

## **Four crop commissions are launching FarmSustainability.ca**

*Submitted by Manager Government and Industry Affairs | Alberta Canola*

As supply chains and multinationals continue to expand globally seeking lower costs and greater production capacity they are exposed to a widening array of risks. This is especially true when companies expand into developing countries. Our farmers can relate to many of these risks, like supply disruption, cost volatility, compliance with local laws and regulations, and even brand reputation.

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

Sustainability was just coming onto our radar back in 2015, and the four crop commissions – Alberta Wheat and Barley, Alberta Canola and Alberta Pulse – collaborated on a pilot project that looked at sustainability certification on 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 too onerous.

So, 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, and together, we are proud to launch farmsustainability.ca, a hub for advancing sustainability within Canada's cropping sector.

Our working group contracted Groupe Ageco 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 tool itself 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: the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification PLUS (ISCC PLUS), the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Farmer Self- Assessment 2.0, and Unilever's Sustainable Agriculture Code (ULSAC).

The farmer-friendly format makes it easier to understand what the sustainability standards are requiring for compliance. When we reach a critical mass of users, then the tool can also make it easier to understand how their farm compares to industry averages.

In February, several directors went online and completed the tool as part of a pilot project to ensure the tool was fully ready for launch. With a full launch anticipated shortly, who should visit farmsustainability.ca and complete the tool? Our new platform is for farmers who are open to learning more about their operations and who may be considering a sustainability certification program on their farms sometime in the future.

Watch for farmsustainability.ca to become operational very soon.



- RESOURCE LIBRARY
- QUESTIONNAIRE
- LOG IN

ABOUT US  
HOW IT WORKS

WELCOME

# Farm Sustainability Readiness Tool

A website that provides farmers with information and resources to support decision making at the farm level regarding sustainability.

**ASSESS**  
MY SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE →

**ACCESS**  
THE RESOURCE LIBRARY →

## Start My Sustainability Assessment

Increase your readiness and take action by assessing your performance and comparing your results with the requirements of internationally recognized sustainability programs. Click any section below to start.

HOW IT WORKS

<p>Economic Viability</p>	<p>Social Responsibility</p>	<p>Environmental Sustainability</p>
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The screenshot shows a web-based questionnaire interface. On the left is a dark sidebar with navigation icons and a green header area containing the text 'Questionnaire'. Below this, three categories are listed: 'ECONOMIC VIABILITY' (with sub-items: Legality and integrity, Financial viability, Operations, Product safety and quality), 'SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY', and 'ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY'. The main content area features a background image of hands holding grain. The title is 'QUESTIONNAIRE ON Economic Viability'. Below the title is a progress bar showing '1/3' and the current section 'Legality and integrity' with the sub-section 'AWARENESS OF LAWS'. The question is: '1 – Which of the following services do you regularly rely on to ensure legal compliance of your activities and to identify changes in legislation? (Check all that apply)'. The list of services includes: Access to legal advisors (e.g. lawyer), Access to the resources of commodity associations, Access to farm/business advisors, Participation in workshops, training sessions or meetings on regulatory issues, Access to government (federal, provincial or municipal) resources including websites, Subscription to newsletters or magazines on regulatory issues, Other, and I do not use specific services. At the bottom of the question area are buttons for 'PREVIOUS', 'SAVE & EXIT', and 'NEXT'. A 'Tips and Advice' section with a plus icon is also visible. The footer contains contact information: 'info@xxxxx.com | TERMS OF USE' and 'Copyright © 2018 Alberta Farm Sustainability Extension (AFSE) Working Group v0.6.8'.

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## **Farm Energy Agri-Processing (FEAP), On-Farm Solar Photovoltaics (OFSVP), and Canadian Environmental Partnership (CAP) Environmental Programing**

*Submitted by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry*

### **Farm Energy Agri-Processing (FEAP) Program**

[www.agriculture.alberta.ca/feap](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/feap)

FEAP is a combination of two discontinued GF2 programs:

On-Farm Energy Management Program

· Accelerating Agricultural Innovation Program (Stream C)

By combining these two programs, a single program can be offered across the whole agricultural value-chain, for energy efficiency and energy management projects.

Program Description:

The Farm Energy and Agri-Processing Program shares costs with the agriculture and agri-processing sector on energy efficiency investments. The Program is designed to encourage energy management which will result in cost savings, energy conservation, and ultimately, reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

The Program offers financial support, subject to financial constraint, to Applicants who incorporate high efficiency equipment that is identified in the applicable Funding List in their construction and/or retrofitting projects.

Key Messages:

- This program is RETROACTIVE to April 2016.
- Applicants with eligible receipts dated April 2016 and later can apply.
- Retroactive projects are subject to current eligibility criteria.
- 50% cost share on most items. See Funding List for full details.
- \$250,000 maximum grant per Applicant per year
- Funding Timeline is from now to Feb 2020
- An EFP is NOT a prerequisite for this funding
- Applications will be processed in a first complete, first served basis. Incomplete applications will not secure a spot in line.
- Once applications have been approved, producers can watch for emails from the grant management system: "Grant\_Management\_System@agric.gov.ab.ca" They will get notifications from this email address as their application moves through the steps.

For More Information:

Visit [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/feap](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/feap) for:

- Application forms
- Producer Funding List
- Processor Funding List
- Program Terms and Conditions

### **On-Farm Solar Photovoltaic (OFSVP) Program**

<http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/general/progserv.nsf/all/pgmsrv464>

This program is being discontinued under GF2. It will now be a provincial program, located on Ropin' The Web. This move is happening because the March 31 deadline of GF2 is causing concern among solar installers. Since they cannot be sure that they can complete projects before that date, they are unable to apply. This move should alleviate that concern.

For more information:

Contact the Energy Outreach Officers:

- Vern Steinborn with SouthGrow in Lethbridge can be contacted at 403-894-0050.
- Lyle Lawrence with Lakeland College in Vermilion can be contacted at 780-581-8403
- Kale Scarff with Gateway Research Organization in Westlock can be contacted at 780-307-7849.

### **Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) Environmental Programming:**

Things are still being adjusted as there is feedback from stakeholders, but these are some guidelines for now.

#### **1. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change - Producer**

Two Outcomes:

- Support producers in reducing the risk agricultural activities pose to water quality.
- Support producers in advancing sustainable production while mitigating carbon emissions that impact air and soil quality, and adapting to climate change.

Producer applications will be processed through first come-first serve merit or by panel review, consisting of Subject Matter Experts. First come-first serve merit will cover applications that do not require a site inspection, the risk can be clearly identified on the application and verified by aerial photos and by the applicant responses. Applications will be scored to determine the government/applicant cost share percentage. The scoring criteria will consist of questions to determine the level of risk present, the degree to which that risk will be mitigated, and the project's technical ability to address that risk.

All other applications that require a site inspection will be processed through panel review. The program will have scheduled dates throughout the year; this will ensure applicants are aware of the deadlines for application submission and know when a decision for their project will be made. The panel will review each application and determine the cost share percentage. The cost shares being proposed range from 30%, 50% and 70%, maximum funding is \$100,000. There will be a funding list, the types of projects will be similar to GF2 Confined Feeding Operation and On-Farm Stewardship Programs. The funding list will act as guide; if the program receives an application that addresses a water quality or GHG risk but may not fall under the prescribed funding list activities, it will still be reviewed by the program. Once the list has been finalized, it will be sent out for distribution.

*A valid EFP is a prerequisite to the program. EFP has implemented a 10-year renewal starting 2018, an EFP completed before 2008 will not be considered valid. We need to start communicating this message now to producers in preparations for the launch of the program in the spring.*

#### **2. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change – Groups and Agricultural Organizations**

Three Outcomes:

- The program supports extension to improve producer understanding that implementing priority environmental practices can increase market access.
- Support producer groups and agricultural organization's applied research and extension on adapting to climate change, and reducing greenhouse gases.
- Support the industry to identify risks and opportunities associated with GHG emissions, and develop strategies for quantifying and mitigating emissions.

This program will also be a merit based process with two intake cycles per year. Eligible applicants include: Applied Research Associations, Forage Associations, Agricultural Commodity Groups, Rural Municipalities, Agricultural Watershed Groups. There is no prescribed cost share, maximum funding is still being determined.

This program seeks to address climate change in agriculture by:

- Helping industry position itself for success in a low-carbon economy.
- Helping industry improve its 'carbon literacy' and understand its risks and opportunities regarding GHG emissions.
- Helping industry organize itself in light of its GHG risks and opportunities.
- Data collection.
- Data analysis.
- Strategy development.
- Minimizing resource waste, optimizing resource utilization.
- This program is NOT seeking to share capital costs on technologies that will reduce a producer's GHG emissions (that's what On-Farm Energy Management is for).

Example (but not limited to) projects that could qualify for funding are:

- A commodity group organizing a series of energy audits for its members, with the aim of identifying opportunities and benchmarking performance.
- A commodity group undertaking a Life Cycle Assessment of its product, with the aim of identifying opportunities to reduce GHG emissions.
- A group investigating barriers to no-till adoption among its members.
- A group looking to promote the 4R system of managing nutrients.
- A group investigating economic consequences of pursuing lower-carbon options by its members.
- A group doing extension activities regarding industry's GHG risks and opportunities.

### Question

Under Section 2, groups and association would internal AF (research) applicants be accepted, and would universities (i.e. U of Lethbridge, U of Alberta) be able to apply for these funds?

### Answer

No to internal applicants. Yes to universities and colleges, however the program will not cover research. The aim of the program is producer extension related to our outcomes which could include applied research and data development

### 3. On-Farm Water Management

Objectives:

- Support producers to improve their water supply security and more effectively and efficiently manage their on-farm water resources.
- Support producers to protect their water resources through beneficial management practices.
- Provide technical assistance to producers to complete an assessment for the management of their water resources (e.g., Long-Term Water Management Plan).

Activities:

- Construction of new water sources such as wells, dugouts, spring developments, dams, and pipelines, and connections to multi-user water supply pipelines.

- Protection of new and existing manmade water sources using beneficial management practices (e.g., off-site watering for dugouts and vermin-proof caps for wells).
- Management of water supply risks through well decommissioning, well pit conversions, water meters, and water well depth measurement equipment.

Recipients:

- Producers, corporations and not-for-profit organizations with an active agricultural business in Alberta.

Noteworthy:

- First-come-first-served.
- Off-site watering will be an eligible activity for new man-made water sources and existing dugouts and spring developments.
- New wells will be required to have vermin-proof caps, higher stickup (18"), 2hr pump/2hr recover test and drawdown measurements, and well ID tag attached to new well. A new well will not be eligible if it has a pumphouse put on it.
- Tie-ins will be moved from special incentive to standard incentive (1/3 up to \$5000).
- Well decommissioning will still be a special incentive. Each decommissioned well will require a decommissioning report to be submitted by a driller. Cost sharing will change: 50% for one well, 60% for two wells, 75% for three or more wells if all submitted on same application. Maximum of \$2000 per project.
- We are looking into supporting wetland assessments as part of the planning process of a proper dugout.

#### **4. Irrigation Efficiency**

Outcome:

- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and increased water savings in irrigated agriculture by assisting producers with the purchase of more efficient irrigation equipment and systems.

Proposed Eligible Equipment Upgrades:

- New low pressure centre pivot to replace a gravity, side-wheel or high pressure centre pivot.
- Retrofit of a high pressure centre pivot to a low pressure centre pivot, including booster pumps, nozzle packages and pump modifications.
- High efficiency sprinkler nozzles and related equipment to upgrade an existing low pressure centre pivot.
- Variable-rate irrigation equipment (controllers and software).
- Control panel upgrades, including base stations for telemetry.
- Surface or subsurface drip irrigation systems.

Eligible Applicants:

- Operate as a producer in Alberta.
- Own an irrigated agricultural operation in Alberta.
- Have a Long-Term Irrigation Management Plan.
- Have not been previously approved for payment from the Program on a given parcel.

Proposed Grant Payments:

- 40% of the costs for eligible equipment upgrades on a given parcel up to a maximum of \$5,000; or

- \$15,000 for an upgrade on a given parcel from a gravity, side-wheel or high pressure centre pivot irrigation system to a new low pressure centre pivot or subsurface drip irrigation system (minimum 20 acres).

### **CAP Consultation Survey**

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry has developed a short online survey for input on the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP). The CAP program is set to begin in April 2018 after Growing Forward 2 (GF2) expires in March 2018. The survey can be completed by anyone, so this along to your contacts and producers.

This survey offers agriculture stakeholders the opportunity to make suggestions on the proposed CAP program concepts. Input provided will equip Alberta Agriculture and Forestry to provide programming that meets the needs and priorities of Alberta's industry.

The five priority areas identified by Alberta are:

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

[Survey Link](#) open until March 18, 2018. If the links does not work please connect through:

[http://www.growingforward.alberta.ca/NextPolicy/index.htm?contentId=CDF\\_NEXT\\_POLICY&useSecondary=true](http://www.growingforward.alberta.ca/NextPolicy/index.htm?contentId=CDF_NEXT_POLICY&useSecondary=true)