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Paving a new path forward

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A New Era
Welcome to the first edition of The Grain Exchange, the joint newsletter of Alberta Barley and the Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC). For those of you who’ve been reading Wheat’s for the past few years, we hope you enjoy the new format. And for those who remember Barley Country’s traditional newsletter, Alberta Barley, we are pleased to offer this new communication a home in which to grow with the work we’re doing on your behalf. Of course, these two commissions will continue to collaborate on GrainsWest magazine which covers the major issues affecting western Canadian crop producers.

Speaking of our new name, there was actually a Calgary Grain Exchange back in the day; first housed in the Gran Exchange Building that still exists in 12th St. and 7th St. home to the Palomino Hotel. Constructed in 1930, the building housed 24 grain businessmen and the exchange itself was interesting to speculate on how the grain industry might have evolved after that open market model had continued.

The new-stand derrick was built by William Rooper Hill, who was also an investor in the Calgary Brewing and Malting Company, makers of the iconic Calgary Beer, perhaps the original Alberta craft beer brand. As such, I think it’s important to mention some of the key players who led the change in bringing the A to the G. Dr. George Clayton, former senior official with Ag Canada, started the conversations four years ago between AWC, AAC and Canterra Seeds. Dr. Kent St Burey, who was also with Ag Canada at the time, was instrumental in developing the contracts and intellectual property. And our own past chair, Kent Erickson, along with our research manager, Dr. Lauren Comin, led the way. We should also mention all of those involved for your hard work in building a new model that not only made history, but will also strengthen farmer competitiveness and profitability.

Over the past year, we have been working on integrations of the management teams of Alberta Barley and AWC and I’m pleased to report that the process is largely complete. We now have a single executive director who is devoted to serving the two commissions and their boards on an equal basis. In the process we have realized savings in the hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in red tape and costs alone. We hope you’ll see the Results those four years ago between those two commissions are between the boards of Alberta Wheat Commission, AAFC and Canterra Seeds. Dr. Ann de St. Remy, who was also with Ag Canada at the time, was instrumental in developing the contracts and intellectual property. And our own past chair, Kent Erickson, along with our research manager, Dr. Lauren Comin, led the way. We should also mention all of those involved for your hard work in building a new model that not only made history, but will also strengthen farmer competitiveness and profitability.

Farmers can learn more about the A to the G by visiting the website or email info@albertawheat.com or barleyinfo@albertabarley.com for more information about both events, call 780.998.3711 or email info@albertawheat.com or barleyinfo@albertabarley.com for more information about both events, call 780.998.3711 or email info@albertawheat.com or barleyinfo@albertabarley.com.
China’s top maltsters tour the prairies and explore new malt barley varieties

There has been increasing interest in recent years in Canadian malting barley among international malting and brewing companies, particularly in China. In order to help drive demand, the Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre (CMBTC) hosted a tour this past August to showcase the Canadian barley industry to malting barley buyers from China. It was an important event to build relationships, making the tour one of the most long-term systems in the industry.

The CMBTC believes crop tours are an important vehicle to support marketing of Canadian malting barley to international customers, and to introduce them to new varieties and their attributes from a technical perspective. Building and maintaining strong relationships with the industry in China through our China office helps to build a stronger foundation for future demand and increased and growing demand for Canadian malting barley.
Over the past year and a half, farmers have been faced with the loss of protected, special proposed re-evaluation decisions on crop protection products by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) of Health Canada. These decisions threaten the tools farmers have at their disposal to protect the quality, yields and competitiveness of their crops. Farmers have every reason to be concerned.

Last year the PMRA called for a special review of Group Four neonicotinoids which include imidacloprid, thiamethoxam and clothianidin. These active ingredients are used widely in seed treatments for all types of crops, including cereals, pulses, wheat and barley. It is estimated that around 50 percent of cereal acres across the prairies receive a neonicotinoid seed treatment. These chemicals are known to help control wireworm populations until the seedling stage, however, they do not eradicate the pest. Once a wireworm population is established it is difficult to eradicate. While specific data doesn’t yet exist, entomologists and farmers agree that the security of wireworm populations are seemingly more pestilent than other insect pests on the Prairies. Losing yet another defense with neonicotinoid seed treatments will make the pest virtually uncontrollable. Depending on a number of variables any given year, farmers have reported anywhere between $50,000-$100,000 worth of crop damage, caused by wireworm in a crop, anywhere between $50,000-$100,000 worth of crop damage, caused by wireworm in a crop. In some areas of the province wireworm infestations have become so prolific that it is uncontrollable. Depending on a number of variables every given year farmers have reported between $50,000-$100,000 worth of crop damage, caused by wireworm in a crop.

The Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions (AWC) have joined forces with other groups across the country in providing feedback on these proposed decisions. We have brought these points and others forward to the Alberta government and our industry colleagues, Team Alberta and our other industry colleagues, to ensure relevant data is gathered well in advance of a final decision. To help farmers in accessing tools to protect their crops.

In the case of the decision of hazard, there have been many questions with respect to the quality and statistical significance of the data used in risk assessment, particularly for the pesticides. The select few (ad hoc) (requests for) (additional information for) (pesticide in the waterways) have been cancelled (proposed to) (consumer class comparison to countries like the USA) that have not detected chronic risk at all allowing (already allowed) (widespread) (countries like the US). For example, the PMRA determined that the threshold to protect aquatic invertebrates from chronic exposure to clothianidin is 15 ppb, compared to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency who has deemed 30 ppb to be acceptable chronic endpoint. Farmers rely on the PMRA to provide access to safe tools needed to protect crops that align with global competitors.

Necessary improvements are not the only stop protection project currently slated for cancellation. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAC) has also been re-evaluated with a proposed decision released in June for cancellation, although no final decision has been made. Also, glyphosate has been proposed for cancellation on production to ensure controlled ground sprawl (glyphosate population). What farmers are also concerned about is human health and protecting beneficial insects within the environment that aid in soil health, pesticides on cancellation of these products must be based on sound, peer-reviewed science and with adequate time to ensure relevant data is gathered well in advance of a final decision.

Alberta Wheat and Alberta barley welcome farmers input to how these decisions will further impact your operations.

The Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions have joined forces with other groups across the country in providing feedback on these proposed decisions through a 90-day public consultation which closes on November 6th, 2018. We have been advocating for the need to use scientific rigor in such decision making as a means to uphold the reputation of our regulatory system and ensure the competitiveness of our farmers in accessing tools to protect their crops.

As a result of the decision of hazard, there have been many questions with respect to the quality and statistical significance of the data used in risk assessment, particularly for the pesticides. The select few (ad hoc) (requests for) (additional information for) (pesticide in the waterways) have been cancelled (proposed to) (consumer class comparison to countries like the USA) that have not detected chronic risk at all allowing (already allowed) (widespread) (countries like the US). For example, the PMRA determined that the threshold to protect aquatic invertebrates from chronic exposure to clothianidin is 15 ppb, compared to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency who has deemed 30 ppb to be acceptable chronic endpoint. Farmers rely on the PMRA to provide access to safe tools needed to protect crops that align with global competitors.

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Alberta Wheat and Alberta barley welcome farmers input to how these decisions will further impact your operations.
For the better part of a decade, technology has been steadily integrated into our daily lives. The latest innovations come from embedded computers, mainly into vehicles.

Automobiles, commercial vehicles, and farm equipment are becoming safer and more efficient as they become more computerized. Equipment are becoming safer and more efficient as they become more computerized.

The autonomous vehicle is the obvious efficient as they become more computerized. This agreement highlighted that commercial vehicles covered both Canada and the United States. This agreement was different, in that it service options were available for commercial vehicles.

So what is available for farmers? The Association vehicles.

Canadian automotive industry. This agreement to ensure that manufacturers would make competitive market for repair service. The statement of principles published by the AEM and EDA does not appear to be the same offering made to the automobile and commercial vehicles sector. Without binding for the availability of diagnostic tools, and predictable expectat…
Policy TRACKER
Sean Warden Government Relations and Policy Manager | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

PolicyTRACKER is a quarterly update of key federal and provincial farm policy issues that stand to impact your operations. The Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC) and Alberta Barley’s Policy and Markets Team undertake a number of activities to advocate for the competitiveness, profitability and market access for farmers. PolicyTRACKER provides an overview of these activities, while providing information on current policy and governmental issues that are of interest to farmers in a regular blog.

Fusarium Head Blight in the Agricultural Pest Act of Alberta (APA)
As part of ongoing work that is underway at AWC, the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions have participated in the Alberta Industry Fusarium Working Group supporting the removal of Fusarium graminearum [Fg] from the Agricultural Pest Act of Alberta. The Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions have participated in a meeting with Agriculture and Forestry Minister Oneil Carlier on the matter. While the Minister and his team agree that taking up to not as an option for managing Fg shows us the potential of what an integrated management program might look like for Alberta. On October 2, 2018, the Minister hosted a roundtable discussion on fusarium leadership and management, in which policy options are being discussed. Alberta Barley and AWC have been invited to contribute.

Alberta General Election 2019
Alberta’s next provincial general election is expected to be called between March 1, 2019 and May 31, 2019. Filing figures released on July 28, 2018 showed the United Conservative Party holding a lead over the government. The campaign has been described and learning others. Team Alberta has engaged in the development of a government relations strategy heading into the elections and will begin to implement the strategy into the winter. There will be further engagement with government officials and key members to get our messaging out regarding legislation that will impact your operations. The Alberta Barley and AWC have been invited to contribute.

Join the provincial crop commissions at your regional/zone meeting this fall
Join the provincial crop commissions at your regional/zone meeting this fall. Pre-register for these events for your chance to win a FarmTech 2019 pass.

Lacombe
Lacombe Memorial Centre
ABC Region 3, AWC Region 3
Grimshaw
Pomeroy Inn Grimshaw
Alberta Canola Region 1

Lethbridge
Lethbridge Exhibition Park
ABC Region 1

Strathmore
Willingdon Recreation Centre
ABC Region 5, AWC Region 5, APG Zone 3

Vegreville
Vegreville Social Centre
ABC Region 2, AWC Region 2, APG Zone 2

Medicine Hat
Medicine Hat Lodge
ABC Region 6, AWC Region 5, APG Zone 1

Airdrie
Apple Creek Golf Course
ABC Region 1

Willsdon
Willsdon Recreation Centre
ABC Region 4, AWC Region 4, APG Zone 5

Kamloops
Kamloops Exhibition Centre
ABC Region 7, AWC Region 7, APG Zone 4

FARMING
December 1

Team Alberta is a collaboration between Alberta Barley, Alberta Canola, Alberta Pulse Growers and the Alberta Wheat Commission to advance policy issues that impact Alberta’s crop sector with all levels of government. Together, we combine resources to strengthen the voice of Alberta crop growers and the Alberta Pulse Commission, and provide effective advocacy, increased market access and increased competitiveness.

Team Alberta has received approval for its proposal under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership’s (CAP) Environmental Stewardship and Climate Change Program to conduct a three-year study which will engage the technical expertise of the PMRA (Practical Agricultural Machinery Institute) to measure and quantify the on-farm usage of electricity, natural gas and propane for grain conditioning. The aim of the project is to optimize the energy efficiency of on-farm grain conditioning, and help farmers overcome barriers to achieving optimal grain storage management. The project ultimately aims to improve the profitability for producers through improved grain quality and premiums.

We hope the results of this initiative will inform government on potential programming and policy options to support farmers. We have begun recruiting 30-40 farmers across all regions of Alberta to participate in this study. If you are interested in participating please contact: seredash@albertawheatandbarley.com

Agri-Food and Aquaculture Regulatory Review
Budget 2018 proposed for the Government of Canada to pursue a regulatory reform agenda focused on supporting innovation and business investments. Agri-Food and Aquaculture was one of the sectors chosen for regulatory modernization focused on a number of departments and agencies including Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Health Canada which is the federal Food Inspection Agency (FIA). Further, we have indicated a need for improvements to the current regulatory and communication process to better serve the agri-food sector.

In an initiative led by AWC and Alberta Barley, Team Alberta has submitted to the process and are advocating for inclusion of the Canada Grain Commission (wheat grading, wheat check pricing, wheat promotion and handling of the surplus) in the process, as well as recommendations for improvements to the current regulatory and communication process. This will help ensure that farmers get the most out of the program. This proposal under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) is expected to be delivered in the Fall.

Policy and Markets Team undertake a number of activities to advocate for the competitiveness, profitability and market access for farmers. PolicyTRACKER provides an overview of these activities, while providing information on current policy and governmental issues that are of interest to farmers in a regular blog.
Canadian Barley
Outlook
Chuck Penner, Founder | LeftField Commodity Research

Throughout 2017/18, Canadian barley prices rallied steadily, climbing to multiyear highs. This summer, the normal seasonal price weakness was minor and only lasted a matter of weeks. A lot of the price behaviour for Canadian barley is often attributed to domestic feed use and although this is the largest source of demand, it wasn’t the main factor behind last year’s rally. It won’t likely be the main driver in 2018/19 either.

This large price movement we’ve seen in barley tends to happen when there is a major shift in the marketplace, but Canadian barley production has actually been quite constant. StatsCan’s latest production estimate for the 2018 barley crop is just under 8.0 million tonnes, only 100,000 tonnes less than last year. Over the last four years, barley production has essentially been flat.

On the demand side, domestic feed use also hasn’t risen enough to trigger a rally. After all, livestock numbers in western Canada haven’t changed by more than a percent or two over the last few years of production. Feed use is one of the largest contributors to barley demand, but it’s often attributed to domestic feed use and not the barley market on its own. With steady production and feed use data, barley exports are the only other variable of note. Even though export volumes are less than domestic feed consumption, the export market is the “swing factor” that can cause the market to move like it has in 2017/18. Canadian barley exports hit 2.08 million tonnes, 45% more than the year before and the highest total since 2001/02. The chart shows China was the major buyer last year’s increase, with the US and Japan in distant second and third. It’s also worth noting that Saudi Arabia was already a buyer in 2017/18, even before it “boycotted” Canadian barley.

The export outlook will also drive market direction for barley in 2018/19, and that is already looking bullish. According to the International Grains Council, global barley production is expected to shrink to 1.5 million tonnes in 2018/19, and that could still be overly optimistic. Global demand should also start to taper down, becoming more mature.

More importantly, with the exception of Argentina, 2018/19 barley production is down significantly among Canada’s export competitors. Most of the major exporters – the EU, Australia, Russia and Ukraine – have all experienced drought this year, and each of those countries already came into 2018/19 with minimal carry-over from the previous year. Tighter feed supplies within those countries will also keep more of their 2018 barley crops within their borders for domestic consumption with minimal carry-over for exports. This will push up more feed demand toward Canada, but supplies here are limited too. The chart of Canadian barley exports shows our forecast of a lower tonnage 2018/19 barley crop.

Just like in 2017/18, domestic feeders (and malters) will need to compete against heavy export demand again this year, but the offshores pull could be even stronger in 2018/19. Conditions over the final few weeks of the 2018 harvest will determine how much of the lower crop will find its way into export markets.

Global ending stocks will also drop sharply, looking bullish. According to the International Grains Council, global ending stocks will also drop sharply, with the US and Japan a distant second and third. Tighter feed supplies within those countries will also keep more of their 2018 barley crops within their borders for domestic consumption with minimal carry-over for exports. This will push up more export demand toward Canada, but supplies here are limited too. The chart of Canadian barley exports shows our forecast of a lower tonnage 2018/19 barley crop.

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With that in mind, and with harvest wrapping up, now is the perfect time to reflect on this year’s growing season. What went well, and what could be improved?

If you have a business plan, how do your results compare to your plan? What goals were met? If goals were not met, why not? And, what actions can be taken to repeat success?

A post-harvest meeting with the farm team is a great way to review your accomplishments and celebrate successes. Have everyone report on what they are proud of, take time to celebrate, and appreciate one another. Consider hosting an off-farm get-together to reward the team.

Hindsight gives a clearer view of the key decisions made and what factors produced favourable results, revealing opportunities for next time. Perhaps there’s an opportunity to develop a standard operating procedure, hire a farm advisor, or pursue additional education and training.

As we move into the autumn months, we are surrounded by learning opportunities through conferences, workshops, and all sorts of industry meetings. What learning opportunities best suit your needs and that of the farm team? Consider creating a skills development plan for the farm.

I encourage everyone to attend learning-focused events such as the Agricultural Excellence Conference in Winnipeg this November or FarmTech in Edmonton this January. Or, consider enrolling in the only national farm business skills development program for farmers, the Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management (CTEAM) program, starting in December.

By investing in lifelong learning through business skills development, you will be able to confront change with confidence and seize opportunity.

Most importantly, plan… and you will prosper!