

Things to do

Determine your farm-water requirements and identify the potential of your water system.

Plan cropping and water supply strategies that will respond to your needs.

Consider alternate uses for your crops if you are impacted by dry conditions.

Read Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's Drought Reports available on Ropin' the Web (www.agric.gov.ab.ca) on a regular basis.

Stay informed, through Agriculture Financial Services Corporation's (AFSC) website (www.afsc.ca) and Ropin' the Web.

Call the Ag-Info Centre toll free at 310-FARM (3276).

Complete and update your marketing plan to respond to differing market conditions.

Research water conservation techniques and drought-resistant crops.

Use cost/benefit worksheets to determine whether you should consider reducing your livestock inventory.

Participate in a crop insurance program to cover the business risk of growing crops that may be affected by dry conditions. Visit www.afsc.ca for more information.

Develop an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) to help identify and address environmental risks and opportunities in your operation. For more information, visit www.albertaefp.com.

Water supply planning

Plan a water system that will last for generations. A resource to assist with this is "Water Wells That Last For Generations", located on Ropin' the Web.

Develop and maintain your dugout water system so that it meets your needs for years to come. An example of a useful resource is the "Quality Farm Dugouts" workbook (call toll-free 1-800-292-5697 to obtain a copy).

Alberta Environment provides Groundwater Observation Well Data for the public at www.environment.alberta.ca, which monitors groundwater levels in aquifers across Alberta.

Agriculture and AgriFood Canada (AAFC) provides current information about climatic variability, its impact on water supply and agriculture, and promotes effective drought management strategies. Visit www.agr.gc.ca or by call (306) 780-7012.

ARD assists AAFC in designating areas for the tax deferral benefit. The benefit is for producers who may have to sell their breeding herd due to a lack of livestock feed. Visit www.agr.gc.ca for more information.

Any full-time Alberta agricultural producer experiencing water shortages for domestic and livestock use can apply to use equipment provided through the ARD Water Pumping Program. Visit www.agric.gov.ab.ca for more information.

Maintain a forage inventory

Keep track of the amount and availability of each type of forage, including inventories in silos and other storage areas. Determine a source of emergency feed.

Plant a field shelterbelt

Properly planned shelterbelts provide many benefits. They reduce wind, control blowing snow, protect livestock, buildings and gardens, and trap snow for dugouts. Shelterbelts also provide habitat for wildlife and beautify the farmyard. For more information visit AAFC's Agri-Environmental Services Branch at www.agr.gc.ca.

Manage soil moisture

Soil moisture is a valuable indicator of drought potential because it shows the reserve of water available to the crop at a given point in time. Appropriate soil moisture management methods include:

- leaving crop residue and stubble on fields
- using crop rotation methods
- using direct seeding and zero-tillage.

To find out more about the costs and benefits of direct seeding, please contact 310-FARM.

Crop selection

Plan ahead, for example, plant crops that could be used as pasture or silage, such as oats, barley, winter wheat or fall rye.

Assess fertilizer carryover

Unused nutrients such as phosphorus, potassium and sulphur from last year may be available for this year's crop. Contact your laboratory fertilizer dealer, private laboratory or crop advisor regarding packing and shipping instructions for soil samples.

DROUGHT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

In 2002, a year that went on record as the driest in the province's history, the multi-agency Alberta Drought Management Committee (ADMC) was formed to plan for managing drought risk. Recent revisions ensure that information is up to date.

The committee's plan is known by its acronym, the ADRMP, which stands for Agriculture Drought Risk Management Plan.

The ADRMP recognizes a need for a consistent and coordinated approach to planning for and responding to drought.

The ADRMP provides strategic options for preparing for drought, monitoring and reporting conditions, mitigating the effects of drought, and AFSC offers risk management programs.

ADMC partners

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) www.agr.gc.ca/pfra
- Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) www.agric.gov.ab.ca
- Alberta Environment www.environment.gov.ab.ca
- Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) www.afsc.ca
- Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMD&C) <http://www.aamdc.com/>

Contact:

Policy, Strategy and Intergovernmental Affairs
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
(780) 422-9167 or toll-free at 310-0000.

Recurring dry conditions is part of Alberta's climate and can have serious impacts on the province's agriculture industry.

Preparing for dry conditions

Year-round efforts can help the agricultural community be better prepared for the next drought. For more information visit Ropin' the Web.

Reporting dry conditions

Drought Reports for the Agricultural Region of Alberta are available on Ropin' the Web.

Alberta has a network of over 200 weather-monitoring stations, with more stations planned. A variety of maps is available in the AgroClimatic Information System (ACIS) section of Ropin' the Web.

Response to dry conditions

A drought response toolbox could include:

- AgriInsurance
- AgriStability
- AgriRecovery
- Water Pumping Program
- Improved tax deferral recommendations

For more information, visit Ropin' the Web at www.agric.gov.ab.ca or call 310-FARM.

PREPARING FOR AND MANAGING DURING DRY CONDITIONS IN ALBERTA



Alberta is no stranger to dry conditions. When there are consecutive seasons of low moisture, farmers face a constant battle to maintain crop yields and manage livestock feed.