

Agricultural Service Board Bulletin

January 2025

AGRIINVEST 2025—ALBERTA EFP

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Did you know?

- Canada is the world’s 8th largest exporter of agri-food, fish and seafood products.
- In 2023, 168 egg farms in Alberta produced nearly one billion eggs (82,260,116 million dozen).
- In 2022, Alberta’s agricultural exports totaled over \$16.1 billion.
- The agriculture and agri-food sector employs 2.3 million people in Canada, or 1/9 of all jobs. About 69,000 Albertans are employed in the agricultural sector.
- Apples, blueberries, and grapes make up over 80% of Canada’s fruit acreage.
- Ontario accounts for 80% of Canada’s egg production.
- Peter Pond, an American cartographer and founding member of the North West company is often credited as the first farmer in Alberta, with his garden plots at Lake Athabasca in 1778.

Navigating AgrInvest’s New Requirements with Alberta EFP

The recent updates to the AgrInvest program introduce new requirements for certain farming operations. If your farm’s average Allowable Net Sales (ANS) over the past three years is \$1 million or more, you’ll need to complete an eligible agri-environmental risk assessment to continue participating in the program. While this change may feel overwhelming, it’s also a chance to enhance the sustainability, efficiency, and competitiveness of your operation.

At the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan (EFP), we’re here to help you navigate these requirements.

Why Alberta EFP?

Completing an Environmental Farm Plan through Alberta EFP does more than meet AgrInvest requirements. It’s an opportunity to improve your farm’s long-term sustainability, efficiency, and value. By participating in the program, you’re taking proactive steps to protect your land, strengthen your business, and contribute to a sustainable agricultural future.

Let us help you stay compliant and competitive. Reach out today—our team is here to support you every step of the way!

Understanding Agri-Environmental Risk Assessments

Agri-environmental risk assessments are designed to identify environmental risks on farms and provide practical tools to mitigate them. By completing an assessment, producers gain guidance on improving farm health and safety, increasing property value, reducing costs, and boosting overall competitiveness.

Several recognized standards qualify as agri-environmental risk assessments, including:

- Environmental Farm Plan (Alberta EFP)
- Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB)
- Sustainable Beef Production Standard
- Certified Organic Standards
- Nutrient Management Plans (including manure management and those created by 4R Certified Experts)
- Other provincial or regional agri-environmental assessments, such as Saskatchewan’s and Quebec’s standards

If you’re unsure which option fits your farm’s needs, the Alberta EFP program offers a streamlined and prac-

tical solution for producers in the province and can be customized to your operation.

Streamlining Your AgrInvest Participation

One Environmental Farm Plan is sufficient for your operation, regardless of the number of AgrInvest accounts associated with it. Ensure your letter of completion or certificate lists all members linked to the AgrInvest account.

Your EFP is valid for 10 years from its approval date. This date can be found on your certificate and letter of completion, both of which are emailed to you upon approval of your EFP workbook. If you need to retrieve these documents, they are accessible in the “My Documents” tab of your EFP account.

Practical Tips for Compliance

When making deposits into your AgrInvest account, you’ll need to attest that your operation has a valid agri-environmental risk assessment. While the certificate itself may not be required during the deposit process, you should keep it on hand, as it may be requested later.

If the name on your EFP certificate doesn’t match your AgrInvest account, reach out to Alberta EFP staff to resolve the discrepancy. Our team is ready to assist with updates and any other questions you may have.

Support and Resources

Your designated EFP technician is your first point of contact for personalized support. Their contact information is available on your EFP webbook account. Alternatively, our staff can be reached at info@albertaefp.com or 587-200-2552.

For more details on the AgrInvest program updates, visit the official Agriculture Canada resource page (<https://tinyurl.com/2dx9ztuh>).



S-CAP WATER PROGRAM—ON-FARM WATER SUPPLY STREAM

The Water Program supports agricultural water management by helping primary producers adopt agriculture water better management practices and priority actions. This supports better management of risks to water quality and supplies, adaptation to climate variability and the efficient use of water resources.

Eligibility (On-Farm Water Supply Stream)

An applicant must be a primary producer that:

- is responsible for input costs for agricultural crops or livestock producing at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually, but does not include a landlord whose only interest in the crop or livestock is that of ownership of the land
- is liable to pay Alberta income tax or corporate tax (or claim losses) on income from the production of farm commodities under the *Income Tax Act* (Canada) or the *Alberta Corporate Tax Act*.

Funding And Eligible Projects

There is limited funding under this program each fiscal year so funding is not guaranteed. If your application is not approved, you will not be reimbursed for any expenses associated with your project. All expenses prior to April 1, 2023, are ineligible.

Funding maximums are project-specific under the On-Farm Water Supply Stream, with a cost-share of up to 50% of eligible expenses for standard incentive projects and varying levels for special incentive projects.

Eligible projects include (but are not limited to):

- Construction of a new well or reconstruction of an existing well
- New construction or expansion of an existing dugout
- New spring development
- Tie-in to a multi-user water supply pipeline (eg: municipal supply pipeline)
- Off-source livestock watering systems
- Well decommissioning

See the Water Program website for full project funding eligibility and terms and conditions.

For dugouts, dams and spring developments under the On-Farm Water Supply Stream, applicants must speak to an Agriculture and Irrigation Water Specialist and receive an approved Construction Sheet prior to planning and construction. This will confirm the proposed project meets legislative and program requirements.

How To Learn More & Apply

Visit the S-CAP Water Program page at <https://www.alberta.ca/water-program> for full eligibility details, terms and conditions, and the application materials. You can also call 310-FARM(3276) or email farmwater-supply@gov.ab.ca for more information about the program.

COUNTY POLICY CHANGES TAKING EFFECT

As of December 9, 2024 a number of County Environmental Services policies have been updated. Here's what you need to know (changes or additions are marked in italics).

Policy ESA 005—Roadside Spraying & Mowing

"4. The following areas are NOT to be sprayed:

- b) Alongside planted shelterbelts, sensitive crops such as canola, potatoes, alfalfa, clover, peas and other if wind direction is not favorable. *When the wind is not favorable application can be made to these areas at a maximum distance of 6 metres (20') or if the crop is flowering a maximum of 3.35 metres (11').* "

The addition of the maximum spraying distances is in an effort to reduce or eliminate unintentional off-target spray drift damage.

Policy ESA 015—Beaver Dam Removal

Policy ESA 015 was rescinded and the beaver dam removal program (via blasting) was ended.

Policy ESA 018—Weed Inspection & Enforcement Protocols

"The minimal acceptable standard allowed for cultivation and planting of annual and perennial crops adjacent to a right-of-way will be one metre set back from the "Toe" of the slope (bottom of the ditch) of the developed road.

Any landowner/occupant agriculturally encroaching upon a right-of-way *may* be notified to stay a minimum of one metre from the "Toe" of the slope or further, dependent upon how it impacts the integrity of the road.

Any crops found within the right-of-way as a result of non-compliance by the landowner/occupant, may be removed as part of the County's regular vegetation control program."

The preceding was added to the policy in February of 2020 and will be implemented starting in 2025. Notification of this implementation will be included in County and ASB bulletins and social media through spring of 2025 as well as spring assessment notices. Further notification afterwards will be determined on a case-by-case basis. **As notification of all producers in the County will at that point be considered complete, any crops planted within the right-of-way in the 2025 growing season and subsequent growing seasons may be subject to removal by the County mowing and/or spraying programs without further notice.**

The policy change means that producers are required to not seed any annual crops or forages in the ditches along roadways, staying at least 1 metre back from the bottom of the ditch. Any plants seeded in this area may be controlled or destroyed by the County mowing and/or spraying programs. Anything seeded on the landowner's property rather than in the ditch will not be subject to control or destruction under this policy change and may carry on as usual.

If you are renting land you own to a producer, please ensure that they are also aware of this policy change.

Still Have Questions?

For more information regarding these policy changes, a copy of the full updated Environmental Services policies document or any policy within, clarification, or any other inquiries, please contact Director of Environmental Services Jeff Cosens at 403-882-3211 or email jcosens@countypaintearth.ca.

PLASTIC AG CONTAINER RECYCLING CHANGES

The following program changes are a CleanFarms and Province of Alberta initiative.

Recycling <23L pesticide & fertilizer containers: please drop off at Clean-farms AG RETAIL collection sites

As the Cleanfarms jug collection program in the province transitions from municipal to retail collection sites, the ag jug collection depot at Paintearth Regional Waste Management transfer sites will be closed as of January 1, 2025, but it's still easy and important for you to recycle these containers.

Recycling matters – not just for households but in our work lives too. And local farmers have proved that by bringing their empty <23L pesticide and fertilizer jugs to the Cleanfarms ag recycling depot at for several years now. Recycling ag plastics helps keep local farms clean and tidy and preserves farms for future generations at the same time as it promotes sustainability throughout our community. Not only that, but once recycled, these jugs go on to live a new life - and could come back as agricultural drain tile, or fence posts or even plastic pallets. It all adds up and we're grateful to farmers for all your hard work!

New ag plastics collection site location for jugs

Cleanfarms has initiated a program to transition its ag jug collection sites through the province, to local retail collections. These are sites where farmers may already bring back non-deposit bulk containers and seed, pesticide and inoculant bags.

With that, effective January 1, 2025, the ag plastic recycling depots at Coronation, Castor, and Halkirk are no longer accepting empty ag jugs.

Find out where to recycle your empty ag jugs

Please check with your local ag retailer to find out if they are accepting empty jugs for recycling yet. Cleanfarms also posts maps of all collection site locations on its website (but notes that there may be a bit of catch up as new collection sites come on stream).

Does this change how you recycle jugs?

It's the same process: when empty, triple or pressure rinse your jug, discard booklets and labels as much as possible and return caps to the jugs.

You'll want to pick up a FREE ag collection bag from your ag retailer to store your jugs in. Once full, tie it securely with rope, twine or a twist tie and you're ready to bring it to your retail collection site at no charge.

Does this change affect other recycling here?

No. The only change is the drop off location for empty <23 L pesticide and fertilizer containers. Thank you for recycling!

We're proud of the work we've all done to recycle ag jugs here and we thank you for participating in this program to help keep this community clean. Regardless of where you take your jugs in the future, know that your efforts are valuable to this community and we appreciate the work you do.

For more information

To find out where to recycle, visit:

Alberta – <https://csmmap.cleanfarms.ca>

To find out more about Cleanfarms ag recycling programs go to cleanfarms.ca or email info@cleanfarms.ca.

TIPS FOR MANAGING BEEF CATTLE IN COLD WEATHER

The following is adapted from the Beef Cattle Research Council's blog post titled "Baby, It's Cold Outside—Six Tips For Managing Beef Cattle In Cold Weather". To read the full article and see the accompanying infographics, visit <https://tinyurl.com/3zvhxtx4>.

Winter has rolled in across Canada, bringing snow, freezing rain and chilling winds. As temperatures drop, it is important to monitor how cattle are coping with the cold and how it is impacting their ability to remain productive.

Tip #1 – Provide Weather Protection

It is important to remember that when wintering beef cattle, they experience wind chill effects just like people do. The effectiveness of a windbreak is only as good as the design chosen, which is determined by factors such as the number of animals utilizing the structure and the prevailing wind direction(s). A general recommendation is 1 foot of fence length for each cow.

Tip #2 – Water Access is Key

Inadequate access to water during cold weather will limit feed intake and reduce a cow's ability to meet its energy requirements. This results in reduced production performance and a loss of body condition.

Tip #3 – Put a Focus on Body Condition

One of the easiest ways to reduce cold stress in cattle is to ensure adequate body condition before winter's onset. Thin cattle do not have fat reserves and require more feed than cows in good body condition in order to tolerate the cold winter months.

Tip #4 – Include Added Energy in the Diet

Energy is typically the most limiting nutrient in winter rations. A general rule of thumb is to provide an extra 1 lb (0.45 kg) of grain or pellets per day for every 5 degrees the temperature is below -20 degrees Celsius at midday.

Tip #5 – Provide Sufficient Bedding

Bedding provides a layer of insulation between the cold ground or snow and the animal, which is crucial to help prevent frostbite, hypothermia and death.

Tip #6 – Frequently Monitor Weather Conditions and How Cattle Are Responding

Weather conditions can change rapidly, leading to compromised water access and rendering windbreaks ineffective. Have plans in place for periods of extreme cold weather and watch for signs of cold stress in your cattle.

County of Paintearth No. 18
Box 509
Castor, AB T0C 0X0
Phone: (403) 882-3211
www.countypaintearth.ca



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Have an event or article suggestion? Email tkerr@countypaintearth.ca to have it included in the next issue!

Test Your Knowledge

1. Your EFP is valid for ____ from its approval date.
2. The S-CAP Water Program will fund up to ____% of eligible expenses.*
3. Clubroot is now present in how many Alberta counties?
4. As of ____ date, PRWM sites are no longer accepting empty ag jugs.
5. What is the general recommendation for wind-break length?
6. **How far back must producers keep planting back from the tow of a ditch slope?**
7. Expenses prior to ____ are not eligible under the S-CAP Water Program On-Farm Water Supply Stream.

Test Your Knowledge Answers

1. 10 years
2. 50%.* on standard incen-tive projects
3. 47 of the 66 total
4. January 1, 2025
5. 1 ft. of fence for each cow
6. One meter
7. April 1, 2023

NEW CLUBROOT PATHOTYPES EMERGING IN THE PRAIRIES

The following is adapted from *The Western Producer's* article titled "Clubroot fights back with increased pathotypes" published December 18, 2024. To view the original article, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2hvvnsky>. To learn more about clubroot, visit the Canola Council of Canada's clubroot.ca.

There are now 55 different types of clubroot across the Prairies.

About a decade ago, in 2016, the number of pathotypes was 17.

The increasing number of variants of the soil-borne disease is a concern, but canola growers need to remember that most of these pathotypes are rare, said Steve Strelkov, a plant pathologist at the University of Alberta. "It (the population) is still dominated by a handful of pathotypes," said Strelkov.

Strelkov said he and other researchers at the U of A and the provincial government looked at 691 canola fields in Alberta this year [2024] and found clubroot in 307 of them. Of that, 167 cases were in fields with no history of the disease. It is now present in 47 of Alberta's 66 counties and municipal districts.

While clubroot continues to spread in the province, the number of detections in Saskatchewan and Manitoba is relatively low:

- From 2008-23, only 82 fields had confirmed cases of clubroot in Saskatchewan

- From 2009-19, there were 35 confirmed cases in Manitoba.
- In Alberta, from 2005-24, there have been 4,190 fields with cases of clubroot.

The difference in magnitude between Alberta and the other provinces is massive. It could be connected to soil pH because clubroot spores prefer acidic soil. "In Alberta, we have a much higher percentage of acidic soils," Strelkov said.

Alkaline soils can reduce the severity of clubroot, but it doesn't stop the disease or prevent symptoms on canola plants, says the canola council website. "While the risk may be lower, high pH does not mean immunity. Plus, pH is often highly variable in a field. Fields can have patches with lower pH, and clubroot could take hold within those patches."

Another explanation for the rarity of clubroot in Manitoba and Saskatchewan is that the disease arrived in those provinces five years later than Alberta. By that time, around 2009, canola breeders and the seed industry had developed hybrids with genetic resistance to clubroot.

The increasing number of clubroot pathotypes in Alberta could simply be evolution as the soil disease responds to canola that has genetic resistance.

"By growing those resistant varieties, we're maybe selecting for a rare element of the (clubroot) population," Strelkov said.

UPCOMING EFP WORKSHOP—BRRG

Ready to Level Up Your Farm's Sustainability?

Join us for the Environmental Farm Plan Workshop on January 28 at the Castor Community Hall!

Before attending, create your EFP account at www.albertaefp.com.

Bring a laptop or tablet to work on your plan.

Register at <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/kftzt5y> or by calling the Battle River Research Group at 780-582-7308.

View more upcoming events at <https://www.battleriverresearch.com/events>.

ENVIRONMENT FARM PLAN WORKSHOP

The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan covers an entire farm using a self-assessment tool to help producers identify their on-farm environmental risks. At the completion of the program, the farmer has an itemized list of adjustments that can be made in their operation. The EFP is a useful tool for analyzing a farming operation and guiding changes as time and resources allow. Having a completed EFP Certificate is a pre-requisite for many grants and funding available to producers.

Before attending the workshop, ensure the following:

- Create an EFP account if you don't have one already at www.albertaefp.com.
- Kindly bring a laptop or tablet to facilitate working on the EFP.

JANUARY 28 10 AM LUNCH PROVIDED
CASTOR COMMUNITY HALL
(4912 49 AVE, CASTOR, AB T0C 0X0)

REGISTER ONLINE AT www.battleriverresearch.com
CALL AT (780 582 7308)