



Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Government of Alberta

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What We Heard Report – Canadian Agricultural Partnership In-Person Consultations and On-Line Engagement January through March, 2018

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# Background

The development of the new agricultural policy framework kicked off in July 2016 when Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers of Agriculture endorsed the Calgary Statement. The Calgary Statement outlined six key priority areas and principles that guided the development of the framework: markets and trade; science, research and innovation; risk management; environmental sustainability and climate change; value-added agriculture and agri-food processing; and public trust.

A year later, July 2017, in St. John's Newfoundland and Labrador the FPT Ministers endorsed the foundation and design of the new framework, now named the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership).

Two formal rounds of consultation and engagement were held to discuss what the Partnership should look like in Alberta. Input and guidance from Alberta's agriculture sector and stakeholders continued to be our most valuable resource throughout both the negotiation phase and the development of program priorities tailored to Alberta industry needs.

The first round of consultation and engagement, held in spring 2017, focused on gaining industry input on the priority areas outlined in the Calgary Statement and discerning what needed to be accomplished in Alberta.

The second round of consultations, held in winter 2018, focused on obtaining feedback on what the suite of the Partnership-funded programs in Alberta should look like.

The Partnership launched in April 2018 in Alberta. It will invest in Alberta's agriculture industry over a five year period from April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2023 and replaces the national five-year agricultural policy framework known as Growing Forward 2 that expired March 31, 2018.

With a \$3 billion investment over five years, the Partnership will strengthen the Canadian agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector, ensuring continued innovation, growth and prosperity through provincially delivered cost-shared strategic programs. In addition, producers will continue to have access to a robust suite of Business Risk Management (BRM) programs (AgriInsurance, AgriStability, AgriRecovery and AgriInvest).

# Overview

Based on the feedback and input from the first phase of Stakeholder engagement in March-April 2017, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF) identified five priority themes to guide the development of the Partnership programs in Alberta. The five themes are, in no particular order:

- Products, Market Growth and Diversification
- Science and Research
- Risk Management
- Environmental Sustainability
- Public Trust.

This next section provides additional background and details on program themes and the subsequent proposed programs under each theme. It provides context to what was presented during the second phase of engagement and what participants were asked to weigh in on both during the in-person consultations and via the on-line survey.

## Product, Market Growth and Diversification

The purpose of this theme is geared toward building new capacity and tools to help business grow in local, domestic and international markets. The intended goals of the theme are:

- Strengthen competitive position of food, agriculture and bio business
- Address barriers to entry and growth
- Increase investment in the value-added sector
- Reduce risk to pursue emerging opportunities.

Three programs were proposed within this theme to support the outcomes:

### **Program 1: Value-added Products to Markets**

This program supports growth of Alberta's value-added food processors and bio-industrial processors. The program targets processors for projects that enable growth of their businesses through increased sales related to development of new products, adoption of state-of-the art processes, commercialization of products in new markets, and expansion of their business in local, domestic and international markets.

### **Program 2: Products to Markets**

This program is intended to support growth of Alberta's agricultural industries by supporting development of new products and/or processes, commercialization of products in new markets, and expansion into local, domestic and international markets.

## **Program 3: Enabling Emerging Opportunities**

This program stream directs dollars to support diversification through the development of new or emerging opportunities to broaden Alberta's food, beverage and bio-products industries.

## **Science and Research**

The purpose of this theme is to turn discoveries into transformative technologies, products, practices and processes that will benefit Albertans. The intended goals of the theme are:

- Drive improved competitiveness and growth through innovation
- Enable future innovation through scientific advances
- Identify industry needs and find solutions that meet those needs.

Two programs were proposed within this theme to support the outcomes:

### **Program 1: Accelerating the Advancement of Agriculture Innovations**

This program is intended to support Alberta's agri-businesses to sustainably grow their businesses through adoption of new innovative practices, processes, products and technologies as well as supporting early adopters of new innovations.

### **Program 2: Adapting Innovative Solutions in Agriculture**

This program is intended for Alberta's agri-businesses to achieve sustainable growth through adaptation of existing technologies, practices, processes and products as well as supporting early adopters of adapted innovations.

## **Risk Management**

The purpose of this theme is to increase industry adoption of best practices that help to anticipate, mitigate and prepare for risks. The intended goals of the theme are:

- Build capacity to anticipate and proactively address risks
- Shift focus from response to prevention
- Enhance industry capacity to quickly respond to risks.

Three programs were proposed within this theme to support the outcomes.

## **Program 1: Emergency Preparedness**

This program is intended to support the development of emergency response plans and to increase preparedness related to animal and plant health, food safety and water conveyance.

## **Program 2: Risk Mitigation**

This program is intended to support the adoption of assurance systems best practices, processes, technologies or plans to mitigate food safety risks, advancements of humane slaughter as well as supporting farm safety, plant health and identifying irrigation conveyance risks.

## **Program 3: Surveillance**

This program is intended to increase industry capacity to proactively assess new and emerging threats to food safety, support early detection of emerging diseases, pests and plant, and animal health issues.

## **Environmental Sustainability**

The purpose of this theme is to increase adoption of practices and technologies to improve environmental sustainability, adapt to climate change and reduce greenhouse gases. The intended goals of the theme are:

- Accelerate private change, especially greenhouse gas reduction; and,
- Evolve supported activities to reflect change in the industry.

Four programs were proposed within this theme to support the outcomes:

### **Program 1: Environmental Stewardship and Climate Change-Producer**

This program is intended to support producers in advancing sustainable production while mitigating carbon emissions that impact air and soil quality. It will also support producers in adapting to climate change and reducing the risk agricultural activities pose to water quality.

### **Program 2: Environmental Stewardship and Climate Change – Groups and Agricultural Organizations**

This program is intended to support extension to improve producer understanding that implementing priority practices can increase market access, as well as supporting producer

groups and agricultural organizations applied research and extension on adapting to climate change and reducing greenhouse gasses.

### **Program 3: Irrigation Efficiency**

This program is intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase water savings in irrigated agriculture by assisting producers with the purchase of more efficient irrigation equipment and systems.

### **Program 4: Farm Water Supply**

This program is intended to support producers to improve their water supply security and efficiently manage their on-farm water resources and to protect their water resources through beneficial management practices as well as provide technical assistance to complete an assessment for the management of their water resources.

## **Public Trust**

The purpose of this theme is to improve the public perception of agriculture and food. The intended goals of the theme are:

- Build capacity with industry to proactively “tell the story”
- Accelerate the development and adoption of new communication tools
- Increase adoption of science-based, verifiable assurance systems.

Three programs were proposed within this theme to support the outcomes:

### **Program 1: Public Agriculture Literacy**

This program is intended to support industry development initiatives that are aimed at improving communication to the public and consumers.

### **Program 2: Agriculture and Food Sustainability Assurance Initiatives**

This program is intended to provide support to develop and enhance assurance systems to demonstrate to the public of the quality, safety and sustainability of products produced by producers and food companies.

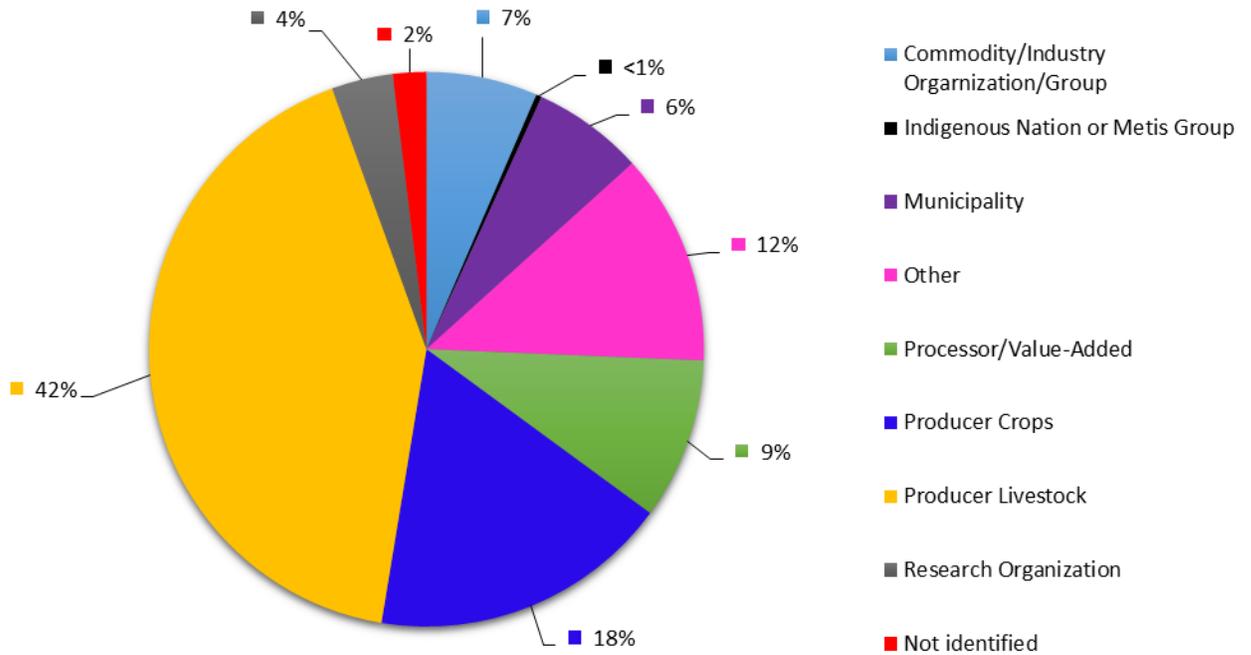
### **Program 3: Youth Agriculture Education**

This program is intended to support the development of robust programs and resources that are science-based and topic-driven that help educators meet their curricular objectives using current best practices in education and evaluation.

# Detailed Summary of Engagement Results

Phase two of the consultation process included three facilitated sessions in Edmonton, Lethbridge and Grande Prairie between January 29, 2018 and March 15, 2018. Industry organizations were invited to send representatives of their membership. A maximum of four participants from each organization was permitted in the series of meetings and a maximum of two participants from one organization was permitted at a single location to ensure a diverse group. There was a total of 86 industry representatives across the three sessions. In addition to the in-person sessions, an online survey was available to all agriculture stakeholders to get a more broad scope of opinions. The online survey was completed by 308 people and was open from February 9, 2018 until March 18, 2018.

**Graph 1: Self-Identified Primary Connection to the Sector**



This graph shows the breakdown of the on-line survey participants. In the survey, they self-identified their primary connection to the sector, which is reflected in the graph.

## Key Findings

The question “Will the proposed program activities move the industry forward?” was asked in the survey and at the in-person sessions. Feedback on where improvements could be made was positive in response to the proposed 15 programs and the value they would bring to Alberta’s agriculture and food sector. On average, 80 percent of the online respondents were supportive of all 15 programs while the remaining 20 percent had a variety of suggestions on what the Partnership should be funding. The increased focus on program outcomes and reporting that are required for the Partnership agreement was well received by participants. Accountability and metrics to demonstrate results is important and was viewed as necessary to determine if Alberta is achieving the desired outcomes. As a result, there was general support from participants for the shift from most programs moving away from first-come first-served to a merit-based selection criteria with the caveat that Agriculture and Forestry (AF) is transparent in the approval process.

Based on the preliminary program design and details that were shared as part of the survey or at the in-person consultations, the participants shared that they could understand the proposed alignment and intentions of each of the themes.

Participants expressed an understanding that the Partnership programs cannot support every important idea under the five themes; there will be a need to prioritize projects in order to make an impact. AF should have a clear vision of what can be achieved under the Partnership.

Participants also commented that it is important for the programs to be responsive and change with industry over the five years of the agreement. In order to move the industry forward participants indicated that different activities should be supported along the way to stay ahead of what is a standard practice or “the norm” and to respond to unforeseen situations that may arise over the next five years.

The crossover of outcomes between programs was mentioned throughout every theme. For example, Emergency Preparedness Program could have a positive impact on public trust and the perception of agriculture. Because of these interwoven outcomes, knowledge transfer and extension was raised as a key element across multiple programs and themes.

Recommendations to streamline and simplify the application process was heard multiple times. The proposed model of 15 programs aims to meet this request while addressing the need for more focused funding objectives.

## Environmental Sustainability

In general, participants commented that most farmers and ranchers in Alberta are already perceived as being stewards of the environment. Letting the public know what is already being

done is just as important as continuous improvement. Most participants were in favour of the Partnership providing funding for this theme and for the four proposed programs.

The level of support for the Irrigation Efficiency program varied depending on the location of the session or the respondents of the survey. In general, the majority of respondents and participants supported this program.

Effective April 1, 2018, producers will need to have an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) completion letter dated within the last 10 years to be considered current and eligible for cost-share funding with the Environmental Stewardship and Climate Change programs. Participants shared concerns about the EFP prerequisite. As Alberta was the only province without a renewal period there is a need to be more consistent nationally and to harmonize the renewal period.

Participants indicated that providing support for this theme has both short-term and long-term benefits. It is important to not only look at the outcomes of this agreement but to look farther ahead to really make an impact on sustainability.

## **Products, Market Growth and Diversification**

A challenge mentioned with this theme is the nature of this sector being so competitive that it is hard to make an impact. Program funding should be focused on helping companies make those risky moves forward (new products) that are backed with a strong business case and capacity to deliver. Market assessment and feasibility work is paramount to the success of these programs. The size of the company does not always dictate success and should not be given priority when choosing projects. Although some participants were discouraged that automation and efficiency are no longer a focus of this theme, there was general support of the program's new direction of business growth and market access. Participants would like to see the merit criteria be transparent and how AF will assess who gets funded.

Food processing and product development is recognized by participants as being important to diversify Alberta's economy, and agriculture as a whole, but the benefits have to extend across the value chain all the way to primary producers. Participants expressed the need for utilizing Alberta's resources for value added processing and thought this should be encouraged in these programs.

Supporting trade missions is important as this activity has a wide spread positive industry impact on Alberta, nationally as well. Some participants suggested that Alberta or Canada should be the focus of trade missions more so than private individual companies getting funding. The point was also made that keeping our current business here in Alberta is just as important as attracting new businesses.

Participants expressed frustration with inter-provincial trade barriers and would like to see the provincial government more active in this area of policy.

## **Public Trust**

Participants expressed overwhelming support for funding this theme. As this is a new area of focus, the participants had varying views on what to do, how to do it and who should do it to make a positive impact. There was a common opinion that commodity groups need to work together and develop themes so there is consistency within the industry.

Participants perceive that there is an obvious gap between producers' and the public's views on agriculture and the proposed programs may begin to bridge that gap. It was felt that when communicating with the public it is important that the message comes from an unbiased group (from the public's view). What the message says should come from industry, but how and who delivers it is just as important. The point was made that social media platforms are becoming increasingly important and that agriculture can no longer shy away from this communication method.

With this type of work it was suggested that Alberta keep up with what other provinces are doing. Some respondents thought public trust should be a national strategy; most participants see the strategy as being larger than Alberta and at minimum larger than any specific commodity. With that in mind, there was a strong agreement that there needs to be collaboration between commodity organizations in Alberta even that it be a requirement for projects.

Some specific comments about the Youth Agriculture Literacy program was that it is just as important to educate adults and educators as it is to educate kindergarten through grade 12 students. There was some encouragement to include a hands on component to learning, not just in a classroom setting. Also, that any education initiative should work with governing bodies that handle the curriculum to ensure they complement each other and that the project has their support.

With Public Trust being a new area of focus with this agreement, participants commented that there may be need to adjust programs over the course of the five years. There is a lot of excitement around this theme and the programs it will deliver.

## **Risk Management**

The overall purpose of this theme is supported and is looked upon favorably as a priority. It was noted that the funding should not replace what organizations and others are doing, but improve what they do and how well they do it. It was felt that the challenge of building a risk management plan is obvious, but an even bigger challenge is how to execute the plan effectively. This theme impacts the whole value chain so it is important that projects are looked at comprehensively and

collaboratively. A weak link at any point within the value chain can have negative effects on everyone.

The idea that the value of emergency preparedness is not always comprehensible until you need it was expressed. Having a program focused on increasing uptake on risk management activities is generally supported. A challenge was raised that a clear definition of roles between agriculture stakeholders, provincial government and federal government (namely Canadian Food Inspection Agency) is required and an important part of any plan. This has not been well done in the past.

The need for surveillance was expressed consistently. Being able to identify and understand the risk is the first step to being able to prepare for it. With an increase in world trade and changing climates we are constantly challenged to stay ahead of new diseases and pests in addition to native risks in Alberta.

Another point that was commonly voiced was that knowledge translation and transfer is important. Outcomes from successful programs under this theme need to be shared with Alberta's agriculture industry to increase impact and effectiveness. Communication is essential between producers to share their learnings as the season progresses. An example is the effectiveness of controlled products on the targeted pest.

## **Science and Research**

Continuing to support Science and Research programs under the Partnership was well supported by the participants. Many expressed the need to have program priorities align with agriculture needs in Alberta to have the greatest impact.

Three points were raised consistently by participants. The first was the agreement that knowledge translation and transfer of project results is essential and many are particularly happy to see it as a requirement. Research projects funded by the Partnership should ensure that the results are available to agriculture stakeholders in Alberta to expand its impact so that Alberta benefits as a whole. The second is that multiple year projects are required in this field of work to be able to achieve outcomes. And the third is that collaboration and coordination between governments and industry is particularly important in the Science and Research theme.

Because the eligible applicant list is inclusive of Agriculture and Forestry applicants, livestock and crop producers, research organizations, industry associations and post-secondary institutions, transparency on the merit criteria of how projects are assessed and chosen is essential.

## **Summary**

In summary, participants expressed support for the proposed suite of 15 programs; however it was noted that there are areas where further discussion should occur regarding the scope of a

program or where there needs to be improved transparency in the application and project selection processes.

The Partnership programs are currently still under development. Program rollout began in April and will continue through the summer months. Progress updates on the development of the programs and the availability of the programs can be found on the provincial CAP website (<https://cap.alberta.ca/CAP>). Industry stakeholders are also encouraged to subscribe to specific programs on the website to receive updates and program specific news.

# Annex A: Industry Associations and Organizations Invited to Participate

Agricultural Fieldmen Representative	Alberta Goat Breeders Association
Agricultural Products Marketing Council	Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association
Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta	Alberta Hatching Egg Producers
Agriculture for Life Inc.	Alberta Holstein Association
Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta	Alberta Lamb Producers
Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies	Alberta Milk
Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties	Alberta Oat Growers Commission
Alberta Association of Seed Cleaning Plants	Alberta Peace Region Forage Seed Growers
Alberta Auction Market Association	Alberta Pork
Alberta Barley Commission (Team Alberta)	Alberta Poultry Hatchery Association
Alberta Beef Producers	Alberta Pulse Growers Commission
Alberta Beekeepers Commission	Alberta Seed Growers Association
Alberta Canola Producers Commission (Team Alberta)	Alberta Sheep Breeders Association
Alberta Cattle Feeders Association	Alberta Sugar Beet Growers
Alberta Chicken Producers	Alberta Turkey Producers
Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund Ltd.	Alberta Vegetable Growers
Alberta Dairy Council	Alberta Wheat Commission
Alberta Elk Commission	Alberta White-tail/Mule Deer Association
Alberta Farm Animal Care	Alfalfa Seed Commission (Alberta)
Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association	Animal Nutrition Association of Canada
Alberta Farm Safety Centre	Applied Research and Extension Council of Alberta
Alberta Federation of Agriculture	Bison Producers of Alberta
Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Organizations	Canadian Meat Council
Alberta Food Processors Association	CEO Club of Calgary
	CEO Club of Edmonton

Ducks Unlimited Canada  
Egg Farmers of Alberta  
Farming Smarter  
Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops Ltd  
Feeder Associations of Alberta  
Horse Industry Association of Alberta  
Irrigation Council  
Lakeland College Agricultural Sciences programs  
Landscape Alberta  
Lethbridge College Agricultural Sciences  
Livestock Identification Services Ltd.  
Olds College Agricultural Management  
Ostrich Association of Alberta  
Peace Country Beef and Forage Association  
Peace Region Forage Seed Association  
Potato Growers of Alberta  
U of A, Faculty of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences  
U of C, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine  
Western Stock Growers Association  
UFA Co-Operative Limited  
Permolex Ltd.  
BioComposites Group  
Botaneco Inc  
Blood Tribe  
Dene Tha' First Nation  
Driftpile Cree Nation  
Little Red River Cree Nation  
Louis Bull Tribe

Samson Cree Nation  
Siksika Nation  
Whitefish Lake First Nations  
Kikino Metis Settlement  
Beaver Lake Indian Reserve  
Sucker Creek First Nation