



## **Report Prepared for Peace River Agriculture Development Fund**

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<b>Organization(s):</b>	B.C. Grain Producers Association.
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### **Executive Summary:**

In this first year of a three-year project, the directors of the B.C. Grain Producer's Association have been involved in and represented the BCGPA and its membership on a number of committees including the Grain Growers of Canada, Canadian Canola Growers Association, Canola Council of Canada, B.C. Agriculture Council, Agriculture Research and Extension Council of Alberta and various local committees. They have represented the interests of the B.C. Peace Region grain & oilseed producers in matters relating to crop research, environment, wildlife damage to crops, farm business risk management, production insurance, crop market development options and transportation issues.

### **Activities & Accomplishments:**

#### **Objective 1. Initiate Communication with Producer Members:**

##### ***Producer to BCGPA***

The BCGPA has established the platform for two way communications between the B.C. Peace region's grain and oilseed producers and the BCGPA. The **survey** of membership done in April 2008 was found to be an ineffective method of feedback, a different approach to obtaining feedback from the producers will be attempted in the second year of this project. The **website** has been well maintained with bulletins of upcoming events, past meetings, feedback form and current contact information, including the **toll-free** number to the BCGPA administrative office.

##### ***BCGPA to Producer***

A new color format introduced for the quarterly **newsletters** has had a positive response and more producers are taking the time to read the newsletters to become informed of the current programs, policies and projects.

##### **Public Meetings:**

A Research **crop tour** in July was very well attended and provided an opportunity for communication during the lunch and beyond. This gathering of crop breeders, industry professionals and producers encouraged direct communication of the producer's needs and wants to the individuals who can influence the direction of crop breeding and technologies.

A **networking seminar** was held in Dawson Creek at the Best Western Hotel on Feb 3rd, 2009. The afternoon meeting and evening banquet was attended by nearly 100 producers and industry representatives from the B.C. Peace.

The objective of this Seminar was to provide a networking opportunity between B.C. Grain Producers Association, its membership, local producers, industry leaders and professionals. It also gave the directors of the association and its membership an update on projects, programs, and other activities that have taken place over the last year.

Clair Langlois gave a research report with a take-home message that although the severe drought of 2008 created some issues with the research plots, some very good data and interesting results still came through.

The afternoon featured four guest speakers:

Richard Phillips, Executive Director for the Grain Growers of Canada, was the first to speak. He outlined the vision and mission of the Growers, and spoke of his lobbying efforts in government, giving special attention to Rail Transportation, Biotechnology, Safety Nets, and Marketing. According to Phillips, farmers can make a big difference in Ottawa.

Jim Smolik, the Assistant Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Grain Commission, reported on issues relating to a new declaration system for wheat after the removal of the Kernel Visual Distiguishability (KVD) system. He also introduced a new accredited and certified container sampling program. Referring to these new programs, Jim says producers need to give their voice as new programs evolve, as they have a critical role to play.

Emily MacNair, Coordinator of the Climate Action Initiative in B.C., presented how climate action policies in B.C. are currently being formed, brought forward, and what this means for agriculture, specifically for the B.C. Grain Producers.

Ken Gamble, Financial Products Sales Specialist for Viterra in Edmonton, shared his view on carbon credits from Alberta's perspective, informing producers of what has been accomplished with carbon credits in that province.

This seminar was an enlightening gathering of information on the new Climate initiatives and Marketing policies. The topics presented gave much discussion during the coffee break, and the rest of the day with new partnerships being formed, contacts made, and concerns brought forward. Producers had ample opportunity during the question and answer period to voice their thoughts and opinions while being updated on current situations and opportunities.

Advertising through the media promoted the Networking Seminar in conjunction with the Annual General meeting. Grain Producers at the meeting were given a package which contained several information pamphlets, BCGPA committee reports and other significant information. The 2008 Crop Variety Performance book was displayed at the registration table, available to all attendees.

B.C. Grain Producers had a display booth including materials about Variety Trials, and there were five other industry sponsored booths featuring Oil and Gas, Farm Credit, Chemicals, Wildlife, and the promotion of B.C. Peace products. Numerous generous door prizes were donated and distributed throughout the day.

A banquet was enjoyed in the evening to celebrate and encourage our local grain producers. Featured speaker Richard Phillips brought an interesting but sobering presentation on his involvement in a Canadian Foodgrains trip to Afghanistan, demonstrating the Afghan people's struggles to grow food in that country, but pointing out how their goals are so similar to the Canadian farmer's. Another speaker was Harry Siemens, publisher and speaker for Siemens Says.com. Siemens encouraged the farmers to '*build a better you*' by keeping a positive mental attitude, to give back by serving others, and five rewards of cultivating positive relations.

A write up about the Networking Seminar and banquet was posted on the website at [www.bcgrain.com](http://www.bcgrain.com). An article and pictures of the meeting were sent to a local newspaper and published. A seminar write up and thank you to all sponsors, including PRAD and BCGIDC, was published in the April 2009 newsletter.

Producers were able to interact, exchange information, quiz speakers and bring concerns to our directors. Response forms were filled out and handed in with 95 percent positive feedback. The novel format with an afternoon meeting and the inclusion of an appreciation dinner is what drew more producers to attend the seminar.

## **Objective 2. Improve Grain & Oilseed Techniques and Technology:**

### ***Investigate new production techniques & crop technology advancements***

The BCGPA's research committee has been dedicated to ensuring that the research occurring through out the BCGPA's research department is relevant, timely, and proactive. Three members of this group attended the **Prairie Grain Development Committee** meetings in Banff, Alberta to monitor and observe the process for variety recommendation for approval for registration. The research manager and the research committee attended several meetings in

Lacombe, AB as part of the **Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA)** and are working towards establishing a crop research network in Western Canada. Vital contacts with research agencies were made which are crucial to the ongoing success of the research department.

The research committee chair is a director on the board of the **Western Grains Research Foundation**, which needs to come up with a detailed plan as to what should be done with the \$68 million dollar fund that has come from CN and CP's revenue cap overpayment by producers across Canada. BCGPA recommendation is that the money should be used to benefit growers.

Committee members have come up with several ideas for new crops for the Peace including a winter wheat trial which will be tested in the small plots in the coming year. New technologies to be tested include an agronomic trial using various rates of fertilizer.

The research committee met on several occasions throughout the year to discuss the operations of the BCGPA's research farm and made decisions for its future to ensure it is sustainable and viable. The concept for a much needed **research facility** in Dawson Creek was developed. This facility will provide an environment designed for agricultural research and allow the growing research team to do their work efficiently and accurately. Funding was obtained and the project start date is estimated for mid-May, with completion date sometime in the fall.

### ***Promote Environmental Stewardship:***

Directors of the B.C. Grain Producer's Association attended local and provincial meetings dealing with environmental stewardship. Through involvement with the B.C. Agriculture Council, BCGPA has had input into the new Agriculture Policy Framework, specifically into the continuation of the **Environmental Farm Plan program**. Provincial and federal governments are in the process of developing an extension to the current programs which were rolled out under APFI. The need was expressed for continuity and effective transition to the new program, and the Provincial Working group was granted bridge funding by the IAF Board, this allowed the EFP Delivery Groups and Planning Advisors to continue to assist producers to prepare environmental farm plans for their operations in 2008. Planners are able to do new EFP's until March 31, 2009, but no projects can be applied for until the review of Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) are complete and the funding agreements are signed by both the Federal and Provincial government.

Locally, the Pesticide and Containers collection program has been promoted. These items may be received year round from producers at Viterra in Fort St. John, with a general round up in the Peace Region slated for mid summer 2009.

### **Objective 3. Protect Producer's Income and Investments:**

#### ***Farm Income Protection***

Directors of the BCGPA attended meetings, seminars, and conferences in order to have input into policy changes and regulations regarding issues such as market access, farm income protections, and other threats to farm income.

The BCGPA sent a committee to meet with **B.C. Minister of Agriculture Hagen** in July 2008 and discussed the state of the industry and economic contributions such as the effects of the drought, high input costs, carbon tax, participating in the carbon cap and trade system, biofuel development and the development of a grain wildlife compensation program.

*Climate Action:* Board members met with the **Chair of Climate Action Secretariat** to get a grasp on what is coming our way, working together with the Climate Action Industry working group on carbon sequestration offsets, Cap & Trade and carbon tax alternative options. The Climate Action Initiative for Agriculture was initiated in 2008. It is an important initiative for agriculture – it will develop and coordinate an agricultural plan and strategies to address climate change and to ensure agriculture is part of the solution. The initiative allows agriculture to take a proactive stance in addressing climate change and should provide information and strategies to enable producers to adapt to climate change, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and take advantage of climate change opportunities. A representative of the BCGPA board is a participant in this initiative.

Representatives met throughout 2008 with several different ministers to develop carbon tax mitigation strategies. A variety of options have been developed including a revised PST system, changes to business management programs, and technical incentives to benefit agriculture.

In August, a response was prepared to the Intentions Paper released by the Ministry of Environment for public consultation regarding the criteria for Emissions Offsets for the Pacific Carbon Trust. 4 fact sheets on climate change have been created and are available to producers.

*Wildlife:* A successful roll out of the **Excreta in Grain Program** for 2008 was long fought for and producers now are able to be compensated for the cleaning of contaminated grain by wildlife. After several meetings with MAL, the development of the Standing Grain Wildlife Damage Compensation program is nearly completed for the 2009 crop year, enabling producers to be compensated for the damage done by wildlife in standing grain and fine seeds. Recommendations by the committee for the inclusion of in swath and waterfowl damage will be considered for 2010.

The Provincial Agriculture Zone Wildlife Program (PAZWP) is the primary wildlife damage mitigation program for the province and is directly linked to the MALs Agriculture Wildlife Program which administers compensation payments. In conjunction, the two ministries have developed a draft outline of a Strategic Framework for Mitigation. This framework identifies that mitigation activities must be undertaken at provincial, regional and on-farms scales. The BCGPA will continue to be involved in recommending mitigation procedures.

*Production Insurance:* Seeding deadlines and concerns over the drought adding another year of bad yield data to Production Insurance rates were communicated by the BCGPA board to Production Insurance Staff at a meeting held in February, 2009. PI policies have changed over the past 20 years and communication to the non insured membership of how to affordably protect their investments is important.

*B.C. Agriculture Council* - Through our involvement with the BCAC, the BCGPA would like to see the PST system move from its current exemption based system to a rebate system with an expanded eligibility list. It is estimated that the expanded eligibility list will save farmers in the province between \$15 and \$18 million. The Council continues to work on their concept of a revised PST system.

BCAC industry members of the APF Advisory Committee provided input at several meetings throughout the year on the bilateral negotiations for implementation of the Growing Forward federal provincial agreement. The multi-lateral framework agreement has been completed. The B.C. Agriculture Council appeared before the Farm Assessment Review Panel to provide pan-agricultural input to the process. The Councils first key message was the continued support of the ALR; including small lot agriculture. The second key message was that the BCAC does not support split classifications. They also recommended that the definition of farmer and farmed products be revisited and recommended a study into the *home and home site principle* in conjunction with a flat tax rate for all farms within the ALR. The study into the *home and home site principle* should be considered in conjunction with a possible program that delinks farm benefits from the farm assessment process. The Council had the opportunity to provide input on behalf of agriculture to the Standing Committee on Finance and Government Operations; they used the meeting to once again stress the economic importance of agriculture, the limited investment in the Ministry of Agriculture, the proposed revised PST system and the impacts of the carbon tax and possible mitigation strategies. Many of BCAC's submission points made it into the Standing Committee's final report.

*Grain Growers of Canada:* Irmgard Critcher, President of BCGPA attended GGC meetings throughout the year. Involvement in this national group of agricultural organizations has afforded access to policy making processes and discussion of national issues such as amendments to the Transportation act, introducing government Bills to deal with barley marketing and CWB director elections, and amendments to the Canadian Grain Commission and Kernel Visual Distinguishability. Representatives from this group appear before the Senate and House of

Commons Standing Committees on Agriculture to ensure that the producer's position is heard. BCGPA's involvement with the GGC brings affiliation with its other members, such as the Canadian Canola Growers Association and the Canola Council of Canada.

*Canadian Canola Growers Association:* A BCGPA director, Ross Ravelli, was the president of the CCGA for the past year. Even as the new Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization (CAIS) program gets underway, CCGA initiated a study by noted Cornell University Professor Calum Turvey – “Development of a **New Risk Management Program for Canadian Grains and Oilseed Producers**”. Preliminary results are showing positive results for a program based on a whole farm approach and current market prices – GRIP styled program.

CCGA continues to work closely, thru membership, with the Canola Council of Canada, Grain Growers of Canada (and its members), Canadian Agri Food Alliance, Canadian Renewable Fuel Association, Vegetable Oil Industry Collision (VOIC) and in cooperation with numerous provincial and federal governments and departments.

The CCGA, which administers the **Canola Cash Advance Program**, has seen a steady increase in both applications and in cash advances. For the first time ever CCGA had to apply to the federal government to raise our loan guarantee – 2008 has seen demand grow to over \$500 million! CCGA has further asked the Federal Government to increase the No Interest limit to \$150,000 per producer and the overall cap to \$500,000 (BCGPA sent letter in support), both are needed as farms grow and costs have increased significantly. Unfortunately, assistance by government was turned down.

*NorthEast Energy and Mines Advisory Committee (NEEMAC):* Representation on NEEMAC has been helpful for putting in place the Landowner Notification Pilot program, which shows potential if done the right way. A soil erosion mitigation method of using a narrower bucket to dig trenches has been put in place; a new pipeline abandonment requirement policy is now in effect and currently being tested with its first case, and an agreement has been reached between industry and landowners on a standard lease agreement which is nearly ready to be released.

### ***Ensure Market Accessibility***

The BCGPA has many concerns over issues which affect the transportation of farm product to market. Concerns identified to Ministry of Local Transportation included the need for ditches to be excavated more often for better drainage and the clearing of brush and tall grass. Also noted was that although the paving of existing rural roads was a very good improvement, they should have been built wider to accommodate agricultural and oilfield equipment. Many roads have not been built for increased traffic, with a need for more grading, gravel and dust control. Attention was also given to the difficulty that there seems to be no reporting process in place for problem areas and attention is only given when a producer complains long enough. Through the **Rural Road Task Force**, the BCGPA requested a system be put in place for the reporting of dangerous areas and be given reassurance that action will be taken in a timely manner. A board member is now on the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC).

On the Federal Transportation level the Canadian Canola Growers Association was a major player in getting agreement for the **level of service review** for the rail system, canola sales have and continue to be lost because of rail “problems” and we will continue to press for effectual changes that will be contained in the review.

## **Objective 4. Promote Peace Region's Grain and Oilseed Industry:**

### ***Investigate New Markets & Follow up on Existing Opportunities***

After developing two successful grain quality and safety assurance pilot programs, the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) will formally launch its voluntary CGC Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Canadian Identity Preserved Recognition System (CIPRS) programs in March 2009. CGC HACCP program certifies a grain company's food safety processes. The system works to identify and manage the risks. Industry is in support of programs

that are voluntary, market driven, flexible and that they are beneficial to producers, if this is maintained it will be a great tool for specialty crops, to respond to market pull.

*Biofuels:* In July, the Climate Action Initiative Committee (on which one BCGPA board member is a representative) prepared an Expression of Interest that was submitted to the B.C. Bioenergy Network for a province-wide biomass inventory for the agri-food sector. If a proposal is encouraged and supported, this inventory would provide detailed information regarding the potential for bioenergy production from agricultural and processing residues which presents a significant opportunity for British Columbia's primary agricultural producers and food processors.

B.C. is going to require oil companies to comply with new carbon emission regulations at the pumps to meet climate change requirements and will need biodiesel to blend with fuel to meet these new regulations. This will come into effect January, 2010, so this should result in a demand for B.C. Peace oilseeds.

The CCGA, as a full member of the Renewable Fuels Association (CRFA) continues to work with governments at all levels to ensure we do have a renewable fuels industry in Canada, one that benefits not only farmers but consumers, retailers and producers as well. Biofuels inclusion rates have been agreed to; standards have been set however what is now needed in the investment in building biofuel plants. Given the wild fluctuation in commodity prices, the meltdown of the world economies recently and all that goes with this; it will be hard to secure funding for multi million dollar plants. CCGA continues to support many provincial demonstration programs and to promote the biofuels benefits to consumers. Should a biofuel plant be built in the B.C. Peace in the near future, it would provide a practical destination for many neighboring crops, benefiting local producers and the environment alike.

## **Summary comments, conclusions:**

Current events in the agricultural industry demand the ongoing attention of those who wish to see our industry thrive. The directors and/or members of the B.C. Grain Producers Association have had a very busy and productive year attending many meetings, seminars, workshops and presentations locally, throughout the province and across the country to stay up-to-date on issues impacting the grain & oilseed industry in the B.C. Peace Region. The directors have met and received feedback from local producers on a regular basis and have brought their concerns forward to appropriate organizations and/or government agencies in a timely and professional manner. They have continued to build on current communication systems to bridge the gap between local producers and organizations, government and non-governmental agencies and the general public. The small but mighty voice of the B.C. Peace has been heard and will continue to be heard through the remaining years of this program.

## **Attachments:**

Newspaper articles  
Agenda for Networking Seminar  
BCGPA newsletters  
Financial report: budget vs. actual  
2009 Pocket Planner