CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALBERTA PULSE GROWERS COMMISSION

Pulses were a relatively new idea for Alberta farmers 30 years ago when the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission (APG) was created.

“Farmers were looking for options beyond a typical rotation that in 1989 included cereals, oilseeds and summer fallow,” said APG Executive Director Leanne Fischbuch. “Beans and peas fit the bill for the soil with their nitrogen fixation and for new market opportunities. The pulse harvest at that time was sold primarily for local feed uses and emerging markets. Farmers who grew pulses 30 years ago were the early innovators for our industry.”

Two organizations representing beans and peas came together in 1989 to form the Commission and the focus of the new organization was research and extension to examine how best to grow pulses in Alberta.

“The biggest change from 1989 to now is just the maturity of the industry,” said Craig Shaw, who served as the Commission’s first vice-chair. “In 1989, we were moving forward on potential and small acres. Investment in genetics, inputs and better mechanization all came about by building the industry and the acres. Probably the biggest surprise has been a market that seems hungry for more production. We have moved from either a specialized small volume market or an animal protein market to a vegetable protein market for many purposes.”

Roughly 150,000 acres of pulses were grown in Alberta 30 years ago, and expanding pulses into

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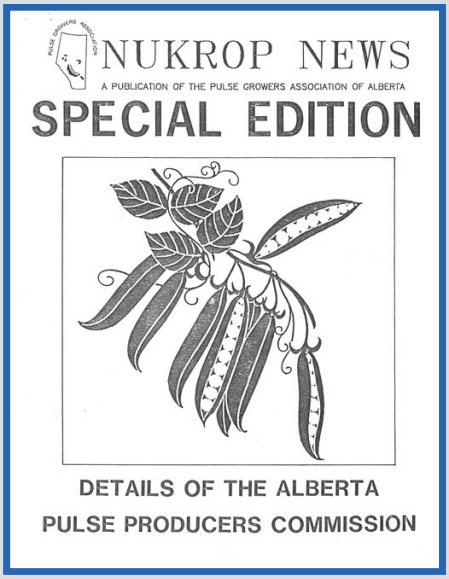
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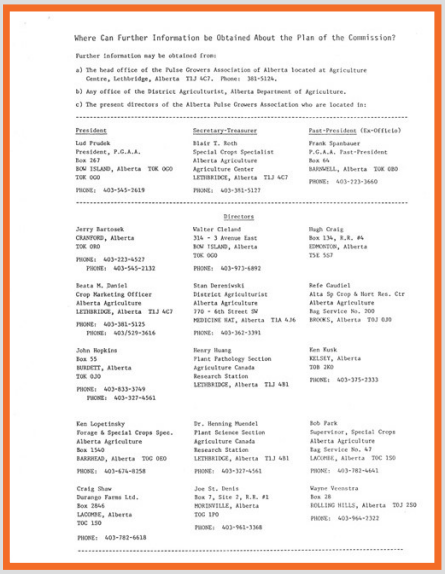
SPECIAL EDITION

DETAILS OF THE ALBERTA PULSE PRODUCERS COMMISSION


Where Can Further Information be Obtained About the Plan of the Commission?

Further information may be obtained from:

a) The head office of the Pulse Growers Association of Alberta located at Agriculture Centre, Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 4C7. Phone: 381-5124.

b) Any office of the District Agriculturist, Alberta Department of Agriculture.

c) The present directors of the Alberta Pulse Growers Association who are located in:

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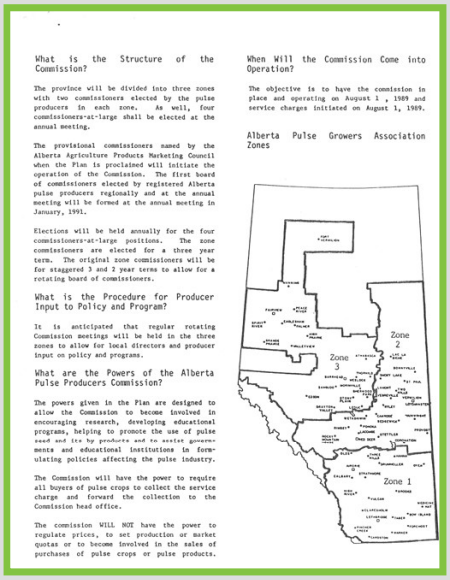

What is the Structure of the Commission?

The province will be divided into three zones with two commissioners elected by the pulse producers in each zone. As well, four commissioners-at-large shall be elected at the annual meeting.

The provisional commissioners named by the Alberta Agriculture Products Marketing Council when the Plan is proclaimed will initiate the operation of the Commission. The first board of commissioners elected by registered Alberta pulse producers regionally and at the annual meeting will be formed at the annual meeting in January, 1991.

Elections will be held annually for the four commissioners-at-large positions. The zone commissioners are elected for a three year term. The original zone commissioners will be for staggered 3 and 2 year terms to allow for a rotating board of commissioners.

What is the Procedure for Producer Input to Policy and Program?

It is anticipated that regular rotating Commission meetings will be held in the three zones to allow for local directors and producer input on policy and programs.

What are the Powers of the Alberta Pulse Producers Commission?

The powers given in the Plan are designed to allow the Commission to become involved in encouraging research, developing educational programs, helping to promote the use of pulse seed and its by products and to assist governments and educational institutions in formulating policies affecting the pulse industry.

The Commission will have the power to require all buyers of pulse crops to collect the service charge and forward the collection to the Commission head office.

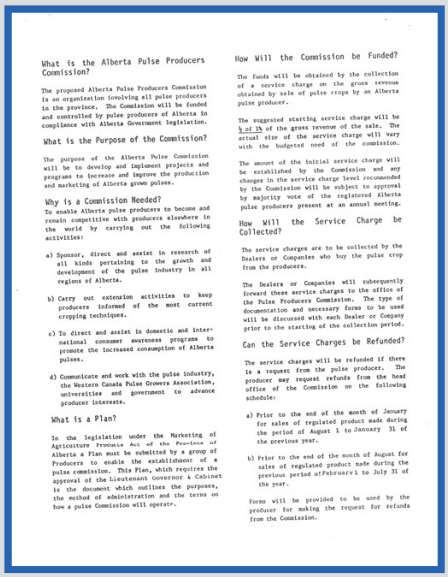
The commission WILL NOT have the power to regulate prices, to set production or market quotas or to become involved in the sales of purchases of pulse crops or pulse products.

When Will the Commission Come into Operation?

The objective is to have the commission in place and operating on August 1 , 1989 and service charges inittated on August 1, 1989.

Alberta Pulse Growers Association Zones

Zone 1
Zone 2
Zone 3


What is the Alberta Pulse Producers Commission?

The proposed Alberta Pulse Producers Commission is an organization involving all pulse producers in the province. The Commission will be funded and controlled by pulse producers of Alberta in compliance with Alberta Government legislation.

What is the Purpose of the Commission?

The purpose of the Alberta Pulse Commission will be to develop and implement projects and programs to increase and improve the production and marketing of Alberta grown pulses.

Why is a Commission Needed?

To enable Alberta pulse producers to become and remain competitive with producers elsewhere in the world by carrying out the following activities:

a) Sponsor, direct and assist in research of all kinds pertaining to the growth and development of the pulse industry in all regions of Alberta.

b) Carry out extension activities to keep producers informed of the most current cropping techniques.

c) To direct and assist in domestic and international consumer awareness programs to promote the increased consumption of Alberta pulses.

d) Communicate and work with the pulse industry, the Western Canada Pulse Growers Association, universities and government to advance producer interests.

What is a Plan?

In the legislation under the Marketing of Agriculture Products Act of the Province of Alberta a Plan must be submitted by a group of Producers to enable the establishment of a pulse commission. This Plan, which requires the approval of the Lieutenant Governor & Cabinet is the document which outlines the purposes, the method of administration and the terms on how a pulse Commission will operate.

How Will the Commission be Funded?

The funds will be obtained by the collection of a service charge on the gross revenue obtained by sale of pulse crops by an Alberta pulse producer.

The suggested starting service charge will be ½ of 1% of the gross revenue of the sale. The actual size of the service charge will vary with the budgeted need of the commission.

The amount of the initial service charge will be established by the Commission and any changes in the service charge level recommended by the Commission will be subject to approval by majority vote of the registered Alberta pulse producers present at an annual meeting.

How Will the Service Charge be Collected?

The service charges are to be collected by the Dealers or Companies who buy the pulse crop from the producers.

The Dealers or Companies will subsequently forward these service charges to the office of the Pulse Producers Commission. The type of documentation and necessary forms to be used will be discussed with each Dealer or Company prior to the starting of the collection period.

Can the Service Charges be Refunded?

The service charges will be refunded if there is a request from the pulse producer. The producer may request refunds from the head office of the Commission on the following schedule:

a) Prior to the end of the month of January for sales of regulated product made during the period of August 1 to January 31 of the previous year.

b) Prior to the end of the month of August for sales of regulated product made during the previous period ofFebruary1 to July 31 of the year.

Forms will be provided to be used by the producer for making the request for refunds from the Commission.

An issue of "Nukrop News" detailed how the new commission would work when it began 30 years ago.

ALBERTA PULSE INDUSTRY INNOVATORS

To celebrate the Alberta Pulse Growers' 25th year in 2014, the Alberta Pulse Industry Innovator Award was established. An industry innovator is a person or organization that has worked to help nurture and shape the pulse industry and has helped contribute to the success of the industry as it is today. The five recipients of this honour so far shared many insights into the evolution of the industry and the commission at the time they received the award. A few of those observations appear below.

"There was such a debate as to what the organization should be called. But eventually pulses won out that it should be the main body."

Lud Prudek (2015)
Alberta Pulse Growers Commission Founding President

"I always think of the directors and the commission and all the time volunteered to discuss issues was fantastic."

Ken Lopetinsky (2016)
Retired Alberta Agriculture Pulse Research Agronomist

"I recall the early days when we formed the Alberta Pulse Growers Association in 1979 and worried how we could ever get enough funding to direct research into the most needed areas."

Blair Roth (2017)
Formerly with Alberta Agriculture
Currently Director-Special Crops for Viterra

"In 1998, we released the first dry bean variety from our program. I am told that now over 90% of the beans grown in southern Alberta are from our program."

Dr. Hans-Henning Muendel (2018)
Retired Senior Research Scientist at AAFC Lethbridge

"St. Paul was barley growing country, but I always felt that there had to be something else that they could grow that would generate more cash flow."

Kirsty Ross (Piquette) (2019)
Former Provincial District Agriculturist

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the sustainable rotations of many Alberta farms seemed a "high hill to climb" back then, said Blair Roth, Director of Special Crops with Viterra, who was an ex-officio commissioner with APG in 1989.

"The total acreage of pulse crops grown in Alberta has expanded a lot to include yellow peas, green peas, red lentils, green lentils, faba beans and dry beans," Roth explained. "The industry has also become more stable as part of an ongoing sustainable rotation on many farms and a lot more diversified in production area, market class produced and where the product is sold. The increase in lentil acres in Alberta was initially slow, but has become another dependable pulse in areas where it is adapted."

Roth noted that Alberta's lentil acreage in 1989 was less than 20,000 acres and now accounts for between 400,000 and 500,000 acres per year.

Today, research and extension have grown the industry to the point where almost two million acres are grown in the province. This includes conventional production as well as a growing component of organic production.

"Another big change from 1989 is how the variety selection in our Alberta dry bean industry is now all from varieties developed at AAFC in Lethbridge," Roth added. "Having locally adapted varieties with enhanced agronomic and market characteristics has been a huge change and has had a very positive impact on the competitiveness and development of this industry in Alberta."

Pulses have become an important part of the rotation for many Alberta farmers and production is primarily sold as human and pet food to international markets. The industry is also embarking on a new and exciting food ingredient journey

Producer Craig Shaw, the Commission's first Vice-Chair.

Blair Roth accepting the 2017 Innovator Award.

where pulse protein is regularly showing up in new foods.

"I would hope that 10 years from now we see continued improved genetics better able to handle disease and standability issues," Shaw said. "I expect a continued movement in new uses for the vegetable protein. I would hope we can see a consistent value of pulses in the crop rotation. The recognition of the value of diversity in cropping options for producers remains as important today as back in 1989."

Research in Alberta has moved beyond how to grow pulses to include processing fractions, developing new food products like licorice, ice cream and pet treats, and supporting health outcomes like dietary fibre, blood sugar control, satiety and weight management, which are all elements in APG's research agenda.

The Commission is also drastically changing how it provides extension to growers with the launch of a new APG app focused on Regional Variety Trial results and agronomy news to keep growers up to date with timely growing and market information.

Roth said that the industry benefitted from having a dedicated Commission over the last three decades.

"The Commission provided focus to research efforts to improve agronomy and utilization of pulses, focus on market access issues to guide levels of government in their activities, focus on meeting consumer needs and expectations, as well as focus to growers and industry on best practices," he said. "Some of this has come through the wise use of check-off dollars to stimulate this focus, but also being in front of the right people and clearly indicating issues and concerns is also very important."

APG has also embraced a strong advocacy role alongside its commitment to research and extension.

"Thirty years ago, advocacy wasn't on the radar of these commissions," Fischbuch noted, referencing APG's partnership with Alberta Canola, as well as Alberta Wheat and Barley in Team Alberta. "Advocacy is growing in importance and I don't think that's going to stop."

Fischbuch sees the future as one with many opportunities including increased discussion on domestic value-added processing and market expansion, healthier consumers from eating pulses, and a vision for long-term sustainable crop systems.

Roth also has high hopes for the future of Alberta's pulse industry.

"I expect that Alberta will continue to develop and broaden its pulse industry and continue to add diversity to the market classes of pulses produced in Alberta," he said. "I'm expecting that additional value-added processing will add diversity to the total usage of pulses which will aid in stabilizing demand and reducing market access issues. I also expect the Canadian producers and industry to continue to innovate and lead the world in ensuring we will continue to have access to world markets with our sustainable, economical and nutritious pulses."