

## South Saskatchewan Regional Plan Strategy 1.5 Reporting

### 1.5 Support and enhance the next generation of agricultural, food and rural entrepreneurs

Supporting new generations of agricultural, food, and rural entrepreneurs is important to the continued vitality, growth and diversification of the agriculture sector. Currently, more farmers are retiring than entering the agriculture industry, and competing career opportunities are resulting in consolidation of farms and declining populations in rural Alberta. Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF) monitors census data on farm population and average age of farm operators, and puts efforts into attracting new entrants into agriculture and agrifood industries by offering support specific to their needs. These supports include government-funded loan programs, training and enhanced extension services. The following information provides a brief overview of AF's work in support of Strategy 1.5 in the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan.

#### Green Certificate Program

The Green Certificate Program (GCP) facilitates the entrance of secondary school graduates either directly into the agriculture workforce or into post-secondary agricultural studies. The GCP focuses on workforce development in the primary agriculture production sector. The program assists in the development of a skilled, safe and trained agricultural labor work force. AF works in partnership with the agriculture industry and Alberta Education (via the off campus education policy) to offer the GCP to all young Albertans. Annually, AF provides \$362,000 for operational costs while Alberta Education provides up to \$400,000 for testing students for the GCP. The program is delivered in partnership with the Province's agriculture colleges (Grande Prairie Regional College, Lakeland College, Olds College, Lethbridge College), as one of Alberta Education's Off-campus Programs of Study. The GCP offers apprenticeship style training in 11 primary production training specialties including beekeeping, cow-calf beef, swine farrow to finish, dairy, poultry, sheep, feedlot, equine, greenhouse, and field crops and irrigated crops. The GCP is a self-directed study program; depending on the competency level and time commitment, students can take up to three years to graduate. Table 1 shows the number of institutes that offered GCP, the number of students enrolled, and the number of students graduated in Alberta as well as by Land Use Framework regions.

**Table 1: Green Certificate Training Program by Land Use Framework Region**

Year	Alberta		South Saskatchewan		North Saskatchewan		Red Deer		Upper Peace		Upper Athabasca		Lower Peace		Lower Athabasca	
	Number of Schools	Students Enrolled	Number of Schools	Students Enrolled	Number of Schools	Students Enrolled	Number of Schools	Students Enrolled	Number of Schools	Students Enrolled	Number of Schools	Students Enrolled	Number of Schools	Students Enrolled	Number of Schools	Students Enrolled
2014-2015	183	681	63	298	52	158	37	144	14	50	9	18	5	10	3	3
2015-2016	187	642	63	232	60	181	30	118	12	65	12	22	6	10	4	14
2016-2017	202	632	77	244	57	136	38	154	11	58	13	27	4	10	2	3
2017-2018	194	612	68	223	53	131	37	156	15	55	13	28	5	13	3	6
<b>Total Graduated (2014-2018)</b>	<b>1324</b>		<b>569</b>		<b>259</b>		<b>279</b>		<b>234</b>		<b>49</b>		<b>27</b>		<b>7</b>	

Source: Estimates prepared by Rural Development Branch, AF.

#### Beginning Farmer Incentive

Beginning Farmer Incentive is a unique feature of the Alberta Farm Loan Program. This incentive offers an interest rate reduction of 1.5 per cent for the first five years of the loan and is available to any qualifying individual with net assets of \$500,000 or less at the time of application. An individual can receive the interest reduction incentive on a loan of up to \$500,000. A couple, applying jointly, could receive the interest reduction incentive on up to a \$1 million loan, provided both have an individual net worth of \$500,000 or less at the time of application. Table 2 shows the number of Beginning Farmer Incentive recipients in Alberta as a whole as well as by Land Use Framework regions.

**Table 2: Alberta Beginning Farm Loan Incentive Recipients by Land Use Framework Region**

Year	Alberta	South Saskatchewan	North Saskatchewan	Red Deer	Upper Peace	Upper Athabasca	Lower Peace	Lower Athabasca
2013	799	121	281	165	80	74	63	15
2014	699	116	233	150	66	63	59	12
2015	677	117	208	149	66	76	51	10
2016	585	88	169	131	82	57	50	8
2017	429	70	144	78	47	38	40	12

Source: Agriculture Financial Services Corporation

# Land Use

## Farm Operators' Age Demography

The definition of farm operators includes those who are responsible for the management decisions regarding an agricultural operation. Farm operators can be owners, tenants or hired managers of the agricultural operation, including those responsible for management decisions pertinent to particular aspects of the farm such as planting, harvesting, raising animals, marketing and sales, and making capital purchases and other financial decisions. Not included in the definition are accountants, lawyers, veterinarians, crop advisors, herbicide consultants, and others who make recommendations affecting the agricultural operation but are not ultimately responsible for management decisions. AF monitors the average age of Alberta's farm operators by analyzing Statistics Canada census data. This can be used to make informed decisions on the future need for programs in Alberta to attract new entrants and to keep existing generations in agriculture, agrifood and agribusiness.

Tables 3a, 3b and 3c show comparisons between 2011 and 2016 census data and the relative change in the number of farm operators in three different age groups. In 2016 census year, compared to 2011, the number of farm operators in the age group of 35 – 54 declined by 25 per cent while that for the age group of under 35 and over 55 increased by 8 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively.

**Table 3a: Alberta Farm Operators: Under 35 Year Old**

Census Year	Alberta	South Saskatchewan	North Saskatchewan	Red Deer	Upper Peace	Upper Athabasca	Lower Peace	Lower Athabasca
2011	4,550	1,045	1,330	995	460	450	250	95
2016	4,910	1,185	1,415	1,145	455	410	210	90
<b>Change</b>	7.9%	13.4%	6.4%	15.1%	-1.1%	-8.9%	-16.0%	-5.3%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, CANSIM Table 004-0239

**Table 3b: Alberta Farm Operators: 35 - 54 Year Old**

Census Year	Alberta	South Saskatchewan	North Saskatchewan	Red Deer	Upper Peace	Upper Athabasca	Lower Peace	Lower Athabasca
2011	26,720	6,095	8,445	5,500	2,385	2,895	810	615
2016	20,155	4,530	6,375	4,225	1,750	2,155	655	465
<b>Change</b>	-24.6%	-25.7%	-24.5%	-23.2%	-26.6%	-25.6%	-19.1%	-24.4%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, CANSIM Table 004-0239

**Table 3c: Alberta Farm Operators: age 55 Years and Over**

Census Year	Alberta	South Saskatchewan	North Saskatchewan	Red Deer	Upper Peace	Upper Athabasca	Lower Peace	Lower Athabasca
2011	30,785	7,065	10,285	6,030	2,625	3,465	615	720
2016	32,535	7,635	10,730	6,700	2,590	3,505	620	755
<b>Change</b>	5.7%	8.1%	4.3%	11.1%	-1.3%	1.2%	0.8%	4.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, CANSIM Table 004-0239