



CSWG MEMBERS COLLABORATE ON TARGETED WATER MONITORING FOR CROP PROTECTION TOOLS TO EVALUATE & SHARE BEST STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES



Crop Sector Working Group (CSWG) member organizations secured funding and started collecting data for a three-year project that promotes wetland stewardship best management practices through targeted water monitoring.

“As a farmer, I take great pride in being a steward of the land and that includes our waterways,” said Don Shepert, CSWG Chair and Alberta Pulse Growers (APG) Past Chair. “The data collected from this project will give farmers a better understanding how stewardship practices can be further employed and adopted to continue to prevent

the movement of crop protection products in the environment.”

APG is one of the agricultural organizations spearheading the Alberta Wetland Stewardship Project as members of CSWG, which is an inclusive partnership of nine crop sector commissions and associations that have come together to consider and discuss environmental issues relating to the crop sector. CSWG consist of Alberta Barley, Alberta Beekeepers Commission, Alberta Canola, Alberta Potato Growers, Alberta Pulse Growers, Alberta Seed Growers, Alberta Sugar Beet Growers, Alberta Wheat Commission

and the Alfalfa Seed Commission Alberta. CSWG previously worked on water monitoring, however, this new endeavour is a more robust program than was previously undertaken. The project includes collaboration with farmers and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), as well as the support of national crop organizations, registrants and others.

“The involvement of the PMRA in the data collection and evaluation process is essential to keeping crop protection products available to farmers,” noted APG Chair Robert Semeniuk. “This collaborative project ensures that

decisions are made using the best available data about water quality, which is essential for farm and environmental sustainability.”

Nevin Rosaasen, Sustainability and Government Relations Lead for APG, is the technical lead for the project.

“Having the PMRA on board from the beginning was critical, not only to ensure the data collected was useful,” he explained. “PMRA engagement allows farmers and crop protection companies to fully understand critical receptor species, chronic and acute endpoints for our priority chemistries. By putting together a great team, including registrants, key PMRA staff and outside expertise for the water sample collection, the monitoring program has been built to succeed.”

Rosaasen noted that the commissions will also be cataloguing and characterizing the wetlands, which has been a challenge in this dry year.

“Four of our 10 wetlands have dried up in one in 50-year events which represents a challenge when sampling water,” he said. “Despite the dry wetlands, the data will still help us understand fate and transport of chemicals in dry years which are forecasted to be more frequent in the future with a changing climate.”

The project is designed to evaluate and maintain the health of aquatic ecosystems in proximity to broad-acre and specialty crop systems through targeted water monitoring of frequently used and essential crop protection products. Water sampling for the first year of the project began on May 25.

Data analysis will determine the effectiveness of stewardship practices, and best practices will be shared with farmers. This will



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ultimately benefit water quality, species diversity and ecosystem health.

The collected data will also be shared with partner organizations and regulators to assist with decision-making and validation of mitigative methods, including vegetative filter strips and spray offsets. The aim is to protect water quality while retaining access to crop protection tools for farmers.

“If we want to keep the crop protection products we are currently using, the water monitoring study is integral to this,” explained APG Director and Zone 1 farmer Rodney Volk. “We need proven scientific evidence that the ag community is properly using these pesticides, and that they are not a danger to the environment.”

With the number of pesticides up for mandatory review, the water monitoring study will be a needed resource in keeping these tools in our toolbox.

“One of the parameters that the PMRA looks at for the environmental safety of a pesticide is water quality, and invertebrate health,” Volk continued. “Without this study, we could lose a lot of our current pesticides. This would be a devastating blow to the

agricultural industry in Canada, and not just farmers but the whole of the industry.”

Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR) invested \$750,000 over three years, of which \$417,500 comes from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP).

“The collection of on-farm data in this project will increase the quality and relevance of information that can be used to inform policy and regulatory guidelines for crop protection product use, which are more realistic than laboratory data,” said Dr. David Chalack, RDAR Board Chair, in a news release. “Collaboration is in our DNA. This landmark project brings together producers, researchers, commissions, and national regulatory bodies, all dedicated to supporting the success and sustainability of Alberta’s agriculture industry.”

The release stated that RDAR is pleased with the collaborative model of this project and the level of interest across the industry. Partners providing matching funds to the project include Syngenta, BASF, Bayer Crop Science - Canada, the Alberta Wheat Commission, Alberta Barley, Alberta Canola, Potato Growers of Alberta, Alberta Sugar Beet Growers, and Alberta Pulse Growers.