

BULLETIN # 5/09

AEPA

- The Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta (AEPA) has developed a set of key messages around several policy issues that are part of the Land Use Framework planning process. These will be posted on AEPA's website www.agpartners.ca as they are finalized. Some of the key messages include:
 - **Outcomes for Alberta's Agriculture Sector** – Agriculture producers are good stewards of the land and should be recognized for their good management practices. In addition, the implementation of regional plans should not create a cost burden on producers but should include incentive systems and market based instruments for achieving environmental objectives.
 - **Fragmentation and Conversion of Agricultural Land** – Private property interests of landholders must be respected and agriculture retains the right to operate and the opportunity to grow in a sustainable manner. AEPA also states that through the use of conservation tools, there is fair compensation to agricultural landowners who are economically affected by regional plans and land use policies.
 - **Cumulative Effects Management** – Alberta currently manages the environmental impacts of individual projects or developments through regulations without considering the cumulative effects of multiple individually regulated projects. Alberta's new Cumulative Effects Management (CEM) system will define environmental end states and outcomes with a shared understanding of implications and trade-offs. Issues for the agriculture sector include the inability for farmers, who are price takers, to pass along any increased costs of CEM to customers, and the differences between industrial and agricultural impacts on the environment. The agriculture sector through AEPA will be fully engaged in the development of targets and outcomes and in ensuring that the specific needs and concerns of the sector are considered.
 - **Surface and Groundwater Quality and Quantity**- Continued access to safe and reliable water supplies is essential for agriculture and rural communities. The AEPA expects that the agriculture sector will have input into water policy decisions including allocation and water quality thresholds. As well, the

agriculture sector will require time to respond to thresholds and objectives on water resources established through the regional planning process.

FarmTech 2010

- This year's conference included a number of sessions with environmental themes in keeping with the growing focus on the connections between agriculture and the environment.
- Land Use Secretariat Assistant Deputy Minister Morris Seiferling answered questions on the Land Use Framework and the agriculture sector's role in the planning process.
- Bruce Love, a Director of Preferred Carbon Group, discussed Alberta's carbon credit offset system and how it can work for farmers.
- Janette McDonald talked about how environmental stewardship management practices on the farm can become business opportunities in the future.
- Roy Spencer, of Earth Systems Science Center stressed the need for better climate science data collection and interpretation to give us a more accurate view of what the climate is really doing.

Pesticide Questions Answered

- Grain Growers of Canada (GGC) www.ggc-pgc.ca sent a letter to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) asking a number of questions about how pesticides are evaluated for safety in Canada.
- PMRA's full response is posted on the GGC website but the following comments refer to the principle of using sound science in their decision processes:

"Science is the basis of all Health Canada regulatory decisions for pesticides. This scientific approach has a strong reliance on a comprehensive body of scientific evidence and scientific methods that examine both hazard and exposure. The approval system for pesticides uses a precautionary approach that provides a stringent standard of protection to human health and the environment."

Climate Change

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is holding focus groups across Canada on the issue of adaptation of the agriculture sector to expected increases in extreme weather events and warming temperatures.
- While it is appropriate to understand what is happening with the climate and to take steps to minimize negative effects on agriculture, in reality, farmers are constantly adapting to a myriad of risks, including weather, and will continue to do so as the climate changes – a little or a lot.