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Sugar beets in Southern Alberta

Photo courtesy of Alberta Sugar Beet Growers

Alberta Federation of Agriculture insight

AFA Summer Council Meeting sets future direction

by Terry Lee Degenhardt

ON JUNE 27, 2014 ALBERTA FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE (AFA) DIRECTORS, REGIONAL DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS MET AT SHORNCLIFFE PARK NEAR PROVOST. THE GROUP DISCUSSED FARM ISSUES AND PLANNED THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION.

AFA is focused in two areas:

- responding to the concerns that producers raise, and
- creating awareness of the important role of a general farm organization like AFA.

The group considered the internal structure, plans and activities needed to create a general

farm organization that is recognized as *the* voice for Alberta on general agricultural issues. AFA wants Alberta farmers to know that our mission is to develop and advocate policies for Alberta producers that promote a sustainable agriculture industry.

A key goal of AFA is to provide a forum for discussion about farm issues by listening to producer concerns. AFA then brings those issues to provincial or national attention.

The grain transportation issue is an example of how this goal contributed to the successful resolution of a producer concern. Farmers raised the problem of poor grain movement at

the 2014 AFA annual meeting. The three prairie farm organizations (AFA, Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan and Keystone Agricultural Producers of Manitoba) enlisted the help of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, which brought the issue to the federal Ministers of Agriculture and Transportation.

The seriousness of the problem and overwhelming evidence resulted in the Canadian government mandating a minimum level of service by the railways. Grain is once again moving in greater volumes to port.

AFA also plays an important role in monitoring government policies affecting agriculture.



Exciting developments for key Alberta crop

Sugar beet growers provide the only domestic source of sugar in Canada, and Southern Alberta is where it happens.

Growing sugar beets has been a tradition in that part of the province since 1902. Still, growers and their farm organization, the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers (ASBG), are always looking for innovative uses for the crop.

“As we move into the future, expansion of the market is a major focus,” says Gerald Third, ASBG Executive Director and AFA Board Member. “We are currently researching the use of sugar beets and energy beets in the production of sustainable alternatives to petrochemicals. We expect this to become a commercially viable part of the sugar beet industry in Alberta soon.”

Third is referring to a process where sugar beets are used as a cost-effective feedstock for bioglycol, a renewable alternative to petrochemicals used in liquid detergents, antifreeze and plastic bottles, and a promising biofuel for unmodified gasoline engines. This potential new market would increase demand for sugar beets significantly.

Southern Alberta has over 200 sugar beet producers who grow a total of between 25,000 and 30,000 acres annually. Patience through bad years and a lot of hard work have created this proud Canadian industry that has stood the test of time.

The ASBG – a long-time AFA member – is a vibrant, expanding, profitable and producer-driven industry organization. ASBG provides:

- leadership and representation for producers on provincial, national and international policy
- promotion of the industry through effective partnering with government, business and producers
- a united voice for producers when dealing with the processing industry
- guidance on agricultural research that will enhance the competitiveness of the industry.



Hon. Verlyn Olson, AFA President Lynn Jacobson, Director Grace MacGregor
Photo courtesy of Richard Holmes



All dressed up and ready for the Newalta tour
Photo courtesy of Marion Popkin

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In the past few years, AFA has:

- successfully lobbied to maintain the fuel rebate
- provided a voice at Land Use Planning forums
- raised awareness about child labour in Alberta
- advocated to maintain farmers' right to save and grow their own seed (under the international convention UPOV 91 for the protection of new varieties of plants, plus changes represented by Bill C-18, the *Agricultural Growth Act*).

At the Summer Council meeting, AFA raised the issue of wildlife damage to swaths and bales left in the field for livestock grazing with Curtis Boyd of Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC), who presented to the group. Currently, there is no compensation to producers for these losses. There is also a concern about crop insurance risk area boundaries. Boyd agreed to take these concerns forward.

After the meeting, attendees toured the Newalta facility at Hughenden. Newalta offers solutions to industrial customers to improve their environmental performance through recycling and recovery of waste products. They store oilfield waste in salt caverns washed out of the dense salt beds about one kilometer below ground. Only 10 percent of the waste is permanently stored in the caverns. The rest is salt water, which returns to the oil producing layers, or oil, which is salvaged and marketed.

Following the tour, folks moved back to the hall at Shorncliffe Park for a barbeque. DT Motley Farms donated burgers and Severn Farms donated ice cream for dessert. The “fixings” were locally prepared by Phi Nguyen and Pam Mackie.

A highlight of the day was an address by provincial Agriculture Minister Honourable Verlyn Olson, QC, at the barbeque. Minister Olson spoke of significant trade opportunities for Alberta, and the importance of having systems in place to provide a consistent supply of agri-food products. He indicated the rail transportation issues of the past year negatively impacted Canada's standing as a world supplier of grain. He felt transportation issues – should they arise in the future – could jeopardize access to sizeable Asian markets.

Minister Olson also responded to questions about crop risk area boundaries, wildlife damage, plant breeding regulations and new crops. AFA was very pleased to have the opportunity to raise issues with Minister Olson in this informal setting.

getting to know **Ag for Life**

Farm organization promotes education and safety AFA's newest member brings important messages to Albertans

AG FOR LIFE IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO BUILDING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF AGRICULTURE AND ITS FUNDAMENTAL CONNECTION TO LIFE. THEIR MISSION IS TO HELP ALBERTANS UNDERSTAND THE INCREDIBLE DEPTH OF OPPORTUNITY THAT AGRICULTURE AFFORDS.

Ag for Life supports the delivery of educational programming that will improve rural and farm safety and build a genuine understanding and appreciation of the important role of agriculture.

Increasingly, consumers want to know where their food comes from. A greater connection between rural and urban societies underlines the importance of sharing the impact agriculture has on everybody's lives. We are all stewards of the land.

AFA's partnership with Ag for Life is inspired by our mutual goals in farm safety and agricultural awareness. In March 2013, David Sprague, Chief Executive Officer of Ag for Life, heard Humphrey Banack (AFA's 2nd VP) talk about farm safety, and they connected afterwards. They found the two organizations had much in common, and over several months, their discussions resulted in this new alliance.

Ag for Life is made possible through the funding and commitment of companies that employ almost 20,000 people in over 350 Alberta communities. Founding members include Agrium Inc., ATB Financial, ATCO Group, Penn West, Rocky Mountain Equipment, TransCanada Corporation and UFA Co-operative Limited. Contributing members include AdFarm and Glacier FarmMedia.

To learn more about Ag for Life, visit their website at www.agricultureforlife.ca.



Nothing is better than spending a beautiful summer day in the country. This August, thousands of Albertans will explore the amazing bounty of rural farms, see demonstrations about how farms operate and attend an amazing array of culinary events across the province.

Alberta Open Farm Days – an *Ag for Life* initiative with several other partners – takes place during the weekend of August 23 and 24, 2014. On the Saturday, talented Alberta chefs team up with farmers and rural communities to offer culinary events (admission fees apply). On the Sunday, producers open the farmgates to offer a first-hand look at the important contribution agriculture makes to our province (free admission to open farms).

To see a list of participating farms, plus video, photos and a wide range of information on this important event, visit the Alberta Open Farm Days website at: <http://www.albertafarmdays.com>

If you are interested in becoming a host farm, or holding a culinary event, the deadline for 2014 has passed. What about next year, though? The application deadline for the 2015 Open Farm Days is June 30, 2015.

The newly formed alliance between AFA and Ag for Life reflects many common goals and values around farm safety and the appreciation of agriculture in Alberta. Ag for Life has numerous educational programs, now reaching almost 50,000 Albertans.

supporting sustainability

Here are just a few of the programs Ag for Life makes possible:

- Through close collaboration with stakeholders, Ag for Life develops hands-on educational programming for children, youth and adults.
- Ag for Life provides committed funding and support to facilitate valuable educational opportunities. With less financial pressure, organizers are able to fully focus on creating useful programs with successful outcomes.
- As partnerships and collaborations continue to build, Ag for Life increases the outreach of programs across Alberta, and ensures the long-term sustainability of these important programs.
- Ag for Life success stories include the Classroom Agriculture Program, Little Green Thumbs, Alberta Open Farm Days, City Slickers, Farm Safety Days and the Rollover Simulator Project.

It will be here before you know it!

Agriculture for Life 2014 Harvest Gala
BMO Centre, Calgary, Alberta
Saturday, November 8, 2014 6-11pm

Join the Agriculture for Life Harvest Gala celebrating Alberta's agricultural roots.

Experience a fusion of urban and rural style and design, the scrumptious taste of locally produced foods, the sights and sounds of Alberta artists, a silent auction and a chance to connect with friends in the community market.

This year's much-anticipated event will directly benefit Agriculture for Life's mandate of promoting farm safety and the impact of agriculture in Alberta.

For more information or to register, visit <http://agricultureforlife.ca/event/2014-agriculture-for-life-harvest-gala>

Save the date!

2015 AFA Annual General Meeting in Red Deer

Mark January 19 to 21 on your calendar!

This is an opportunity to add your voice to issues of importance in agriculture for the coming year. Attend the AGM and help shape the evolving direction of Alberta's agriculture industry!

Registration forms and information
on speakers coming soon.

Do you know people who are **not** AFA members?

Don't keep a secret – tell them about us so they can start enjoying the many benefits we offer today! Joining is easy. For information, visit our website at <http://afaonline.ca/membership>



5033 - 52 Street, Lacombe, AB T4L 2A6

Keep your home safe when you're away

Exclusive insurance coverages and savings

As a proud Member-Owner of The Co-operators, AFA is pleased to provide our members with access to exclusive coverage and savings on a variety of insurance products. **Remember to tell your agent that you're an AFA member to get your discount.**

With the summer season here, The Co-operators offers these important tips to keep your home or cabin secure, and your property safe.

Make sure your insurance coverage stays valid

If you're away from your property for more than five consecutive days, these actions must take place in order to maintain insurance coverage:

- have someone enter the property daily to ensure heating is continuous
- shut off the water supply.

That lived-in look helps deter vandals

Unoccupied dwellings are attractive to vandals. Take these steps to make your home look lived in while you're away:

- keep window coverings closed
- put interior lights on timers
- have mail collected at least every 72 hours
- stop newspaper delivery
- have someone cut your lawn in the summer, or shovel snow in winter



If you have a cabin or seasonal property (lucky you), The Co-operators offers a variety of seasonal policies with coverage to suit your needs.

For more home insurance tips and information, visit The Co-operators' website at www.cooperators.ca or contact a local Co-operators financial advisor.