

Check-off dollars Campaign nets significant results for Agricultural Commissions

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A communications campaign promoting the value of check-off dollars to crop producers is netting new revenue and new opportunities for four of Alberta agricultural producer organizations.

The **Alberta Barley Commission**, the Alberta Canola Producers Commission, the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission and the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission launched the campaign in August 2009. In Alberta, check-off dollars, or service charges, are deducted from farmers' crop payments at the point of sale and submitted to producer associations to support research and market development.

Each partner commission has seen substantial results from the campaign.

The **Alberta Barley Com-**

mission has doubled its licensed dealers in the past five months and increased check-off dollar collection by more than \$25,000. The Alberta Pulse Growers Commission and the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission have also seen licensees and check-off revenue increase.

The campaign has also raised producers' awareness of the value of check-off dollars.

"Growers are not always fully aware of the many activities our commissions are involved with," says Ward Toma, general manager of the Alberta Canola Producers Commission. "In our experience, once growers see the work we're doing on their behalf, they see the value and power of their check-off dollars. We hear this from growers who attend our regional

meetings."

Rick Istead of the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission says the check-off value message needs to be told more often.

"We need to tell our story on an ongoing basis so that the producer is regularly reminded that we do bring value to their farm operation through various research, marketing, communications and education initiatives," says Istead.

"Producer funding is crucial to our success, and through this campaign, we've adopted a strong and unified stance and the importance of their support," says Mike Leslie, CEO of the **Alberta Barley Commission**. "Our producers have been urging us to work together and this campaign demonstrates the benefits of a collective effort."

"Check-off dollars are the single most important way producers can invest in their industry," says Sheri Strydhorst, executive director of the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission. "Government and industry partners are much more likely to support our research, development, marketing and risk management projects when they see producers investing their check-off dollars in priority areas."

The four commissions use check-off dollars to leverage government and industry funding, attracting \$7 to \$8 for every \$1 of producer check-off funds. These funds are used to develop and improve crop varieties with stronger disease and pest resistance packages, improve and refine agronomic practices, and develop new domestic and export markets.

