

Check-off dollars boost Alberta's agricultural organizations

SHANNON WOODWARD
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Four Alberta agricultural organizations have launched a campaign to tell producers they are getting top value from their check-off dollars.

The **Alberta Barley Commission**, the Alberta Canola Producers Commission, the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission and the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission launched the campaign to promote the value of check-off dollars, or service charges, to crop producers in August 2009.

Check-off dollars are deducted from farmers' crop payments at the point of sale and submitted to producer associations to support research and market development within the industry.

"Growers are not always fully aware of the many activities our commissions are involved with," said Ward Toma, general manager of the Alberta Canola Producers Association.

"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."

Each partner commission has seen substantial results from the campaign. The **Alberta Barley Commission** 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 increases.

Rick Istead of the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission said 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," he said.

The **Alberta Barley Commission** is a not-for-profit corporation organized, funded, directed and controlled by the province's 17,000 barley producers. The commission coordinates and sponsors research, market development, technology-transfer and policy development on behalf of its producers.

"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," said 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."

Sheri Strydhorst, executive director of the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission, agreed.

"Check-off dollars are the single most important way producers can invest in their industry," she said.

"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.

