It’s 2014 and I’m feeling optimistic about another year representing farmers’ interests at Alberta Barley.

When I look back over the past two years, I’m encouraged by what we have accomplished in such a short time. We have met the changes to our marketing system head on. We have also established a national barley council to work with the federal government to increase funding for barley innovation and grow the food barley markets.

Over the coming year, we will build on our past successes to further grow our industry. Last year, I grew malt, as well as feed barley for the cattle industry. I also participated in an initiative to grow food barley, which was my way of contributing to an exciting new development that we are working on at Alberta Barley.

With record yields for many farmers last year, I’m confident that barley is a crop with a solid place on my farm—and a proven performer for producers around the province. If you haven’t grown barley in a few years, I urge you to take a look at it as a rotational crop that just makes sense.

In the same way that barley is part of a strong rotation, it is also part of a larger industry. Over the next year, you’ll see us strengthen ties with our officemates from the Alberta Wheat Commission, as well as continue to collaborate with our close colleagues at the Alberta Canola Producers Commission and Alberta Pulse Growers Commission. Working together enables us to make sure your check-off investments go further, giving us all more bang for our buck.

On a final note, I would like to say that we take the responsibility of investing your check-off dollars very seriously. The projects and initiatives we invest in would mean nothing without your support. With that in mind, over the next 12 months we will continue to make research and market development our top priorities. These are the areas that move our industry forward—and ensure our profitability.

I wish you all a happy and healthy 2014.

Matt Sawyer
Chairman
Measuring an organization’s success year over year is, in some ways, a test of patience and endurance. From developing the strategic plan early in the new year, to making a work plan and budget based on those strategies, to then implementing those strategies (and tracking them in the work plan), our goal at Alberta Barley is to be accountable to our members. Yet some results are more tangible than others.

As Matt mentioned in the “Chairman’s Message,” we have had a busy couple of years with some major successes. Yet our day-to-day work is often about more immediate priorities: What is happening in international trade? What about transportation? Is anyone growing hulless barley? Who is working on UPOV 91? Are we investing our research funds in the right areas? Do we agree with the government on a particular issue?—and what do we think about all of these things?

At Alberta Barley, we actively invest time and energy in communications, finance and check-off management, market development, policy and research. We are fortunate to have developed a solid committee structure that provides us with farmer input in all of these areas—the most notable development today being GrainsWest, the magazine you’re holding in your hands right now.

In 2014, we will be adding more work in agronomy to our list of projects and priorities. As this progresses, your feedback will be much appreciated.

In a similar vein, developing research extension materials is an area we’ll be more active in over the coming months. Stay tuned for more information on our @albertabarley Twitter account, our albertabarley.com and gobarley.com websites, our Barley Country blog, and our attendance at meetings throughout the year. We look forward to seeing you out there—and online.

## 5 WAYS We’re Working for You

1. **Farmer-focused research**
   We invest in research that provides tangible and practical results. We do this by identifying projects and initiatives that ensure profitability for farmers. Recently, we received a federal government AgrilInnovation Program grant that invests $8 million in 27 new barley-focused research projects.

2. **Leaders in trade**
   We remain committed to increasing market opportunities for feed, food and malt barley at home and abroad. Our participation in trade missions strengthens new and existing ties to target markets.

3. **Barley Council of Canada**
   We fund and provide administrative support for the Barley Council of Canada (BCC). The BCC unites barley farmers, researchers and industry stakeholders from across the value chain to promote the growth and profitability of the barley industry.

4. **Policy**
   We track and gauge the impact of policy issues affecting farmers, and represent farmers’ interests to governments and regulatory organizations. Through active engagement and working closely with industry partners, we work on issues ranging from market access to sustainability.

5. **GrainsWest magazine**
   We have teamed up with the Alberta Wheat Commission to produce a wheat- and barley-focused magazine. This publication, GrainsWest, is another way that we prioritize outreach to producers. Distributed four times per year, GrainsWest focuses on issues including agronomy, trade and industry news.
As food barley is a niche growth area, two different business development groups have been started: one that is national in scope and one that is provincial. These meetings bring producers and industry together so each segment understands the opportunities and the issues affecting the entire value chain.

The first of these—the Alberta Business Development Committee—includes representation from Alberta’s barley producers, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development’s Crop Research and Extension Division and Food and Bio-Processing Division, Canterra Seeds, Lakeview Bakery, Stony Plain Seed Cleaning Association and Sunny Boy Foods.

Following the committee’s initial meeting, its first barley-promoting project is already underway: Sunny Boy Foods and Lakeview Bakery have joined forces to develop a food-service-type barley bread mix suitable for bakeries. The flour mix will be designed so that bakeries can quickly create a batch of dough with the addition of very little other than liquid. The bag of baking mix will include bread bags with the miller’s information and the nutrient composition already printed on them.

The objective is to have a serving size of the bread contain enough barley beta-glucan to allow the bread to carry the health claim: “Eating barley fibre helps to reduce cholesterol, which is a risk factor in heart disease.”

Sunny Boy received a Growing Forward 2 grant from the federal government to work on this product. The bread mix is currently in development, and Sunny Boy hopes to feature this product in the near future. Uptake of such a product is the first step in promoting new food products containing barley.

Market Development is also working on a technical guide that will be made available to the food industry. The guide will include ideas for, and basic formulations of, barley food products, as well as processing techniques that have already been developed by Canadian research institutes. It will connect interested processors and manufacturers with expertise in barley processing and product development.

On the consumer side, Alberta Barley is publishing Go Barley: Modern Recipes for an Ancient Grain, a 256-page cookbook featuring more than 100 delicious recipes and accompanying photos. It will be available in stores April 8, 2014.
The potential for food barley research is especially exciting as barley is one of only nine ingredients approved by Health Canada for a health claim related to its cholesterol-lowering potential. The cluster’s activities will include developing barley ingredients to encourage food manufacturers to use more barley in their products, as well as developing new barley varieties that contain more health components.

The research themes will focus on relevant industry priorities for feed, malt and food barley.

Several projects are already underway, including two food barley projects from AAFC’s Nancy Ames, PhD. The first is “The Effect of Barley Beta-Glucan on Human Glycemic Response,” a study that will use the powerful statistical tool of meta-analysis to examine data pooled from clinical studies. This will measure precisely how effective barley and barley products are in lowering blood glucose and insulin levels. Food producers and marketers will then be able to make accurate claims when promoting barley products, and identify gaps in barley research that will direct further studies.

Ames’ second project, “Optimization of Primary Processing Protocols to Improve Wholegrain Barley Product Nutrition, Safety and Flavour,” will survey commercial whole-grain barley products to determine the consistency of beta-glucan content, flavour and microbial safety. Although higher levels of beta-glucan are desirable from a health standpoint, this study looks for the optimum balance between meeting beta-glucan health claim requirements and obtaining good end-product quality and stability.

National research cluster will propel Canada’s barley industry forward thanks to 27 innovative projects.

Alberta Barley’s research focuses on providing tangible and practical results to farmers. A major step towards achieving this goal happened on July 9, 2013, when Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) announced that Alberta Barley would be the recipient of $8 million dollars under the AgriInnovation Program (AIP).

The AIP is a five-year initiative investing up to $698 million to support innovation in the Canadian agricultural industry. As a result of this $8 million funding, 27 research projects will be supported under a National Barley Research Cluster.

The top priority of this cluster is realizing the potential of the Canadian barley sector through scientific advancements that will reduce the expense and risk for producers. The research themes focus on relevant industry priorities for feed, malt and food barley.

Meet the Staff

Erin Gowriluk
Policy Analyst

The first staff member that we would like to introduce in this feature series is Erin Gowriluk, our new policy analyst.

Gowriluk’s role is shared between Alberta Barley and the Alberta Wheat Commission. Her experience includes working at Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development’s Local Market Expansion Branch, where she contributed to projects under the federal government’s Growing Forward 2 initiative.

As part of her policy and advocacy efforts, Gowriluk works to convey an informed opinion on matters of importance to farmers. Gowriluk focuses her efforts on identifying policy priorities—from research funding and international trade to creating market-development opportunities.

Gowriluk made Calgary her home 17 years ago when she moved with her family from Winnipeg, MB. She is married and enjoys managing her son’s novice hockey team, horseback riding, entertaining friends and family, and exploring Fish Creek Provincial Park with her Old English sheepdog, Felix.