



Honourable George Groeneveld
Minister of Agriculture and Food
Alberta Agriculture and Food
#229 Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

Monday, February 12, 2007

Dear Minister Groeneveld,

The Alberta Barley Commission wishes to thank the provincial government for its continued support of a sustainable and profitable agriculture industry. The barley plebiscite which is currently underway has greatly benefited from the governments' cooperation in preparing the list of voters. These are truly groundbreaking times for agricultural producers in this province. Dynamics such as the barley plebiscite, biofuel initiatives, trade action on US corn, and ongoing research will certainly affect the way we do our business in the future.

As a fellow stakeholder in the Canada Alberta Barley Development Agreement, together with the Province and AAFC, we appreciate your continued support of the project. It has benefited barley producers with long term work in genomics, breeding, agronomic research, and genetics. Producers of cereals and livestock feeders from across the province have seen great returns from this tripartite agreement.

Dr. James Helm and his team at the Lacombe Field Crop Development Centre have been truly invaluable contributors to Alberta agriculture. Barley varieties developed there raise royalties- which under the Barley Agreement are re-invested into additional research, further improving barley varieties for the food, feed, and malt industries. In fact, Lacombe developed varieties have over the years resulted in more than \$400,000,000 in farm gate sales of those varieties! The Centre's combination of malt and feed-barley work is paramount to the success of our members. Upwards of 80 % of malt varieties end up as feed, to which Lacombe's expert staff applies specialized research, maximizing farmer earnings as well as developing new higher yielding, higher quality feed varieties for our livestock feeding industry. This forms the basis for Alberta's value-added sector.

The ABC supports Lacombe's agronomic program which seeks to get out ahead of fusarium head blight disease, nitrogen uptake challenges, and to develop drought resistance. Mounting threats from global warming and climate change highlight the need for research in these and other emerging areas. Adapting to changing environmental conditions is essential for future sustainability in agriculture and the success of our producers, the red meat industry, and value-added processors.

Our producers, and indeed all those with a stake in quality food products, owe thanks to people like Dr. Helm and his team. Their field work ensures that research is carried out in areas where it is needed most. The results of their research benefit not only producers in the immediate surrounding areas, but all Albertans. Dr. Helm's enduring efforts to build the research base for our value-added food and livestock industries have resulted in the creation of the J.H. Helm Cereal Research Centre in Lacombe and his induction into the Agriculture Hall of Fame.

During this time of shifting priorities in all levels of government, we see a move to new priorities in bio-products, bio-fuel, and more value-adding strategies. It is important that these new initiatives have access to *new* funding and people resources. Existing long-term programs for the feeding and crop sector should not be jeopardized in order to supply resources for new ventures in the short term. For even these new ventures require a strong cereals sector in the province for their long term success.

We are confident that the new Agriculture Ministry recognizes this. We wish to work closely with your new team in building a sustainable agri-food sector to benefit all Albertans. In the coming months, we will be working with our colleagues in the livestock industry to build a provincial alliance ensuring the crop, feed, livestock, and meat sectors are aligned and moving forward successfully. We are meeting in Calgary on March 2nd for the next stage in this process. We hope that you will be able to join us; an invitation has gone out to you under a separate cover.

We will also continue to work with the federal Government to ensure federal breeding and agronomic researchers and their teams are not re-assigned to non-genomic programs or to non-agronomic areas. We ask for your support with our endeavours in this area also.

As we move forward to meet change and greet opportunity, let us not forget W. B. Yeats who wrote: "if the core is not stable, the rest will not hold".

Sincerely,



Mike Leslie
General Manager
Alberta Barley Commission

Cc. Rory Campbell
Deputy Minister