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Alberta Water Council

- The Crop Sector Working Group has been welcomed as a new member of the Alberta Water Council (AWC) joining the livestock and irrigation sectors as agricultural representatives on the Council. Fairview farmer Neil Boyd is the member representative for the CSWG and Sharon McKinnon is the alternate.
- In addition to the Non-Point Source Pollution Project, the AWC approved a new project on riparian land conservation and management that will have impacts on the agriculture sector as major landholders.
- See www.albertawatercouncil.ca for more information on the AWC.

CASA

- The Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA) held its 2010 Coordination Workshop in Calgary on September 29.
- Topics included:
 - CASA history and current projects
 - Alberta Airsheds Council , which advocates for Alberta airsheds, performs monitoring and develops ozone management plans
 - Alberta Water Council activities and linkages with CASA
 - Alberta Environment's Integrated Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (IMER) Project that is looking at how to do these activities better.
 - Alberta's renewed Clean Air Strategy that will include some management of non-point pollution, integration of land use regions and airsheds, and shared responsibilities and better monitoring and reporting.
 - An update on the Land-Use Framework including the vision document from the Lower Athabasca Region and an update on progress in the South Saskatchewan region
 - The Energy Resources Conservation Board and air quality issues of concern

Environmental Footprinting for Agriculture

- Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) is undertaking a four year project to develop four environmental footprints for crops and livestock.

Questions? Contact Sharon McKinnon, Policy Program Coordinator
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- Environmental footprinting is a tool increasingly being used globally to measure the environmental impact of a product or process. Specific kinds of environmental footprints include water, energy and carbon footprints.
- Footprinting carries with it both opportunities and risks for agriculture.
 - On the positive side, footprinting can help identify inefficiencies in farming practices that can help reduce inputs like water, fuel, herbicides and pesticides resulting in cost savings. Footprinting is also being used to brand products as a means of maintaining or gaining market share and providing consumer confidence in the products farmers grow. By getting out front of this emerging trend, agriculture can lead the way to better environmental sustainability rather than reacting to outside forces (like Walmart – see below).
 - There are risks as well, particularly in the proliferation of green claims in the marketplace (greenwashing), which may not be backed by legitimate data, and in the number of systems used for determining footprints.
- The ARD project is expected to look at the research on methods for calculating footprints, collect relevant data, and come up with transparent footprinting coefficients that will enhance buyer and public confidence in Alberta’s agricultural products and practices.
- For more information contact:

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Walmart

- On a similar note, Walmart recently launched its new global commitment to sustainable agriculture that “that will help small and medium sized farmers expand their businesses, get more income for their products, and reduce the environmental impact of farming...”
- Walmart’s three part strategy includes:
 - Supporting farmers and their communities by sourcing more products locally and increasing the income of small and medium farmers by 10-15%.
 - Producing more food with fewer resources and less waste through requiring suppliers to report the water, energy fertilizer and pesticides used per unit of food produced.
 - Sustainably source key agriculture products focusing on palm oil sources and beef production that doesn’t contribute to the deforestation of the rainforest in Brazil. There are also country specific commitments – for Canada this means sourcing 30% of the produce in its stores locally on an annual basis.
- There is no definition of small and medium farmers but presumably Walmart intends to focus on farmers in developing countries and not in North America.
- Some proof of sustainability will definitely become part of doing business with Walmart and other buyers in the future.
- For more information see: www.walmartstores.com/pressroom/news/10376.aspx