



Barley, canola, pulse, and winter wheat commissions team up to promote the value of producer check-off dollars

August 31, 2009 (Calgary, Alta.) -- The Alberta Barley Commission, the Alberta Canola Producers Commission the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission, and the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission are partnering in a campaign to promote the value of check-off dollars from producers. The campaign emphasizes the ongoing benefits barley, pulse and winter wheat growers —and their customers—realize from check-off dollars.

Check-off dollars, or service charges, are legislated by the provincial government and provide the main ongoing source of revenue for the agricultural commissions to serve the interests of their respective producers. By law, anyone who purchases barley, pulse, winter wheat and canola in Alberta (as well as soft wheat) must be licensed and deduct check-off dollars from their payments to producers and then submit these funds to the respective commissions.

The four commissions use check-off dollars to leverage government and industry funding. The commissions then attract as much as \$7.80 for every \$1.00 of producer check-off funds, to, in turn be used to develop new crop varieties with improved disease and pest resistance, improve and refine agronomic practices and develop new domestic and export markets.

"Check-off dollars are the single most important way producers can invest in their industry," says Sheri Strydhorst, executive director of the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission. "Government and industry partners are much more likely to support our research, development, and marketing and risk management projects when they see producers investing their check-off dollars in priority areas."

While the remittance rate of check-off dollars to the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission and the Alberta Canola Producers Commission is above 90 percent, the Alberta Barley Commission and the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission estimate that last year alone almost 50 per cent of potential check-off dollars were not submitted on barley and winter wheat. In a move to better support the industry, the Alberta Barley Commission increased its check-off to \$1/tonne (up from \$0.50/tonne) on Aug. 1, 2009 (The check-off to the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission and the Alberta Canola Producers Commission is also \$1/tonne). The check-off to the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission is one per cent of the value of pulses sold.

Only a small percentage of the producers whose check-off dollars are submitted to their respective commissions request a refund, says Mike Leslie, CEO of the Alberta Barley Commission. "The vast majority see benefits beyond immediate returns. Our goal now is to see more check-off dollars remitted to continue to expand those returns."

"Check-off dollars help us to do the things we need to do to ensure our crops are financially viable and environmentally sustainable in Alberta," says Rick Istead, executive director of the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission. "They are an important way to help agriculture in our province meet the needs of our local customers and to compete in international markets."

"Check-off dollars improve the long-term profitability of farmers in Alberta," says Ward Toma, general manager of the Alberta Canola Producers Commission. "These funds give farmers a variety of educational opportunities such as research tours, regional meetings and the FarmTech conference." He notes that, in part, the four commissions host and organize FarmTech, Western Canada's premier crop production and farm management conference.

The check-off dollars campaign will run from August and into the early part of 2010. It includes ads in each of the commissions' newsletters and materials for distribution at trade shows, regional meetings and other industry events.

The Alberta Barley Commission (www.albertabarley.com) is a not-for-profit organization funded, directed and controlled by its members – Alberta's 17,000 barley producers. On behalf of its membership, the commission coordinates and sponsors research, assists in market development, enables technology transfer and represents barley producers in policy development.

The Alberta Canola Producers Commission (www.canola.ab.ca), founded in 1989, was the province's first refundable check-off producer organization. The mandate of the ACPC, reflected in its mission statement, is to increase the long-term profitability of Alberta canola growers through research, promotional activities, consumer and producer education programs, and policy development. The ACPC in no way regulates or is involved with the production, buying or selling of canola.

The Alberta Pulse Growers Commission (www.albertapulse.ab.ca) is a producer-driven, not-for-profit organization established in 1989 to represent the interests of Alberta's 4,500 pulse growers. Pulse crops grown in Alberta include field peas, dry beans, chickpeas, lentils and faba beans.

A member-driven organization, the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission (www.wintercereals.ca) is dedicated to representing and advancing the interests of the province's winter wheat growers. Our organization and its leaders are committed to partnerships, stewardship, sustainability and marketability. We work throughout our industry to ensure winter wheat benefits our producers, customers and consumers.

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