



“The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

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Agricultural Policy Framework (APF)

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General Comments

- We need to know what government is hearing from stakeholders and we need to be consulted throughout this process as the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) is further developed.
- Farming must be profitable to ensure that the components of the APF can be implemented in a sustainable manner.
- There is a gap in the framework. There is a need for another chapter which targets trade issues.
- APF is directed towards farmers' responsibilities - what is the government's commitment? (There are many areas, including road infrastructure, reduction of cost recovery fees, where the federal government could play a major role).
- There is no evidence to suggest that "Branding Canada" will improve our market share or increase our return. Will "Branding Canada" increase profitability? Is this what the domestic and international markets want, and if so, are they willing to pay for it?
- Any agriculture policy implemented must pass the test of economic, environmental and social sustainability.
- It is important that all departments that touch the farm are aware of this process and generally agree with its direction for the industry. Harmonization is critical.
- Funding has been allocated for the various chapters before program design is in place. It has always been our position that governments should first develop programs and then adequately fund them.
- We must identify which benefits are public/social and which are private? Producers should not have to bear the costs of public/social benefits.

- The funding formula which will dictate allocations for the 4 chapters of Science and Innovation, Environment, Food Safety and Renewal will flow less money to Manitoba. The formula consists of 50% on market receipts and 50% on proportionate number of farms with revenue in excess of \$10,000.

Business Risk Management

- This is the most important chapter of the framework and must be the focus of all consultations.
- We still need safety nets to help us when the business risk management tools fail us.
- Business risk management tools must not be linked to such initiatives as food safety and environment.
- The federal government must first address the impact of foreign subsidies on domestic crop prices before implementing other chapters of the framework.
- Safety net programs must be designed as safety nets, i.e. the intent is not to use them, but they need to be adequately funded and readily available.
- All crops in the crop sector require a predictable, long term level of production insurance at a reasonable cost which would allow farmers to make business decisions surrounding prices and inputs.
- The risk for the livestock industry could be reduced through an improved disaster program.
- If an "entire farm entity" approach is pushed to the extreme, it will stifle adaptation and innovation.
- If a commodity specific margin could be insured, a component returning a portion of premiums to the producer's individual account (such as NISA) in non-claim years would reward sound risk management. Of course in a claim year, this would not be rewarded. This fund could then be used for succession / farm renewal. (We would need to investigate the cost of such a program and its premium levels).
- The APF does not allow for cost shared companion programs and this will impact our producers.
- Canadian safety net programs must be non-countervailable.

Science & Innovation

- Benefits of research must flow back to the farmer.

- There are concerns with the patent protection system: We need innovative methods of rewarding research other than long term ownership of technology; There is particular concern with ownership of the processes; and TUAs should be vetted by the Competitions Bureau.
- We need to review how farmers fund research & where the benefits accrue: The Australian model is a good example to look toward; Farmers' & industries' interests differ; and Farmers need input into directing research so that the benefits accrue to farmers.
- There is a need for mechanisms to bring new varieties to the market place in a more timely manner, i.e. Fusarium resistant wheat.
- We need legislative changes to facilitate the development of the biofuel industry. The Manitoba Government has taken a positive step in this direction.
- Pesticide harmonization in a timely manner is a critical issue which needs to be addressed (Canada/US).
- There is potential for neutraceuticals and genetically engineered products, but the risks need to be addressed, specifically food safety and cropping systems.
- Academic Freedom of researchers is very important.

Renewal

- Aggressive education programs are needed for agriculture, including alternate production systems, finance, marketing, production, etc.
- We do not want agriculture policy that states that we will train farmers to work off-farm to pay for farm expenses.
- Agriculture needs to be profitable in order to renew itself.
- Agriculture must offer a sustainable livelihood if young people are to be attracted to the industry.
- We must change the image of agriculture to a more positive one.
- We need a mechanism for recapitalization that allows new entrants to the industry without acquiring a major debt load.

Food Safety & Quality

- There has to be measures put in place to ensure that imported products meet the same standards as our producers are required to meet.
- Systems need to be crop/product specific.
- We must ensure that we have food security in Canada.

- Food safety is a public good and should be paid for by the public. If the consumer will not pay more for the assurance of food safety & quality (HACCP, tracing/tracking programs), then government must pay. Producers cannot bear this cost for society.
- We know that additional regulations will not ensure a premium from the marketplace, rather it will ensure access to existing markets.

Environment

- We know that it is the government's intention to use the results of the Farm Environmental Management Survey to establish baseline data. We have many concerns with the wording and direction of this survey as it does not reflect what is currently happening on the farm.
- When dealing with environmental issues, an incentive approach is essential.
- The Alternate Land Use Services program is a good example of a constructive incentive system. The federal government must ensure that such a concept is adopted and forms part of the APF.
- There is concern for biodiversity being a goal - biodiversity may not necessarily be sustainable, as a single component, because the ecosystem is constantly evolving. Status quo is not an option in this area. Producers manage air, water, wildlife for society and should be compensated by society for this management.
- We need to define what components should be in an environmental farm plan by asking what are we trying to achieve or fix and why: A farm plan cannot be a static document, it needs to be reviewed regularly and changed to reflect the areas affected; If a producer highlights hazards and risks, we have a major concern with the issue of confidentiality; It cannot just look at environment separately from the economy; Any standards developed under the environmental farm scan/plan must be environmentally and economically sustainable; It needs to measure strength and advantages, as well as risks; It is very important to keep regional controls; It is important to prioritize risks, i.e. which are the most important to address, so that dollars can be targeted where it is most needed; It is important that dollars flow to producers; and The affordability of farm plans is a big issue not only the development but also the implementation of actions.
- We question the relevancy of the overall outcomes and farm environmental management in Annex 1 of the legal text.

Trade

- This is the missing chapter of the APF and it has short term and long term goals.
- The government must act now to insulate Canadian farmers against high government subsidies in foreign countries. These foreign subsidies distort the market and impede our ability to compete on the world market.

- There must be a high priority on reviewing the effects of existing trade agreements and on achieving full implementation of existing commitments.
- There must be agreement reached with our trading partners on the tolerance level of genetically engineered products.
- The framework must include provision for adequate resources to promote Canada's trade policy position and to be effective and proactive in defending the interests of Canadian farmers in trade disputes.
- Government must identify the WTO as the principle vehicle for the establishment of fair and effective trade rules and export opportunities.
- We must ensure that all trade negotiations are approached in a coordinated fashion that ensures trade agreements and initiatives complement each other.
- We must ensure the maximum possible access for agricultural exports, but also respect the domestic interests of Canadian farmers. This means preserving the rights of Canadian farmers to design and operate marketing systems, including orderly marketing and supply management.
- In trade negotiations, one commodity's interests must not be traded off to benefit another commodity, and the interests of Canadian agriculture must not be traded off to benefit another industry sector.
- The APF must recognize that for some sectors the elimination of sanitary, phyto-sanitary and other barriers without technical merit require as much priority as the further elimination of tariffs.