



January 18-19, 2010

Meeting Report: Climate Change Adaptation Workshop

Background:

I was invited to participate in this Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) workshop in Calgary put on by the new Agri-Environment Services Branch, which incorporates the former Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), the National Land and Water Information Service (NLWIS) and the Agri-Environmental Policy Bureau (AEPB).

A series of similar workshops are being held across Canada to help develop a “Roadmap for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector.” The Roadmap will be part of AAFC’s Climate Change Strategy which will include measures the sector can take to help mitigate future climate changes. A final wrap-up workshop is planned for April, 2010 in Ottawa.

Key Messages:

- Climate change is real and is a long-term problem as well as an opportunity for agriculture.
- The agriculture sector is both a greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter and a GHG sink.
- The agriculture sector has always had to adapt to weather/climate to be successful.
- Efforts to date have been mostly focused on **mitigation** – reducing GHG to reduce climate change. AAFC is trying to balance climate change efforts to include **adaptation**.
- Guiding principles include:
 - Focus on actions to achieve the greatest environmental benefits and economic outcomes
 - Consider mitigation and adaptation together
 - Capture co-benefits and understand complexities
 - Collaboration with stakeholders
- Economic opportunities can include green energy from agricultural waste and biomass; increased productivity; more diverse crops; new agricultural production areas; carbon offsets.

- Presentation from Dr. Denise Neilsen (AAFC and Okanagan Water Stewardship Council):
 - Water issues will be increasingly important in BC (like the land reserve) to manage water resources
 - On the horizon – how do we price water?
- Tom Goddard (ARD):
 - Water is always going to move to the highest value crop
 - Predictions are for an increase in growing degree days but greater variability
 - Alberta's climate change strategy includes Alberta Climate Change Action Team (ACCAT), which is looking at scenarios for climate/water changes and asking farmers about their concerns.
 - Farmer concerns include – business risk management policies are not adapting to climate change; lack of data/information on a regional and local level; lagging cereal research in varietal development.
- Dr. Gerrit Hoogenboom (University of Georgia – crop modeling and agrometeorology)
 - Co-Principal Investigator of the Southeast Climate Consortium (SECC), a partnership of universities in the southeastern US developing solutions for managing climate risks to people and natural resources in agriculture and natural ecosystems.
 - Water demand predictions linked with rainfall are providing useful data for planning for climate change adaptation.
- Discussion groups identified priority areas for climate change impacts as well as opportunities and needs. Some of these included:
 - Basic research in varietal development to prepare for a warmer/variable and wetter/drier climate
 - Business risk management tools to deal with greater expected weather variability
- Final report from all workshops is expected sometime in 2010.