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Agricultural Society initiatives will encourage youth leadership

Local programs key to involving young people in agriculture

Edmonton... The Government of Alberta is working with Agricultural Societies to support leadership development activities for the next generation of producers, farm safety programs and ongoing initiatives within their communities.

"In today's diverse agriculture sector there are a variety of career options available to young Albertans, both on and off the farm," said Evan Berger, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. "Currently, the average age of Alberta's producers is 51; we need to change that. This additional funding of \$2 million will help support local programs that encourage our youth to become involved in our agriculture industry."

The seven regional Agricultural Societies (Grande Prairie, Camrose, Lloydminster, Red Deer, Olds, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge) will each receive \$142,850, totaling nearly \$1 million, 10 per cent of which must be directly used for agricultural youth leadership development or initiatives such as scholarships, training or youth development activities. The funding can also be used to enhance farm safety programming.

Alberta's 284 local Agricultural Societies, who are in good standing, will receive \$2,500 each to be used for activity-based agricultural youth leadership development activities or farm safety programming. The remaining dollars from the \$1 million granted to local societies will be used to strengthen activity-based funding for the 2011-12 year.

In 2010, each Primary Ag Society received a one-time grant of \$2,500 from the Alberta government, to use for farm safety events and activities in their community. Projects ranged from ad campaigns to safety plans/initiatives, incorporating farm safety in 4-H programs and trade show booths. Several societies combined their funding and developed joint programming. This approach was successful in increasing awareness of the importance of farm safety and it is believed the same success can be achieved in helping develop our agriculture industry's next generation of producers, leaders and entrepreneurs.

For more information on agricultural youth leadership development or the Farm Safety Program visit <http://agriculture.alberta.ca>.

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