



TEAMALBERTA

SUSTAINABILITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND THE CARBON TAX



Team Alberta looks forward to working with a government that is dedicated to supporting Alberta's crop sector.

Alberta's farmers are at the forefront of sustainable environmental management and are continually improving the efficiency of their businesses while reducing their impact on the land and air. The majority of the changes that have led to these achievements have been implemented in an absence of government policy; farmers care about environmental sustainability because their livelihood depends on healthy, fertile land, and because they want future generations to have the same opportunities for growth.

In this context, Team Alberta believes that:

- Policy should focus on changes that make good business sense and which will have a positive environmental impact.
- New and well-designed carbon offset protocols are necessary to continue to engage the crop sector. Dedicated funding from Emissions Reduction Alberta could go to protocol development and other emissions reducing projects in the crop sector.
- We are keen to begin work in this area and to define opportunities for growers so that conservation cropping and other protocols can continue to be a solution to increase market opportunities and recognize producers for their ecological services.
- The carbon levy is unfairly penalizing farmers who are not recognized for their sequestration of carbon in the absence of government regulation. Farmers have adopted a number of emissions reducing technologies and practices, often at significant cost, and these must be taken into account when applying the carbon levy.
- Further exemptions on fuel sources used in on-farm activities like grain drying, irrigation, and heating must be extended to recognize farmers' positive environmental contributions and the trade-exposed nature of their businesses.

Sustainability

Team Alberta has worked closely with the Alberta government to assess the readiness of Alberta's crop sector to respond to increasing demands of multinationals for sustainable sourcing along their supply chains. In March of 2018, we launched a collaborative platform which acts as a self-assessment tool to allow farmers to gauge their areas of strengths and weakness with respect to relevant sustainable sourcing schemes and provides a plan of action along with resources which will allow the farmer to improve specific practices. Farmsustainability.com is part of an ongoing collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Team Alberta.



Climate Change Mitigation

For decades, farmers have made continuous improvements in beneficial management practices, investments in machinery and technologies, and a constant commitment to environmental stewardship. These improvements happened in the absence of government regulation, and have led to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from the crop sector.

Farmers have significantly increased the amount of carbon that is removed from the atmosphere and stored or 'sequestered' in the soil. This was achieved over decades because of a strong commitment to address soil degradation through continuous and voluntary improvements in land management practices such as conservation tillage, adoption of precision agriculture, increased nitrogen-use efficiency and improvements in diesel engine combustion.

Growers have increased their productivity at twice the rate of increases in emissions and as of 2000 Canadian agricultural soils sequestered more carbon than they emitted. Allowing agricultural soils to sequester carbon produced from other industrial processes. Nonetheless, climate change policy of provincial and federal jurisdictions has yet to recognize or account for these carbon cycle balances and acknowledge natural climate solutions through wetland protection, vegetative buffer strips along riparian areas, and other climate change mitigating solutions being implemented on farm.

The crop sector is sequestering more carbon than it emits and has been recognized for the potential to further contribute to the government's climate change objectives. Alberta's carbon offset system could see a significant increase in demand. The most effective protocol to date has been the Conservation Cropping Protocol which is set to expire in 2021. Currently, farmers participation in the offset program has been declining due to challenges with well-defined communications on the opportunity (e.g. NERP), and impractical compliance measures (e.g. CCP)

The Carbon Tax

Policies that seek to reduce greenhouse gases should consider the impact of the policy on a producer's economic viability. Alberta farmers are trade-exposed price-takers in the global marketplace. Regulations that increase the cost of critical inputs, such as fuel and fertilizer, are borne entirely by farmers which negatively impacts the economic sustainability of farming and our competitiveness across regional, federal and international jurisdictions.

Farmers are seeing an erosion to their competitiveness through rising costs, increasingly related to the usage of propane and natural gas in grain conditioning (grain drying) and irrigation, which are practices forecasted to be essential to adapting to future increases in excessive moisture or drought conditions as climate and weather patterns change. These tools must continue to be available and affordable for producers so that they are well positioned to adapt to future climate change and overcome difficulties presented by extreme weather events.

Farmers should be exempt from the carbon levy and the exemption on marked fuel should be extended to all on-farm energy sources so that Alberta's farmers are not put at a competitive disadvantage and so they are able to continue to adapt and respond to the changing demands of their local climates.

Team Alberta advocates for a revenue neutral carbon tax. Improving other environmentally focused regulations and policies (e.g. carbon offsets) is key to having a real impact on our environment. The tax generated from agricultural systems should be measured and allocated to research into emission reduction technologies and climate change adaptation practices, not put into general revenue or urban programming.



Team Alberta represents a working collaboration between four of Alberta's crop commissions: Alberta Barley, Alberta Canola, Alberta Pulse Growers and the Alberta Wheat Commission.

We work together with the aim to provide input to policy makers, ensure long-term access to markets, promote the sustainability of the crop sector, and advocate on behalf of farmers while enabling grass-roots advocacy by our farmer members themselves.