting dates for spring wheat growers,” said Brian Beres, the lead investigator for the research project. “So the hypothesis is, ‘Can you improve successful early plantings into cold soils?’”

The project began last spring, and will continue until spring 2018. It’s funded by the Western Grains Research Foundation, Alberta Innovates – Bio Solutions and the Alberta Wheat Commission. The research team has already selected three cold-tolerant spring wheat lines for the experiments, Beres said.

Fellow researcher and winter wheat breeder Rob Graf also believes this project has the potential to give farmers a leg up on Mother Nature. “If, in fact, the lines that we’ve developed prove to be reliable enough to give a consistent advantage—and that’s part



Photo: Rob Graf

AC Barrie in the foreground showing winterkill in Lethbridge. Behind it are several plots of cold tolerant spring wheat. All other plots are winter wheat.

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regular registered varieties*

*-Brian Beres*

of the reason for the experiment—what it would actually allow, then, is the development of cold-tolerant spring wheats that would have longer days to maturity, and in doing that we can boost yield,” Graf said.

“That involved sending the material to a winter nursery to increase them and ensure that they were spring wheats, then bringing it back and growing it out here. We then conducted a very basic adaptation and yield trial here, and selected the best lines. Now we’re ready to go this spring with the actual agronomic study,” Beres said. That will involve planting the spring wheat at six different times, each planting at a slightly warmer temperature.

The next step in the project is more complicated. The team will select two of the three wheat lines and then try a more rigorous experiment, including factors like seeding depths as well as planting temperatures.

Ultimately, the research team is trying to develop a system for earlier spring planting, Beres said. “And so that system derives from things like cultural practices, including seeding rates, seeding depths, the planting dates, and then how do these cold-tolerant lines respond to that.”

There’s some risk in the research project. It’s possible that the cold-tolerant wheat lines will perform no better than the regular registered varieties, Beres said. “That’s science. It’s high risk, low reward.”

Yet Beres knows that the research project could be important to Alberta farmers who want an early start on seeding their spring crop. “Their farm size and scale isn’t decreasing, it’s increasing,” he said. “So around here I’ve seen guys in the field in March, trying to get on that as fast as they can.”

## SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY



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

**M**ore and more we are hearing from multinational companies like McDonald's, Unilever, Kellogg's, Anheuser-Busch and a host of others that their customers are demanding products that contain sustainably sourced ingredients. In response to such demands, these companies have developed sustainability requirements that will be applied to the entire supply chain, starting at the farm.

How will these sustainability metrics be applied to on-farm practices? How do we know what, if anything, about the way we farm needs to change in order to maintain market access?

In March 2015, representatives from Alberta's four crop commissions—Alberta Barley, Canola, Pulse and Wheat—will undergo on-farm assessments in three internationally recognized sustainability-certification programs.

The first of these programs is International Sustainability and Carbon Certification PLUS (ISCC PLUS). Why? Because the ISCC PLUS standard is currently recognized by the global market and used by farm groups across North America. The European Commission recognizes ISCC as one of the first certification schemes to demonstrate compliance with the European Union's Renewable Energy Directive requirements.

The second program is the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform.

This is the main food and beverage industry platform supporting the development of sustainable agriculture initiatives worldwide. Relevant members include Anheuser-Busch, Heineken, Kellogg's, General Mills and McDonald's, among many others.

The third and final program that will be included in the on-farm assessments is Unilever's Sustainable Agriculture Code (SAC). This scheme was developed in 2010 as part of Unilever's continuous improvement efforts. It was created and tested by a network of practical agronomists, farmers, consultants and sustainability advisors, and is applied to agricultural raw materials sourced by Unilever.

As part of its program, Unilever expects suppliers to agree to "minimum standards of performance"—it is not specified that they must be Unilever's, and in fact Unilever is open to accommodating other schemes. According to the SAC, "Unilever will not do business with new suppliers who do not meet the mandatory requirements of our Responsible Sourcing Policy. And existing suppliers will be expected to meet these requirements by 2017."

The purpose of this on-farm assessment project is threefold. First, our farmer members want to better understand consumer expectations around agriculture and sustainability, and we believe that these consumer-driven programs are the most efficient and effective means to collect that information. Farmers also want to contribute to the conversation, and this project will prepare them to address consumer expectations in relation to the on-farm practices employed in modern agriculture today. And finally, we want to assess grower readiness.

As noted above, these sustainability programs are not about satisfying a niche market. Growers' ability to satisfy these requirements will determine whether or not they can access major markets in the future.

## MEET THE AWC STAFF



**Victoria Russell**  
**Communications and  
Events Coordinator**

**V**ictoria Russell is the communications and events coordinator for the Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC).

Since joining AWC in June 2014, Russell has been sharing how farmers' check-off dollars are invested. AWC is also exploring the consumer market, communicating the importance of wheat in a healthy and balanced diet. On the events side, Russell plans everything from trade shows to regional meetings, our AGM, and announcements.

After receiving her advanced diploma in advertising at Ottawa's Algonquin College and her bachelor's degree majoring in communications and sociology at the University of Ottawa, Russell began doing communications work in Newfoundland, and finally made her way to Alberta.

Fresh to the foothills, Russell has spent much of her time exploring the province, especially mountain biking on its rustic trails. But after a minor encounter with a bear, she might need a confidence boost to get back out there.