



Agri-News

Alberta Carbon Offset Market Shows an Increase in 2008

When it comes to the carbon offset market, there are presently 10 agriculture related protocols (quantification of the greenhouse gas reduction and or carbon sequestration within a specific management practice) that producers can use, and additional protocols are being established.

“It is important to remember that management practices that producers began in Alberta as early as 2002 can be used to apply for offsets as long as the management practice can be verified and it complies to Alberta Government approved protocol,” says Kerriane Koehler-Munro, climate change program planner with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton.

The amendment to the Specified Gas Emitters Regulation (SGER) came into effect on July 1, 2007, and the following six months marked the first compliance period. The second compliance period was the 2008 calendar year. Alberta facilities that produce more than 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalence (CO₂e – all greenhouse gases represented in a common unit) per year have to reduce their emission intensity by 12 per cent annually. They had until March 31, 2009, to file their accounts and settlements with the regulator, Alberta Environment for the 2008 compliance period.

“These Alberta facilities have three options to meet their reduction: pay into the Tech Fund at \$15/tonne of CO₂e; trade Emission Performance Credits and/or; purchase offset credits from approved voluntary projects in Alberta,” says Koehler-Munro. “These first two compliance periods have shown that the market is developing and there has been an increase in demand for the carbon offsets, and that’s good news for producers who have offset credits to sell.”

This past year there has been an increase of offsets registered and retired compared to the six months of compliance in 2007. In 2008, there were 25 projects registered, totaling 3.5 million tonnes CO₂e, compared to seven projects in 2007. Ten of the 25

projects in 2008 were agriculture tillage (minimal and no-till) projects.

“In the year and a half timeframe of these two compliance periods, approximately five million tonnes of offsets were registered and approximately 1.5 million tonnes, or 30 per cent, came from agriculture tillage offsets. There is no price

Cont'd on page 2

This Week

Alberta Carbon Offset Market Shows an Increase in 2008	1
Eat – Shop – Experience – Alberta Approved Farmers’ Markets!	2
Seedling Blight and Damping Off	3
Farm Safety – Put your best foot forward	3
Spring Frost: Wait Before Assessing Damage	4
Agri-News Briefs	5

discovery in this market; however, it has been suggested that the offsets sold between \$11 and \$13.50 per tonne this past year. A rough estimate of value at \$11 a tonne would equal approximately \$11 million being paid back to the agriculture sector in 2008. This suggests that agriculture is in the market and can, and is, receiving financial gain from this new intangible commodity.”

More information on the carbon offset market is available online at www.carbonoffsetsolutions.ca or www.agriculture.alberta.ca.

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Eat – Shop – Experience – Alberta Approved Farmers’ Markets!

Spring is in the air once again and that means the seasonal farmers’ markets are open or set to open soon. Almost every day, experiences are shared describing local food and the experiences that local communities have to offer.

“The local food movement is booming in Alberta, and at the heart of it are the Alberta approved farmers’ markets,” says Eileen Kotowich, farmers’ market specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Vermilion. “A recently completed study by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development on alternative agricultural markets in Alberta showed that farmers’ markets generate revenue amounting to \$380 million per year, and that 60 per cent of the households in Alberta shop at them.”

As the industry grows, many farmers and small food processors are seeing farmers’ markets as a viable option for marketing their food products. According to the national farmers’ market survey, the top three products sought after by farmers’ market customers are vegetables, fruit and baking.

For producers interested in selling at a farmers’ market, but don’t know where to start, here are some things to consider:

- Check out markets in the local area to see what products are offered and how vendors display their items. Take the time to talk to the vendors to get a feel for how they started in the business and how they view the opportunities and challenges.
- Talk to the market manager. The market manager will be able to provide information on market operations, the application process (if any), and whether there is available space in the market. All Alberta approved farmers’ markets must meet some minimum guidelines established by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development which they

incorporate into their own rules and regulations.

- Be strategic! This applies to both the products for sale and where they are being sold. It’s important for a product to be unique and differentiated from other vendors’ products in the market. Being strategic in the farmers’ market of choice can mean that it’s not the closest to home but is the one that offers the best opportunity for maximum sales. In order to make a strategic decision, be aware of all costs of production, have a good idea of what price to charge for a product and make a realistic estimate of expected sales.
- If selling a food product, check with the local public health inspector. Some low risk foods offered for sale at approved farmers’ markets are allowed to be produced in home kitchens. It is the vendor’s responsibility to ensure that all the requirements are being following.
- Research what other legislation and regulations need to be followed. For example, the *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act* must be followed regardless of where products are being sold.
- Check out a presentation given recently by the Alberta Farmers’ Market Association. It has more tips and great advice. It is available for download at www.albertamarkets.com/Portals/0/HowBecomeVendorBusLinkMar09.pdf

“If you feel your community could benefit from having an approved farmers’ market, there is an application process,” says Kotowich. “Approved farmers’ markets can be sponsored by community non-profit organizations, be established as their own non-profit society, or be organized as a new generation cooperative set up on a reduced profit basis.”

For more information on the application process, go to: Alberta Agriculture’s homepage at www.agriculture.alberta.ca and search for *How do I start an Alberta approved farmers’ market*.

“The May long-weekend was the kick-off for several markets,” says Kotowich. “If you are looking for a listing of the Alberta approved farmers’ markets, check out Alberta Agriculture’s interactive map at www.sunnygirl.ca. This listing contains information on each market, including contact information. If you want to find additional information on vendors, check out the individual market websites or go to www.albertamarkets.com and click on the *Vendor* section.”

For more information about becoming a vendor or about starting an approved farmers’ market, contact Kotowich at 780-853-8223.

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Seedling Blight and Damping Off

Patchy and poor emergence even though there was good moisture for germination could be a sign of seedling blight, also known as damping off. Seedling blight is a fungal infection that causes the seed or seedlings to rot and die. If the seedlings do manage to germinate, they may not emerge, or they may emerge and then become brown, pinched, and die. Other symptoms include stunted and yellow growth, or reduced root growth with brown spots on the roots and coleoptile.

“All crops can be affected by one or more of the fungus pathogens that result in seedling blight,” says Karla Bergstrom, grains and oilseed economist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton. “Seed treating before planting can help protect the seed and the newly emerging seedlings. It is also advisable to plant shallow so the seedling does not rely on its seed reserve as long. This means the seedling is stronger and growing well, faster than a seedling that is planted deeper.

“One of the most important factors to prevent severe infection is to plant good quality seed. Cracked seed allows the pathogen to enter the seed and this can increase the infection rate.”

Weather plays a role in the occurrence of seedling blight. Cool moist conditions in the spring can slow seed germination and emergence, and this can make a crop more susceptible to seedling blight.

Pathogens vary depending on weather conditions. Further information on seedling blight and the pathogens that could be causing the problem is available at [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/faq6801](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/faq6801).

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Farm Safety – Put your best foot forward

The old saying - “when your feet hurt, you hurt all over” is certainly true for people working in agriculture who at times work long hours in extreme temperatures and in a variety of conditions. Proper footwear not only protects feet from possible injuries, it also prevents the pain and fatigue that can lead to injuries due to distraction, slower reactions and unsafe shortcuts.

The theme of the 2009 Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign is **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) only works if you use it!** The campaign places a focus on the use, fit and access of PPE in agriculture.

“Agricultural producers work in diversified conditions,” says Laurent Pellerin, Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) first vice-president. “Proper footwear and foot care are essential for the comfort, safety and productivity of everyone working on a farm.”

There are two major categories of work-related foot injuries. The first is trauma injuries from punctures, crushes, and lacerations, which account for 10 per cent of reported disabling injuries. The second is injuries resulting from slips, trips and falls – accounting for 15 per cent of reported disabling injuries, reports the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS).

These two categories of foot injuries; however, do not exhaust the whole range of foot problems at work. There are also other conditions such as calluses, ingrown toenails or simply tired feet that are common among workers. Footwear that fits poorly or is in need of repair also contributes heavily to foot discomfort.

Although these may not be considered as occupational injuries in the strictest sense, they can cause discomfort, pain and fatigue. Fatigue sets up the worker for further injuries affecting the muscles and joints. Also, a worker who is tired and suffering pain is less alert and more likely to act unsafely, and an incident may result.

The best way to involve workers in programs to protect their feet is to provide: training and information on the health hazards of wearing improper shoes; the principles for selecting proper ones; and, the simple rules of general foot care. In addition, protective footwear should conform to CSA Standard CAN/CSA-Z195-02 or appropriate standards for the jurisdiction.

Good footwear should grip the heel firmly; allow free movement of the toes; have a low wide-based heel; and, have a fastening across the instep to prevent the foot from slipping when walking.

The type of flooring used in the workplace has an important influence on comfort. Hard, unyielding floors such as concrete are the least comfortable surfaces to work on. Slippery floors are hazardous for slips and falls that can result in sprained ankles or broken bones. Additional hazards for foot injury exist in outdoor jobs that involve freezing temperatures, or wetness in low temperatures, frostbite and trench foot.

Job and workplace designs also have the potential to increase foot safety:

- keep mobile equipment away from areas usually used for foot traffic
- ensure guards are installed properly on all machinery
- keep walkways and work areas tidy
- keep stairs, ramps, walkways and work areas clear of debris and well lit to reduce slips, trips and falls

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and the CFA along with Farm Credit Canada (FCC), Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) want to remind farmers that ***“PPE only works if you use it!”***

For more farm safety information, visit the Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety

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Spring Frost: Wait Before Assessing Damage

The Canola Council of Canada (CCC) is advising growers with frost-damaged crops to wait at least four days (or more if conditions are cool and regrowth is slow) before assessing the damage.

When the time does come to check, growers should look at the growing point of the plants, determine the percentage of plants killed versus recovered, and assess the weed population, says CCC senior agronomy specialist Doug Moisey

“The extent of the damage can be determined only by waiting several days following the frost,” says Moisey. “If an initial inspection suggests the remaining plant population is questionable, but growing conditions since the frost have been cool contributing to slow plant recovery, producers may need to revisit the field in another three to four days to accurately determine the extent of the damage and the surviving plant population. As well, after a frost any herbicide applications should be delayed until recovery of the plants as well as the weeds has occurred.”

If there is any green colour at the growing point in the centre of the frozen rosette, or the centre stem is exhibiting turgor pressure and does not appear pinched off, the plant will recover and yields will be higher than if the field is re-seeded. Canola seedlings will usually recover from a light spring frost that does not damage the growing point of the plant. A light frost that wilts the leaves but does not cause any browning will not injure the plants. There may be some discoloration of the leaves, usually a yellowing or whitening especially under drought conditions.

When a frost does blacken the cotyledons and/or leaves, no action should be taken for at least four days, advises Moisey. Under good growing conditions, green re-growth from the growing point should occur in four to five days. Under poor growing conditions; cold and/or dry, this can take up to 10 days.

When evaluating frost damaged seedling fields, growers should consider the percentage of plants killed, the percentage recovered, and the weed population.

To evaluate a frost damaged field, Moisey suggests walking a diagonal path across the field, evaluating all plants in a 1/4 m² (3 ft²) every 20 paces. This should result in 50 to 100 samples. If, for example, 80 per cent of the field has a minimum of 20 to 40 recovering healthy plants per m² (2 to 4 per ft²) and a light and/or easily controlled weed population, while the remainder of the field has fewer plants, then this field probably still has a higher yield potential than one that is reseeded. That’s because only the 20 per cent with less than two to four plants per square foot likely will benefit significantly from reseeding.

Canola can compensate for lower plant populations because surviving plants can take advantage of reduced competition for light, moisture and nutrients. Plants will grow larger, producing more branches, pods and seeds per pod. While the surviving plants will require longer to mature, a re-seeded crop would require an even longer frost-free period and have a greater risk of fall frost damage.

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Helping Habitat at Home

The Stewards in Motion 7 and annual general meeting of the Alberta Stewardship Network is being held in Fort Macleod on June 25, 2009. The theme of the event is ***Local Diversity: Helping Habitat at Home***. Anyone with an interest in stewardship is invited to attend. Highlights of the event include:

- Habitat Heroes – stewardship groups share success stories
- An Emerald Thread – riparian areas - the ties that bind
- Grizzlies to Grasses – a panel discussion
- Greg Hale – keeping the home place wild: critters, conservation and communities
- Sid Marty – natural history buff, musician and writer

Registration is free, but those planning to attend are asked to register by June 19, 2009. To register, phone toll-free 1-877-727-5276 or register online by visiting the Network's website at www.ab.stewardshipcanada.ca