



# MARKET ACCESS

## INCREASED TARIFFS TOP OF MIND FOR APG DIRECTOR IN INDIA FOR PULSE CONCLAVE



*Alberta Agriculture Minister Oneil Carlier met with Indian dignitaries in Delhi. Photo courtesy of Government of Alberta*

An Alberta Pulse Growers (APG) Director joined a delegation to India with the Alberta Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and other pulse industry representatives as Alberta producers grappled with increasing tariffs on pulses destined for India.

“Clearing the way for increased international market access is crucial for the continued success of our industry,” said APG Zone 1 Director Rodney Volk of the February tour. “Our industry needs predictability and we appreciate the Alberta government communicating our trade concerns to

their counterparts in India and to the country’s business community.”

Volk was a member of a delegation from Alberta that included Oneil Carlier, Minister of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF), and Etienne van Straaten, AF Trade Development Officer.

The Pulse Conclave 2018 took place in New Delhi February 14-16. The welcome letter posted to the conclave website on behalf of the India Pulses and Grains Association’s Managing Committee stated: “As we all know, the pulses trade is going through a rather

difficult phase yet the presence of over 750 delegates was a testimony of the fact that irrespective of the situation, the entire trade stands together in solidarity and unity as one.”

Carlier delivered a keynote address highlighting the robust and mutually beneficial relationship between Alberta and India to an audience of international delegates.

“The opportunities in India are immense and our Alberta products are desired by emerging markets,” Carlier said. “We have a reputation for



*At the Naya bazaar, (left to right) Grant Winton of Alberta Agriculture's International Relations and Marketing Section, Alberta Agriculture Minister Oneil Carlier, Etienne van Straaten of Alberta Agriculture, Rahul Sharma of Alberta Economic Development and Trade based in Delhi, Jocelyn Shuman of South Peace Grain, and APG Zone 1 Director Rodney Volk.*

safe, world-class food and ingredients. Our government's work to increase market access for prime agricultural products is key to furthering our efforts in diversifying our economy, creating jobs and keeping our family farms sustainable."

A Government of Alberta news release also noted that Carlier met with the Indian Union Minister for Food Processing to discuss trade opportunities and issues including fumigation and tariffs on pulses. The delegation also met with senior business executives, chamber of commerce members, retailers and importers who provided insight into business expansion opportunities available for Alberta producers of pulses and canola. Last year, Alberta's agriculture trade with India was worth approximately \$82 million. India is the largest export market for Canadian pulses.

"Participating in the conclave strengthens our relationship with key trade partners and enhances exposure of our world-class exports," said APG Chair D'Arcy Hilgartner, who attended the conclave in 2016. "We appreciate the opportunity to be included as part of this important delegation to India."

The first official day of this year's Pulse Conclave began with a business to business session involving the delegates from Alberta and Saskatchewan, which was organized by Alberta's New Delhi trade office.

"All of us from Alberta and Saskatchewan were seated at our own small table, then people from all over the world would come sit with us for a short conversation," Volk recalled. "Most of them wanted to buy my peas right off the farm. They still want Canadian lentils and peas for their quality even with the government restrictions. I received a lot of questions about this year's intentions for seeding. I also tried to get them to provide some idea about when we could expect the tariffs to be lifted, and generally the opinion was later this fall at the earliest."

There were a number of presentations at the conclave regarding the increased pulse production in India, but one speaker addressed some of the challenges after this was achieved, Volk said.

"Storage and distribution are both under-developed in India at the current time," he explained.

Volk noted that while travelling in the countryside, he saw first-hand that there wasn't much available for on-farm storage. Most of the crops were still green in February, but there was some hand harvesting going on.

"I think that it is only a matter of time before India is back in the market for the larger bulk shipments," Volk said. "These opportunities are going to be dependent on maintaining a high level of quality at a competitive price."

Volk also seized the opportunity to experience how Indian people buy pulses. A group including Volk, van Straaten, and Jocelyn Shuman of South Peace Grain visited the DLF Promenade Mall and Nazarene bazaar prior to the conclave.

"There were a couple of food stores in this mall," Volk explained. "These are a new idea in India and still not a common place for people to buy food. Both had pulses on display, loose in bulk bins, and prepackaged." In the afternoon, the group met up with Carlier and his staff for a tour of the Naya Bazaar Pulses and Spice Markets by rickshaw.

"As soon as we started to enter the vicinity of the bazaar, the scent of all the different spices permeated the air," Volk said. "The whole group unloaded from the rickshaws and walked down a narrow street where all of the merchants were selling pulses displayed in barrels and bags for inspection. After walking the street, we once again loaded up on the rickshaws and headed over to Kareem's, one of the oldest restaurants in Delhi, where we enjoyed a meal including dal made with pulses."

Although chickpeas are the preferred pulse for dal, lentils and peas can be substituted as a cheaper alternative. There is also a certain level of blending that takes place in order to stretch out the available supply of chickpeas.