






Join us at FarmTech for Alberta Wheat Commission's

Annual General Meeting

 Wednesday, January 30th, 2019  10:30 am - 11:30 am  Edmonton Expo Centre, Hall F

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Bayer Banquet featuring comedian and author **Rick Mercer!**

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SELF-ASSESSMENT

Crop commissions launch farmsustainability.ca

Karla Bergstrom

Manager of government and industry affairs, Alberta Canola

As supply chains and multinationals continue to expand globally, while seeking lower costs and greater production capacity, they are exposed to a wide array of risks. This is especially true when companies expand into developing countries. Our farmers can relate to many of the same risks such as supply disruption and cost volatility. There is also compliance with local laws and regulations and even brand reputation to worry about.

Companies such as Walmart, General Mills and McDonald's are looking to source sustainable ingredients to meet the growing expectations of their stakeholders to be more responsible for their suppliers' social, ethical and environmental practices.

Sustainability was just coming onto our radar in 2015, and the four crop commissions—the Alberta Wheat Commission, Alberta Barley, Alberta Canola and Alberta Pulse Growers—collaborated on a pilot project that looked at sustainability certification of grain farms. We learned that Alberta farmers are using a lot of beneficial management practices on their farms and that agriculture has great stories to tell, but we needed to be more proactive to help our farmers provide the proof in a way that wasn't onerous.

We've continued to work together, forming the Alberta Farm Sustainability Extension Working Group with the four commissions and staff from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. Together, we are proud to launch farmsustainability.ca, a hub for ad-



vancing sustainability within Canada's cropping sector.

Our working group contracted Groupe Agéco to build this platform, which focuses on increasing farmers' readiness to supply sustainable ingredients. The website provides information about what sustainability is and addresses the drivers behind sustainable sourcing and sustainability certification.

The website also serves as a platform for farmers to voluntarily complete an online self-assessment that was created from a hybrid checklist of three international sustainability standards. These include the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification PLUS (ISCC PLUS), the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI

Platform) Farmer Self-Assessment 2.0 and Unilever's Sustainable Agriculture Code (ULSAC).

The site presents sustainability standards in a format that makes compliance requirements easy to understand. It will also allow users to compare their sustainability practices to those of their Alberta peers.

In February 2018, several crop-group directors went online and completed the self-assessment as part of a pilot project to ensure the tool was fully ready for launch. With that process now complete, our new platform is ready to be used by farmers who are open to learn more about their operations and may consider adopting a sustainability certification program on their farms.

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—
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OF CHEMISTRY AND CORN

Quebec crop input restriction has implications for Western Canada

Isabelle Thibout

AdvancingAg Future Leaders Program mentee

The presence of weeds affects crop yield and quality. The most common method of weed control is the use of herbicides, due to their ease of use and the vast areas of treatment. However, some herbicides on the market present varying health and environmental risks.

In corn, the active ingredient atrazine is registered to control a wide range of broadleaf weeds and wild oats at various crop stages. However, according to the Quebec Pesticide Risk Indicator (QPRI), which measures the toxicological or human health risk and ecotoxicological or environmental risk associated with crop protection products, atrazine poses a high level of concern.

In February 2018, the Ministry of Environment and the Fight Against Climate Change implemented new regulations on the use of the most controversial agricultural pesticides. The provincial government's vision was to protect human health and the environment. The use of atrazine in corn was restricted. Farmers now need to obtain permission—termed “a prescription”—from an agronomist, to justify its use.

In Canada, federal pesticide regulations are established by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA). It evaluates the risks associated with pesticides and authorizes the sale and use of these products within the country. Each province and territory individually rules on whether or not to authorize the sale and use of these pesticides.



Photo: Rob McMorris Photography

At the Prairie Cereals Summit, Isabelle Thibout makes a presentation as the Advancing Ag essay winner.



“The restriction of atrazine in Eastern Canada is a sign that stricter regulation of agricultural pesticides in general may be coming.”

Quebec is the only province to implement an atrazine regulation that applies to corn. This new regulation is currently subject to a complex risk re-assessment being performed by the PMRA.

This situation makes the future use of the active ingredient uncertain in Western Canada. If other corn producing provinces decide to restrict the use of atrazine, will the PMRA re-assess its decision and regulate its use? And, if the PMRA proves that atrazine has an impact on human health or the environment, we can assume its use will be constrained. Then, what is the future of other pesticides?

We appreciate the concern the federal and various provincial governments have around the protection of human health and the environment. However, the restriction of atrazine in Eastern Canada is a sign that stricter

regulation of agricultural pesticides in general may be coming.

We need to develop a proactive approach to make sure the government does not take away the agricultural tools that make farming the rich and successful industry it now is. Without them, it would be the end of agriculture as we know it. We can already see the issues Europe is facing in this regard.

I recommend being proactive by establishing and following integrated pest management programs and adopting Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs).

For herbicide use, an important BMP is to identify weed species in the field and select the most appropriate control treatment rather than a blanket treatment. It also includes applying herbicide at optimal timing, taking into consideration weather

conditions, weed and crop stage, and other variables. Another BMP is using the necessary amount of herbicide to avoid correction treatments, on the appropriate crop and maintaining crop rotations. Borrowing from the nutrient-management sphere, in short, this means using the right product at the right time, rate and place.

Safety practices, such as following usage instructions and wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment, along with stewardship practices, all paired with the previously stated cultural practices will help us shape the future of agriculture, for the better.

Isabelle Thibout is the 2018 AdvancingAg Future Leaders essay winner and a 2018/19 program participant. She works as a solutions centre specialist at Corteva Agriscience.

LEARN FROM THE BEST

Opportunities abound for AdvancingAg future leaders



Photos: Rob McMorris Photography

AdvancingAg mentees, Marissa Gehlert (left) and Isabelle Thibout discuss their respective goals for the program at the Advancing Ag 2018 kick-off event.

As the old saying goes, opportunities don't happen, you create them. For the AdvancingAg Future Leaders Program class of 2019, this statement could not be more true

Of the numerous applicants for the Alberta Wheat Commission and Alberta Barley mentorship program, eight mentee-mentor pairings were selected. The participants were selected based on the strength of their applications, willingness to learn and step out of their comfort zone, and their ability to outline a path forward

in their burgeoning careers. A good fit with a prospective mentor was also an important criteria.

One of these fortunate pairings was Isabelle Thibout and Ben Graham. "I am very grateful to have been paired with the perfect fit," said Thibout, who works as a solutions centre specialist at Corteva Agriscience.

Thibout lives in Calgary but was raised in Crespières, France, and sought to learn more about the communications and marketing world of

agriculture. She was glad she took the plunge and applied to AdvancingAg. For her, there was no better pairing than with Graham, the president of AdFarm—a widely respected agricultural marketing and public relations firm with offices across North America. "Ben is very talented, knowledgeable and is recognized as an expert in the agriculture industry," explained Thibout.

While only a few months into the year-long program, Thibout has already learned a lot about the world



"I want to be proud to say that I have taken every opportunity to work towards my goal."

—Marissa Gehlert



"I am very grateful to have been paired with the perfect fit."

—Isabelle Thibout

of agricultural marketing and communications. With Graham's help, they have also established unique learning objectives that would have otherwise been difficult to achieve.

"This year I will participate in the creation and implementation of a marketing plan on a product or communication project within AdFarm," said Thibout. "On top of that, I have attended an event organized by the Calgary Marketing Association focused on enhancing the customer experience. These are professional development experiences that I am very pleased to be part of."

Another mentee who has made the most of her AdvancingAg experience has been Marissa Gehlert. Hailing from Parkland County, Gehlert grew up on a mixed dairy farm and fondly remembers bottle feeding calves and

helping out with chores as soon as she was old enough. As a Certified Crop Adviser and retailer, Gehlert now supports farmers and ranchers in achieving their goals. This has inspired her to follow her own goals.

Gehlert is paired up with Bill Chapman, a crop extension specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. He is confident that 2019 will bring even more opportunities for Gehlert to engage with the industry and advance her learning.

Gehlert has put her words into action, by way of the City Slickers event in Stony Plain, held in September of 2018. The program works with Edmonton-area schools and transports more than 1,000 children from Grades 4 and 5 to farms where they learn about farm life and where their food comes from.

"I was very happy to be able to take part in such an amazing event," recounted Gehlert. "Many of these kids have never been on a farm before and they've never even seen a cow up close. It was so rewarding to see the interaction from these kids, the questions and the genuine interest they expressed about the farm."

"When I look back a year from now, I want to be proud to say that I have taken every opportunity to work towards my goals, taken every chance to learn something new and to have shared the new knowledge and experience I have gained with others," she added.

To learn more about the AdvancingAg Future Leaders Program, visit advancingag.ca. Applications for the 2019/20 program year are now open until Feb. 28, 2019.

