

## **Partner Profile: Potato Growers of Alberta**

*Submitted by PGA*

From its humble beginnings on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1966 the Potato Growers of Alberta has today grown to represent over 140 Process, Seed and Fresh growers in the Province of Alberta. Originally known as the Alberta Potato Commission with their office in Lethbridge, the organization has undergone a number of changes over its 48-year history. During a brief period of its history, it was considered a Marketing Board but due to the lack of legislated regulatory abilities, it is now formally recognised as a Commission, known today as the Potato Growers of Alberta. For about 12 years in the late 80's, the office was moved to the Stockman's Centre in Calgary in hopes to spur a greater interest in the fresh market in Alberta. In July of 2000, the Office was officially moved back to Southern Alberta with its home now located in Taber.

The PGA is a not-for-profit organization, governed by a seven member Board and employs a staff of six. Five employees work out of the Taber office and the Seed Coordinator works out of her office at CDC North in Edmonton. Our entire organization is governed by the Potato Growers of Alberta Marketing Regulation, Plan Regulation and Authorization Regulation, which falls under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act in the Province of Alberta. We follow the same guiding rules and regulations as the other 20 Marketing Boards and Commissions in Alberta.

Alberta grows over 50,000 acres of potatoes annually, with the majority of the production being French fries produced by Lamb Weston-Con Agra, McCain's and Cavendish Farms. PepsiCo-Frito Lay and Old Dutch Foods also produce a large number of the North American potato chip market here in Alberta. Our seed industry is second to none in North America with a large annual export market.

With annual farm gate sales exceeding 150 million dollars annually and the economic spin off of over 1 billion dollars to the Alberta economy, the PGA continues to play an important role in the agricultural industry of Alberta.

The PGA and its growers are very proud of their involvement in the Canada Gap – On Farm Food Safety Program, The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan, The Alberta Agriculture Environmental Sustainability Carbon Footprinting Pilot Project, as well as other North American Sustainability projects. Our growers are very aware of the fact that the food that we produce must be done so in a safe, healthy, conscientious environment, that not only sustains the future of our industry but the future of the environment, our families and the people that rely on the food that we produce. The land and water that we use every day is the future of this business.

We continue to fund research that not only increases production but reduces our need for chemical and fertilizer inputs. Our collaboration with Provincial and Federal researchers, processors and the universities and colleges in Alberta will continue to expand the potato industry both provincially and on a national basis.

We look forward to our next 50 years of being an integral part of the Alberta agricultural landscape. Our opportunity to be a part of the AEPA has been very beneficially to our organization. It allows us networking access to all producer groups in the province and collectively allows all of us the ability to share a table with the Alberta government to talk about the future of agriculture in Alberta and hopefully have some influence as to its place in Alberta.

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