

The KAP Alert

April 11, 2008

Prairie Farmers Focus on Environment, Inputs

April 10, 2008 News Release

The three major farm organizations representing farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta emerged from a forum today with a renewed focus on the issues facing Prairie agriculture. Their discussions were framed around the current crisis facing cattle and hog farmers across the Prairies, and what is happening in the way of support and solutions in each province.

Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP), the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS), and Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP) identified three major priorities, and developed an action plan to move these issues forward in the coming year.

Recognize farmers for their environmental stewardship.

The farm groups believe that farmers must be recognized for the environmental services they provide to society, like clean water, habitat, and biodiversity. Farmers also have a unique opportunity to create carbon offsets for the country, if the appropriate tools and resources are in place. KAP, APAS, and WRAP support the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) model of creating a market for environmental services that are nurtured on the farm landscape, and will be lobbying governments to move forward with this kind of program in the *Growing Forward* policy framework.

There is no question that cattle and hog producers across the Prairies are in an extremely dire financial situation. The groups identified ALUS as a critical opportunity to create a new stream of revenue for these Prairie farms, and will be conveying the urgency of this policy direction to Minister Gerry Ritz.

Tackle rising input costs.

Building on previous work, the three Prairie organizations will be working together to monitor the input costs that producers must pay, and highlight price disparities between provinces. The goal of this initiative is to increase aware-

ness about the impact that input costs have, and to provide grain and livestock producers with additional information to help inform their purchasing decisions.

Address proposed changes to the Canada Grains Act.

Bill C-39 proposes fundamental changes to the grain system in Western Canada, and the three Prairie organizations believe that more time is needed for producers to investigate what the impact will be, and what options are available. APAS, KAP, and WRAP will be investigating options to the current bonding services that are under the power of the Canadian Grain Commission. Bonding currently protects a producer's grain delivery to an elevator and ensures that he or she will be paid. This is an absolutely critical protection – particularly when grain prices are high – and there must be no gaps until an effective replacement is put in place. There are also a wider range of issues at play in C-39, and the groups will work together to provide input to government and develop sound recommendations.

The leaders of WRAP, APAS, and KAP also discussed grain transportation issues, research, and building agricultural awareness. The organizations remain committed to working together to speak for Prairie farmers with a strong voice.

Fuel & Fertilizer Survey

Don't forget to complete your fuel & fertilizer survey and submit it to the KAP office by Monday, April 21.

It was sent out with last week's Alert, and is also posted online at www.kap.mb.ca.

Thanks for helping us to continue to shine a spotlight on the inputs costs being paid by Manitoba farmers!

‘08 Budget: Where’s the Beef? **(Or agriculture, for that matter)**

April 10, 2008 News Release

The provincial budget leaves many unanswered questions for farmers in Manitoba, according to Keystone Agricultural Producers. KAP had expected the province to take further steps to address the financial crisis facing cattle and hog farmers, and to better explain some of the ‘green economy’ incentives that have been promised to agriculture.

“Farm families that raise cattle and hogs are really hurting, and this budget isn’t going to provide any new support,” says KAP Vice President Robert McLean, who attended the budget this week. “KAP and other groups had given the province a range of recommendations on how they could increase their commitment to agriculture, but government hasn’t followed through.”

KAP had recommended in its pre-budget submission that the farmland school tax rebate should be expanded to include farm production buildings, so that more livestock producers could benefit. While the rebate did increase slightly, there is no expanded relief.

No new money, beyond what has been previously announced, was committed in the budget for cattle and hog farmers. To compound the problem, a raft of new provincial regulations have recently been announced or implemented for farmers, including the Employment Stan-

dards Code, the moratorium on hog development, and the new nutrient management regulation.

“Manitoba wants to build a green economy, and farmers can lead the way,” says McLean. “But so far, all we’ve seen are promises and regulation, with no tools or incentives put in place.”

Producers were promised that there would be a funding package announced related to the nutrient management regulation, but none was included in the budget. All political parties committed to a provincial Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program that would pay a fair value for the environmental benefits that farmers provide, but this has not been included in the budget. This budget promises to support greenhouse gas reductions in agriculture, but the details are very sparse.

Overall, there are a few small portions of the budget that will directly affect Manitoba’s farm families. Because of the severe financial hardship facing many producers, the increasing expectations placed on producers by government, and the unique opportunity that farmers have to help meet the province’s environmental goals, KAP was expecting a lot more out of this budget.

KAP Activity Report

Monday, April 7

KAP’s General Council met in Portage la Prairie to get updates on recent news, and to form policy for the organization. A special session on changes to the Employment Standards Code was also provided. Executive member Chuck Fossay attended the Canada Grains Council annual meeting in Winnipeg.

Tuesday, April 8

President Ian Wishart attended at a Prairie Habitat Joint Venture meeting in Saskatoon. KAP’s Rural Development & Land Use Committee met in Winnipeg. VP Robert McLean attended Manitoba Pork Council’s annual meeting.

Wednesday, April 9

VP McLean attended the provincial budget, and

responded to a number of media inquiries, which generally focused on the lack of additional assistance for livestock producers.

Thursday, April 10

VP McLean attended a summit hosted by Manitoba Pork Council, and committed KAP’s support to lobby against the moratorium. He joined a group of concerned producers and other supporters at the Manitoba Legislature. KAP, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, and the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan met in Winnipeg to develop a joint approach to dealing with Prairie issues.

Friday, April 11

VP Rob Brunel attended an Agribusiness Advisory Committee meeting at ACC in Brandon.

General Council Sets Policy for KAP

KAP delegates from across the province met in Portage la Prairie this week to learn more about emerging issues in agriculture, and to set direction for the organization. The following resolutions were passed, and are now KAP policy:

Elimination of KVD

THAT KAP supports communication and awareness activities relating to the elimination of KVD effective August 1, 2008 so that producers are aware of the details.

Support for Hog Industry

THAT KAP supports Manitoba Pork Council and the sustainable development of the hog industry in Manitoba; and further

THAT KAP lobby government for the removal of the moratorium on the hog industry.

Environmental Farm Plans

THAT KAP work with the Manitoba government and the federal government to ensure that environmental farm plans continue to be delivered by an arms length agency to maintain confidentiality and flexibility of the program in *Growing Forward*.

Revenue Cap Penalties

THAT KAP ask the federal government to raise the revenue cap penalties to 25% to increase their effectiveness.

Financial Security Programs

THAT KAP support the study of the pros and cons of alternative options to Canadian Grain Commission bonding to determine suitability and affordability for farmers' financial protection in grain transactions; and further

THAT KAP lobby the federal government to maintain the current bonding system until such time as an affordable and viable option to provide financial security for farmers in grain sales transactions is implemented; and further

THAT KAP request that the federal government financially support such studies for financial security programs for producers for grain transactions.

Riparian Tax Credit

THAT KAP investigate the potential of the ripar-

ian tax credit being extended to include buffer strips legislated under the nutrient management regulation.

Retail Sales Tax Exemptions

THAT KAP request that the Manitoba government creates an awareness program to include the exemptions of retail sales tax on leasing of buildings, sheds, etc; and further

THAT KAP request that Manitoba Finance include an article in the next issue of the *Manitoba Farmers' Voice* on exemptions of retail sales tax for the agricultural industry.

Commercialization of RR Alfalfa

THAT KAP make a formal request to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Monsanto for assurance that they will not commercialize Roundup Ready alfalfa varieties in Canada until full approval of the RR traits has been obtained in important seed export markets, particularly the European Union.

Consumer Awareness

THAT KAP investigate an advertising campaign including billboards and signage on the 14¢ that producers receive for a loaf of bread; and further **THAT** KAP call upon its allies across Canada to promote this message.

Delegates also received important updates on current issues from KAP's committees, and learned more about the status of grains research in Western Canada and what's needed in the future, with presentations from the Western Grains Research Foundation and the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mark Your Calendar:

The 7th Annual KAP Klassic Golf Tournament will be taking place on Friday, June 27 in Portage la Prairie. For those of you who attended General Council, please note that this date has changed. More details coming soon!

The KAP Alert is published weekly by Keystone Agricultural Producers

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