

WHEAT REPORT

PULLOUT →



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Kent Erickson
Chairman

Any 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 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "K. Erickson", written over a horizontal line.

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, or request a printed copy by emailing us at 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 and features highlights from the past year as well as our financial statements. Email 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

Farmers 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.

It’s possible that the cold-tolerant wheat lines will perform no better than the 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**

More 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**

Victoria 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.

BARLEY REPORT



**Alberta
Barley**

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



**Mike Ammeter
Chairman**

Welcome to the March 2015 issue of *GrainsWest*.

With seeding and spraying on the horizon, I know that you, our farmer members, are getting ready for a busy time ahead. However, none of that important work can happen without first spending a great deal of time on planning and preparation.

At Alberta Barley, we take the same mantra and approach as you do when looking at the spring, summer and fall.

On the national front, with a federal election set to take place, the regu-

lations for UPOV 91 being created, and the *Canada Transportation Act* review wrapping up, what happens over the next nine months will set the tone for another generation of Canadian farmers.

Additionally, with a booming craft beer market and a strong demand for Alberta's world-renowned beef, our barley industry is going to have new challenges and opportunities that we must be ready to seize.

On top of these new opportunities, we also know that the landscape is changing on the research side. As our Farmer Model discussions last year indicated, a new system of funding for research and varietal development is soon to become a reality—and we need to be prepared for it.

This isn't even taking into account the continued rebuilding of our

industry in a post-monopoly world, or region-specific issues like fusarium that will continue to dominate the agricultural landscape.

You have trusted us to work on these issues, and, rest assured, our board of directors and staff are up to the challenge. This starts from the top, where our board has set the tone for this critical year with lively policy discussions, leading to a clear direction for our organization in the months to come. I am positive that we are well poised to represent you during this pivotal time.

Our vision this year is for farmers to continue to be heard, and we will work tirelessly to make sure that's the case. We've done our homework and are ready to get to work. After all, preparation is 90 per cent of the battle. Now it's time to lead the charge.

Until next time,



GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE



Lisa Skierka
General Manager

In an election year like this one, we Canadians are able to experience the most fundamental tenet of democracy: the right to vote.

In the coming months, Alberta Barley will be working diligently to ensure that we have the best agriculture-related information available on the political front, including analysis of what this information means for our industry. We will work with the *GrainsWest* team to make sure we

are asking the right questions of our politicians, and we will push all of the parties to tell us what their vision is for the future of agriculture.

We will also use the opportunities presented in an election year to ensure we are talking to key influencers, starting with the Alberta crops federal lobby mission to Ottawa that took place in late-February. Working with our colleagues at the canola, pulse and wheat commissions, our goal is to keep agriculture on the federal agenda, from encouraging research investment to building on international trade opportunities.

Trade remains a top priority as we work on implementing free trade agreements with the European Union and South Korea, while also moving forward with the TransPacific Partnership. By keeping the agriculture sector on the political agenda, we can reinforce the importance of trade for Canadian farmers, while also empha-

sizing the need to improve Canada's transportation system in order to meet our growing trade commitments.

Other political factors that will affect our work on trade include topics as diverse as the changes to the temporary foreign worker program, market access issues and sustainability. These issues are a priority both federally and provincially, and it's our job to ensure political candidates understand how they affect our industry.

As all of you move into the field this spring, be assured the wheels will keep turning at the office as we push forward with the policies and priorities set out by our elected representatives. Democracy is at the heart of how we operate as a provincial commission, and is the foundation of our grassroots organization.

NEW CHAIRMAN EAGER TO LAY GROUNDWORK FOR NEXT GENERATION

By Jeremy Simes

It's an extraordinary privilege that Mike Ammeter is ready to seize. In December 2014, Alberta Barley's board of directors elected Ammeter as its new chairman following the commission's annual general meeting in Banff.

Having previously served as vice-chairman, the Sylvan Lake-area farmer is no stranger to a leadership role. However, accepting the new responsibility was not something Ammeter took lightly.

"It's an honour to represent the barley producers of Alberta and it's a

challenge I'm up for," he said.

With so many policy initiatives on the horizon, Ammeter and the Alberta Barley board of directors have been busy right from the get-go. Hot topics range from transportation issues to UPOV 91 and the future of research funding in Canada.

"These are really big things that the next generation of farmers is going to be dealing with. A lot of what we decide in the next year or two will shape that. We want to get it right," he explained.

In a post-monopoly world, farmers

and segments of the industry are in rebuild mode, Ammeter added. However, armed with a collaborative board of directors, an engaged delegate base and a high-performing staff team, Ammeter said Alberta Barley is ready to help shape the agricultural landscape and ensure that farmers' input is heard.

"We've tackled policy more head-on in recent years, and we haven't shied away from it," Ammeter said. "We have a stronger voice."

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BARLEY RESEARCH

Growing the industry, one project at a time

By Sydney Duhaime

In order to be profitable, farmers have to stay ahead of the curve. That's why research (and innovation) is one of Alberta Barley's main priorities—a profitable crop needs access to cutting-edge science to stay that way.

"Research benefits farmers by developing improved varieties of barley that are better yielding, prevent the spread of pests and diseases, and thereby have the potential to maximize profits," said Garson Law, Alberta Barley's research manager.

As a grassroots organization, Alberta Barley's research projects are driven by and for farmers.

"Projects are recommended by the Research Committee, which is made up of farmers and industry advisors," Law explained, adding that projects are chosen based on their potential to benefit farmers in the current market.

In addition to funding projects, Alberta Barley also stays in communication with researchers and farmers to ensure the impact of the research being done is measurable, practical and relevant.

That's why continued barley research is important, Law said.

"Without innovative research, the varieties in existence will become less competitive, less resistant to environmental pressures and, as a result, the yield and quality will decline and reduce profitability."

Luckily, the future of barley research is bright—thanks in large part to a major investment from farmers, in partnership



One of the focuses of Alberta Barley's stable of research projects is barley ingredient development for food manufacturers.

with industry and government. This is in large part due to the \$11 million *National Barley Research Cluster* funding announced by Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Gerry Ritz last year under the *Growing Forward 2* agricultural policy framework.

The funding covers 27 new and exciting projects to be completed by 2018. These projects fall into one of the following four categories: agronomy, breeding and genetics, pathology, and value-added (barley for food). These focus areas shine a spotlight on the practice of breeding new barley varieties and combating diseases to help farmers increase their yields, as well as offer value-added barley to a variety of markets. The projects also focus on barley ingredient development for food manufacturers and creating new barley varieties that contain more healthy components.

The impact of investments like this are felt directly on the farm, said Law.

"An investment of this level enhances the competitiveness of barley farmers by giving them the tools they need," he explained. With the science side of the equation in good

hands, what about the communications side? Well, the research department has that covered, too.

Recently, Alberta Barley launched the new-and-improved research projects page on albertabarley.com/research.

Based on farmer feedback, the new research page is a comprehensive and transparent breakdown of the research projects funded by barley farmers.

"This page is an opportunity for researchers to present their projects to farmers directly. Now, farmers can see exactly how and where check-off dollars are invested," said Law.

By clearly listing Alberta Barley-funded projects—including current and recently completed projects, summaries of the project objectives and important findings to date—the new page is truly a one-shop stop for farmers interested in the latest barley research.

"It's all about reporting to our members to let them know what we are working on," said Law. "We are proud of our research activities, and we want everyone to know about them."

Photo: Bryce Meyer

Part of this stronger voice includes driving discussion on the future of research funding in Canada. After the Farmer Model workshop in Calgary last June, the Alberta Barley board of directors decided to open up the conversation to all farmers. This is being done through the #FarmerModel discussion on Twitter and AlbertaBarley.com.

“Our belief is that, as the primary funders of agricultural research through check-off dollars, farmers have the right and responsibility to provide input as to where that money goes,” said Ammeter.

While policy remains a critical emphasis for Alberta Barley, agronomy and research are also at the forefront. Chief among the challenges is the infiltration of fusarium head blight, a fungal disease in cereal crops. However, those concerns are currently region-specific in Alberta, making it difficult to establish an encompassing provincial or regional policy to tackle the disease, Ammeter said.

“These are really big things that the next generation of farmers is going to be dealing with. A lot of what we decide in the next year or two will shape that. We want to get it right.”

—Mike Ammeter

“There’s limited awareness of fusarium, and there are these wide regional variations of it. So it’s hard to come up with a one-size-fits-all policy,” he explained. “It has been a challenge for us, and the issue is not going away. But we haven’t backed away from it, and will continue to figure it out.”

Going forward, Ammeter is confident the Alberta Barley team is well equipped to handle what the future brings.

“I’m proud of this organization. Everyone involved is working hard. It’s a lot of fun, believe it or not,” he added. “There’s nothing wrong with putting in a hard day’s work.”

MEET THE ABC STAFF



Cole Christensen
Communications Manager

Cole Christensen is the communications manager for Alberta Barley. He has been with the organization since August 2013 and currently oversees all communications activities for Alberta Barley, the Barley Council of Canada and the Western Wheat and Barley Check-off, also known as the Western Canadian Deduction.

Born and raised in Calgary, Christensen grew up dreaming of becoming a sports journalist—a dream he eventually achieved after graduating with a bachelor of arts in communications studies from the University of Calgary.

Following his graduation in 2009, Christensen worked as a sports journalist with *The News Review* in Yorkton, SK, and the *Western Wheel* in Okotoks, AB. He then moved on to the communications world with a job in the utilities industry as a communications adviser before signing on to the Alberta Barley team.

In his free time, Christensen enjoys playing basketball, watching his beloved Cleveland Browns and going on road trips across North America with his wife, Kristin.



Photo: Michael Interisano
Jason Lenz, vice-chairman (left), and Mike Ammeter, chairman, in Banff following the 2014 AGM.