



July 9, 2012

New Incentives for Environmental Improvements in Crop Management

A new Conservation Cropping Protocol is now available for use by farmers to get paid for making environmental improvements. By increasing soil carbon levels through no till management and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from fuel use, farmers can earn carbon offset credits.

The newest opportunity is for farmers in the Brown and Dark Brown soil zones who can replace areas of summerfallow with no tilled crops. "A growing crop seeded with low disturbance no till equipment increases biological carbon capture and storage compared with uncropped fallow fields," notes Sheilah Nolan, climate change specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. "The soil carbon increase from cropping summerfallowed land is more than double the soil carbon increase from no till management, so carbon credits more than double."

Carbon credits are based on the amount of decrease in area of summerfallowed land at the end of five years, compared with a three-year average baseline for the same farmed area. Previous history of summerfallow activity and the use of no till crop management must be confirmed with records.

Companies who buy the offset credits are regulated under Alberta's Specified Gas Emitters Regulation (2002). Companies can use carbon credits as a way to meet their requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emission intensities by 12 per cent each year. Carbon credits can be created from farm practice improvements that have a proven scientific basis for lower greenhouse gas emissions, are above and beyond business as usual, and can be verified by independent third parties.

The new Conservation Cropping Protocol includes updates to the old Tillage System Management Protocol. The new protocol adjusts for higher rates of conservation tillage, which means

that there's less land to shift from full till. Reduced till no longer qualifies for offset credit, but no till credits are available for all soil zones in Alberta until at least 2017 when a review is scheduled.

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The new protocol also lists the positive proof requirements needed to meet new verification standards for all protocols in the Alberta Offset System, effective January 1, 2012. Positive proof means that only go-forward credits are allowed, so no historic offsets can be claimed.

“Some of the records needed to meet the new standards are the same as those needed for the Tillage protocol,” says Paul Jungnitsch, greenhouse gas offset agronomist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “Other records such as crop plans, photos of equipment, or calculations of cropped areas and soil disturbance can be collected by farmers themselves or with the help of professional agronomists.”

A detailed checklist of evidence needed to claim offset credits using the new protocol is available online at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/agcarbonoffsets under What’s New. Along with new incentives for environmental improvements, this protocol gives opportunities for farmers to become familiar with the verifiable records needed for other types of emerging environmental markets. Management to reduce greenhouse gases also brings benefits of improved production efficiencies and increased adaptation to climate change.

Funds for these initiatives were provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Agricultural Flexibility fund, as part of Canada’s Economic Action Plan. This is a cost-shared project between Agriculture and Rural Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

More details are available by calling the Ag-Info Centre at 310-FARM (3276) or by emailing agcarbonoffsets@gov.ab.ca

Contact: Ag-Info Centre
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Be Aware of Price Risk Management

As the globalization of world grain production becomes more integrated, various agriculture policies set throughout the world increase price volatility paid to producers in our own backyards. Non-agriculture uses (ethanol, biodiesel), price-stabilizing policies, processing demand and, of course, weather are just some factors contributing to price volatility. In this electronic age, where news is quickly disseminated and available throughout the world, price movements in all commodities have increased.

“As the world agriculture scene continues to evolve, price risk management becomes more important in this increasing volatile environment,” says David K. Wong, market specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “However, some basic principles of price risk management should be adhered to.

“There are various types of risks associated with farming. Most farmers know about production risk, or the risk that their crop will or will not turn out as expected. Farmers can control, to some extent, this form of risk by using sound management practices such as selecting what variety to grow, how much fertilizer to add, when and what to spray, etc. Of course, weather is a major component of this risk factor as well.”

The risk factor that affects the bottom line of the operation is price risk. Price risk is the risk of price movement effecting what you are paid for what you grow. “Price movements are a given, as price will change,” says Wong. “However, it is up to the farm manager to control this risk – hopefully to the downside. There are various farm risk management tools available to price grain at acceptable levels. It is important to manage price risk to some extent, as the prices one receives will affect other risks associated with farming such as gross margin risk, cash flow risk and financial risk.”

Gross margin risk, the difference between the selling price and the cost to produce that unit of production, only includes the cash/direct costs of producing that product. Cash flow risk comes into play when funds are needed to meet payments at a particular time. Money must be available to meet financial obligations as they become due.

“Financial risk, therefore, is the ability of the farm to generate enough profit to cover fixed and variable costs, as well as provide living expenses and monies to cover depreciation. For most farms, this is an annual event,” says Wong. “Farmers will reduce their price risk by selling product. The more you sell, the less you are exposed to this price risk, especially if selling into a profitable market. An acceptable price must be met for growers to lock in a price. At this time of year (summer),

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decreasing your price risk may result in higher production risks, as production is not in the bin and must now be met to meet commitments. However, production risks here can be alleviated by only pricing an amount of production you know you should achieve.”

After reviewing the various risk management tools available to you, as a grower, it is wise to remember that when entering into a grain selling contract, sound business practices and principles are still required, such as:

- good communication with the buyer
- knowing the implications of a production shortfall
- knowing how solvent the buyer is
- knowing your costs of production and how this contract price will affect your farm
- knowing what quantity and quality is expected, delivery point and delivery period, price formula to determine the net price, what price adjustments will be (discounts/premiums), if there is an act of God clause included, and **then** having both parties sign and date the contract

Always be sure that if you do not understand the contract – ask questions first and get clarification before signing.

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4-H Summer Events

Since 1917, 4-H Alberta members from across the province have been showing off their prized livestock. While breeds have changed and evolved since those early days, one thing has remained constant – 4-Hers continually showing top genetics.

This summer, members and their top livestock projects will descend upon Olds for three provincial livestock shows; Provincial Beef Heifer Show, Provincial Sheep Show and the Provincial Dairy Show. Whether members are displaying a commercial cow/calf pair, a market lamb or a yearling Holstein there is no doubt that the stock shown at these provincial shows is some of the finest in the province.

4-H members take great pride in their project’s conformation, their talents in showmanship, judging, grooming, marketing, and in their husbandry knowledge which makes for a well-rounded agriculture producer. “The industry is in great hands with these individuals at the helm,” says Cameron Horner, 4-H specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

The public is invited to attend these fantastic shows, to see first-hand how much pride and hard work these 4-H members demonstrate.

All three shows take place at the Olds Agriculture Society Fairgrounds:

- Provincial Beef Heifer Show - July 8 - 10
- Provincial Sheep Show – July 11 – 13
- Provincial Dairy Show – July 11 – 13

For more information regarding any of these shows or the 4-H program, visit www.4h.ab.ca

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Tasty Home Style Meal Options for Seniors

For five years, SAGE Savories has been providing wholesome meals for seniors in Edmonton. The business, operated by the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton (SAGE), provides home style meals for seniors through their Sunshine Cafe downtown and through frozen meals that can be picked up at the Cafe or delivered to a senior’s home.

“We believe supplying seniors with healthy meals will help them stay in their own homes longer, and we are providing a niche service that other senior food purveyors are not filling,” explains Wayne Sand, Certified Chef de Cuisine and food services manager.

Currently, SAGE Savories prepares over 1600 frozen meal servings and 300 soups per month, as well as desserts. “We have five soup varieties, six desserts and 18 meals,” states Sand. “Four of our soups and nine of our meals meet the Health Check™ Menu Options criteria. We worked with the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation to ensure that the meals meet the specific nutrient specifications developed by the Health Check™ program.”

Nutritional analyses were completed as needed to ensure the labelling met CFIA requirements. “I always try to prepare healthy foods, so it was good to find out so many of our products met the criteria,” says Sand. “We are the first senior service agency to receive certification.”

When Sand first started working at SAGE, he adapted home style recipes and prepared comfort foods he thought seniors would enjoy. The Health Check™ Menu features meals such as beef stew, roast beef, roast turkey and stuffing, shepherd’s pie, poached salmon filet, and vegetarian chilli. The chicken and veggie stir fry won a 2010/2011 Alberta Food for Health Award – a Premier’s Award, for healthy Alberta food sold through food service.

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Every meal prepared at SAGE Savouries includes a protein, vegetable and starch component. Soup varieties include beef vegetable and barley, chicken noodle, green split pea and ham, and tomato vegetable rice, all of which appear on the Health Check™ list.

SAGE Savories also offers traditional menu options, such as navy bean and bacon soup, and meals consisting of glazed ham, breaded pork cutlet, chicken pot pie, a Ukrainian plate and three-cheese lasagne. Desserts include rice and raisin pudding, bread pudding, apple crumble and strawberry slice. Meals are packaged in convenient, single serve portions and sold in a microwave and oven safe containers.

“Our meals are very popular with seniors who want a tasty meal without the hassle of cooking for themselves,” says Sand. “We provide them with good heating instructions and ensure they have all the nutritional information for each meal they order.”

“I have been asked whether they are good for diabetics, and, after checking with their doctors and dieticians, many people have found they can eat our products,” says Sand. The frozen meals allow them to stay in their own home, as many of them don’t have the energy or interest in cooking for themselves.

“We pride ourselves on providing a healthy meal option for them that has a good taste profile too, so people will enjoy eating the meals. They will push a meal away if it doesn’t taste good.”

The Savouries meal service targets doctors, dieticians and social workers to create awareness of what meals they provide. “I would like to expand our kitchen and move into our own commissary for preparation of the frozen meals, but we have to ensure we have the volume of sales to justify our move,” says Sand.

As a non-profit agency, Sand has pushed SAGE to treat the Savories service as a social enterprise so that the profits generated from the meals can be put towards other costs such as administration and rent.

Seniors can pick up meals at the Sunshine Cafe in Edmonton or order meals for delivery by a cadre of volunteers. “We do ask for a minimum \$50 purchase,” Sand adds. “Otherwise, you pay a \$5 delivery fee.”

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Dutch Elm Disease Summertime Awareness

“Dutch Elm Disease (DED) is a serious threat to elm trees in Alberta communities,” says Janet Feddes-Calpas, executive director for the Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED). “It is also a disease that can be prevented. At present, Alberta has the largest DED-free American elm stand in the world, and it is important to protect this valuable resource. The Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED) is asking for Albertans’ assistance to save the province’s beautiful elm trees from this deadly disease.”

DED is caused by a fungus that clogs the elm tree’s water conducting system, causing the tree to die, usually within one or two seasons. The fungus is primarily spread from one elm tree to another by three species of beetles, the smaller European, the native and the banded elm bark beetle. These beetles are attracted to weak and dying trees, which serve as breeding sites for them. Once the beetles have pupated and turned into adults, they leave the brood gallery and fly to healthy elms to feed, transporting the fungus on their bodies from one tree to the next. Monitoring for the beetles is done annually throughout the province by STOPDED.

“The smaller elm bark beetles have been found throughout the province in low numbers and now the banded elm bark beetle is found in larger numbers throughout the City of Medicine Hat,” says Feddes-Calpas. “For this reason, it is imperative to be even more vigilant.

“Leaves on a DED-infected elm will wilt or droop, curl and become brown. This is referred to as flagging, and appears in mid-June to mid-July. Later in the season, leaves on infected trees usually turn yellow and drop prematurely. Leaf symptoms are accompanied by brown staining under the bark. All suspicious elms must be tested in a lab, a service STOPDED funds.”

Albertans are asked to take a moment and find out how they can help save Alberta’s elms:

- Be aware of the Alberta Elm Pruning Ban between April 1 and September 30. The beetles are most active at this time and can be attracted to the scent of fresh tree cuts, possibly infecting a healthy elm.
- Keep elm trees healthy, and vigorous.
- Water elms well from April until mid-August. To allow the tree to harden off for the winter, watering should be stopped mid-August followed by a good soaking or two before freeze-up.

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- Prune ONLY between October 1 to March 31. Remove dead branches and trees as they can provide beetle habitat.
- Dispose of all elm wood immediately by burning, burying or chipping.
- Report all suspect trees to the DED Hotline at 1-877-837-ELMS. A confirmed DED tree must be removed immediately to prevent further spread.

To enhance prevention of this serious disease:

- Do NOT transport or store elm firewood at any time! DED and the beetles are declared pests under the Alberta Agricultural *Pests Act* making it illegal to do so.
- Do NOT transport elm firewood into Alberta! Firewood is confiscated at all the Alberta-Montana border crossings.
- Do NOT prune elms between April 1 to September 30.

“Elms are a treasure we cannot afford to lose,” says Feddes-Calpas!

To report a DED suspect elm tree or for more information, call the STOPDED hotline at 1-877-837-ELMS or check out the website at www.stopped.org

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Agri-News Briefs

Crop Walks for Pulse Growers in July

Three crop walk events for pulse growers are being held in July 2012. The events are an opportunity to meet researchers, representatives from industry and Alberta Pulse Grower representatives. Topics will vary slightly at each location; however, the discussions and demonstrations include trialing genetic materials into broad agro-climatic zones, monitoring and identifying diseases of field pea, optimum economic and maximum rates of seed placed and banded ESN/Soft Wheat and CPS Wheat agronomy in five soil-climate in Alberta Zones/triticale project, and a pulse demonstration of lentil. Dates are:

- St. Albert – July 24
- Vegreville – July 25
- Barrhead – July 26

Further information on each crop walk is available on Alberta Agriculture's website under coming events. To register call Brenda McLellan at the Ag Info Centre at 1-800-387-6030.

Irrigation Districts Water Quality Project Progress Report

Alberta has the largest irrigated area in Canada with nearly 680,000 hectares of irrigated land. More than 80 per cent of this area is in 13 irrigation districts. Irrigation water is not only essential for agricultural production, it provides municipal water for more than 40 municipalities plus thousands of rural residents in Alberta. A recent report summarizes the first-year results of a five-year project (2011-2015), where water was sampled at 86 sites and more than 150 parameters were measured. Water sampling will continue in 2012 with some modifications to the project design, including the addition of pathogens. The report summary and the full report are available on Alberta Agriculture's website at [http://agapps16.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/irr14080](http://agapps16.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/irr14080)

2012 Dine Alberta Participating Restaurants

An up-to-date listing of Alberta restaurants which serve regional cuisine food and which are participating in the 2012 Dine Alberta program is now available on Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website. For more information on the participating restaurants and for information on the Dine Alberta program, visit www.agriculture.alberta.ca and type 2012 Dine Alberta Participating Restaurants in the search field.

Looking for a 4-H Club

To find a 4-H Club in a specific area of the province, take a look at the Regional Info area of the Alberta 4-H website. From there, select the region you reside in and find out what 4-H Clubs are available near you. Alberta 4-H helps develop the leadership, communication, technical and life skills of 4-H members and leaders to strengthen communities. For more information or to join a local 4-H Club, contact Alberta 4-H at www.4h.ab.ca

Shaggy Hawkweed Being Sold in Alberta

Shaggy Hawkweed *Hieracium villosum* is being sold at some garden supply departments in Alberta. While it is not an 'invasive' hawkweed, it will form mats. This is a perennial herb with stems 15–30 cm, is densely hairy, with hairs up to 6–10 mm long, and has oblong-shaped basal leaves. The plant can have one to four flower heads per stem. While this species is not on the Alberta Weed Control Act list of regulated species, it is a close relative of the Prohibited Noxious hawkweeds. Accounts indicate that Shaggy Hawkweed isn't as invasive as those presently on the Act. But since Shaggy Hawkweed will form mats, caution is advised, as information on how this plant performs under Alberta conditions is not known. For more information on this hawkweed species, visit <http://e-ecodb.bas.bg/rdb/en/vol1/Hievillo.html>