CHAIRMAN’S MESSAGE

Matt Sawyer
Chairman

Logical Logistics

Transportation.

It’s the new dirty word for farmers after a year of record crop production followed by a winter of logistical issues and a feeling of powerlessness.

Storage issues throughout the winter muted the thrill of delivering feed barley off the combine. My heart especially goes out to those of you with grain sitting on the ground. These issues have led to a situation that we did not anticipate—and that we have not been able to easily resolve.

The lack of a simple fix has led to a lot of rhetoric from all parties involved. We all know the government, the producer groups, the grain companies and the railways are working on the problem, but it is incredibly frustrating to see such a monumental failure within our domestic transportation system.

Our country was built on—and by—railways and farmers. However, farmers remain the last priority of the railways. That is disheartening.

Money talks, and our competition comes from the forestry, oil and gas, mining and potash sectors. The pursuit of any realistic solution has to take into account that those are simply higher-value commodities.

As farmers, we are being told to gear up to feed a growing global population, while at the same time we know there is no way to efficiently get a record-breaking crop out of the country.

As we move to modernize our varietal registration system to get outputs up for the demands of our world, we cannot help but wonder what to do about transportation. There is no point in growing more food if we are never going to be able to move it.

I sit on the federal government’s Crop Logistics Working Group and I feel like I should have the answer—but I’m still searching.

However, I can assure you that Alberta Barley will continue to apply pressure so this issue remains a priority for industry and government. After all, there is a hungry world out there.

albertabarley.com
GENERAL MANAGER’S MESSAGE

Trading Up

Working on issues in agriculture sometimes feels like learning a second or third language.

Whether it’s participating in the Barley Council of Canada (BCC), the Grain Growers of Canada (GGC), the Canada Grains Council (CGC) or the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA), it seems like there is a C-based acronym for all of our partner organizations.

This can make clear communication that much harder for all of us. For example, it can be tough explaining a point if you’re talking about the CGC (Canada Grains Council) and the people you’re talking to think you’re making a point about the CGC (Canadian Grain Commission). This happens to me more than I’d like to admit.

Despite onerous acronyms, Alberta Barley’s involvement at the national level increased significantly over the past year. Our chairman Matt Sawyer was elected vice-president of the GGC in December; Region 1 delegate and former chairman Brian Otto remains chair of the BCC; and I have been the president of CAFTA since last May. Recently elected Region 3 director Jason Lenz was also appointed as Alberta Barley’s representative on the BCC in December.

These additional responsibilities are our way of ensuring Alberta’s barley farmers have a strong voice. They also complement our work in growing Alberta’s barley industry—and ensuring its profitability.

The national groups we work with all have different areas of focus and responsibility, and each of them runs on a small staff that brings in expertise from its member organizations. Our goal is to work with these key groups to ensure barley is fairly represented, but we are also keen to maximize resources and avoid duplication.

In the coming years, I anticipate that we will get better at organizing and sharing resources in order to benefit barley growers in the field.

A new take on an ancient grain, Go Barley is a revolutionary cookbook that includes more than 100 healthy, delicious and easy-to-follow recipes, accompanied by mouthwatering colour photographs.

The cookbook will be available for purchase on April 8, 2014. For more information go to gobarley.com.
Alberta Barley directors and delegates took time during our 2013 annual general meeting to work together on a domestic policy agenda for 2014. With the year already underway, we are sticking to our New Year’s resolutions.

Top of the agenda was identifying policy priorities. The resulting list included policy issues of high importance to barley farmers across the province, which will direct Alberta Barley’s policy work for the year.

Through the process of issue identification, our elected representatives looked for opportunities to collaborate with industry partners and expressed a strong desire to show leadership in several key areas. Transportation, variety registration and the potential increase in Canadian corn acres were identified as our top three policy issues.

Alberta Barley’s directors and delegates demonstrated a strong desire to increase agriculture’s social licence through education and consumer-awareness initiatives.

Social licence is used to measure the level of public consent or approval of an organization or industry’s practices. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development Deputy Minister Jason Krips identified social licence as a priority for the ministry in late 2013, in large part because it is expected to increasingly influence trade in the years to come.

Alberta Barley’s ongoing involvement in educational initiatives like the Classroom Agriculture Program and Aggie Days, as well as consumer-focused promotion through www.gobarley.com and events like the Calgary Stampede, demonstrate that we are communicating the importance of the agriculture sector to consumers in Alberta.

In November 2013, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Minister Gerry Ritz announced his intention to ratify UPOV 91 by Aug. 1, 2014. This announcement, along with the introduction of the government’s proposed Agricultural Growth Act, led to a series of important and ongoing conversations around the government’s role in plant breeding, end-point royalties and what will be required to create an environment that encourages innovation through increased investment.

Rounding out Alberta Barley’s policy priorities for 2014 are environmental policy and agricultural land fragmentation. As an active member of the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta and the Crop Sector Working Group, we are collaborating with our industry partners to develop producer-driven, made-in-Alberta environmental policy solutions.
COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Food for Thought

Just as farmers have spent the winter preparing for the year ahead, our communications department has spent the winter months laying the groundwork for an exciting and busy spring and summer.

In the coming months, you will be seeing a lot of us. We are always looking to improve, and our department is focused on reaching out to our members (on the road, on the phone and online) to find out how to serve you better.

No matter what we are working on, our philosophy remains strong and continues to drive us: farmers speak on farmer issues. With that in mind, we remain committed to getting our name out there, and providing a strong farmer voice on issues that affect your bottom line.

We will also continue to do what we do best, which is to ensure that Alberta Barley is the “go-to” information source for barley, as well as any issues that impact our industry. In addition to handling media inquiries, writing press releases and setting up interviews, we are committed to providing our members with the most “bang for their buck.”

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Speaking of websites, if you are looking for the latest on Canada’s homegrown superfood, check out www.GoBarley.com. Our consumer website is a one-stop shop with recipes, how-to videos, Q&As with our market development manager and food spokesperson Linda Whitworth, and reviews of everyone’s favourite beverage (BEER!!). You can also get the latest on our new cookbook, Go Barley: Modern Recipes for an Ancient Grain.

We continue to provide support for the Western Canadian Deduction, as well as the Barley Council of Canada and Alberta Barley’s research and market development teams. We are also focusing on enhancing our agronomic reach and capabilities. A communicator’s work is never done, and we wouldn’t have it any other way.

MEET THE STAFF

Asad Mahmood
Project Accountant

Asad Mahmood is a project accountant for Alberta Barley. He has been with the organization since November 2012. Currently, he is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Western Canadian Deduction.

Asad grew up in Islamabad, Pakistan, with dreams of becoming a pilot and travelling the world. His interest in becoming a stockbroker led him to the field of finance and strategy. At the age of 23, Asad immigrated to Canada to pursue a master of business administration (MBA) at Laurentian University in Sudbury, ON. After graduation, he worked in the telecommunications industry before moving to Calgary in 2012.

In his free time, Asad enjoys reading the news and trying new foods. He wants to travel the world and visit the Middle East, Europe and Australia. While he is fluent in English, Punjabi and Urdu, Asad is passionate about learning and would like to study Arabic and French.