

Manitoba Agriculture 2018 Winter Consultation Summary Report

The 2018 Winter Consultation held on November 23, 2018 at the Winnipeg Convention Centre was an opportunity for industry stakeholders to meet with the Minister, gain information and share feedback on the beneficial management practices (BMPs) offered through Ag Action Manitoba programming. Industry members facilitated discussion with department staff acting as note takers. The following report is a summary of the discussion.

Meeting Format

The Deputy Minister and Minister encourage participants to engage with one another in discussion and share their feedback to the room. In addition to the BMP discussion, information was provided on Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC) Trust, Manitoba Agriculture Research and Innovation Committee (MARIC), and Ag Actions Manitoba.

Industry discussed the benefit of BMPs in advancing economic growth of the agriculture and agri-food sector. Participants had collective dialogue and reported key messages to the room.

Key messages:

- There is still a need for BMP support at the farm gate level.
- The department does not have the data and measurement tools in place to weigh one BMP cost benefit over another. This has not been a requirement of the funding.
- Government should be promoting BMPs, even those not funded, in support of building a pro-active industry with effective risk management strategies.
- BMP support should focus on the adoption of or adaptation to practices that are not market driven but rather those that support public trust, innovation, meeting regulatory demands and supporting environmental sustainability.
- Industry has a role in determining the framework for BMPs. Industry knows what BMPs are required to advance their sector.
- Government and industry need to work collaboratively to prioritize sector needs across the entire value chain. This will ensure that BMPs are targeted and funding is allocated appropriately to meet industry challenges.

Discussion Summary:

Market Driven BMPs

Industry made a distinction between market driven BMPs and those that support conforming to public demands and meeting regulatory changes. Industry recognized the value of historical government support in transiting production practices to meet market and public demands. The improvements allowed them to gain increased market revenues.

The investment cost related to expansion, skills development, increasing efficiencies, and reducing production cost and enhancing productivity are recoverable from the market. Continued production enhancing BMPs may not be the priority of governments moving forward. The measurement of success is farm specific and not industry wide.

Public Trust Driven BMPs

Government needs to differentiate between BMPs in support of market demand and those in support of meeting public demand. BMPs should support producers in adjusting practices to meet public demands, regulatory burdens and meeting sustainability goals areas where producers are unable to pass on the increased cost of production.

Industry identified that producer level support is required to help them adapt to changing consumer demands with no cost benefit to the producer. There may not be immediate value to the producer but there is long-term value to the industry as whole. For example effective biosecurity practices assisted Manitoba in minimizing the impact of a disease such as Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus (PEDv).

BMP selection process:

Industry indicated that they are the experts in identifying their needs and the support required to advance respective commodities groups. BMPs that are proactive rather than reactive support the evolution of the industry. Industry needs BMPs in key areas that are not in response to market driven demands. These may include:

- Water management:
 - Risk mitigation specific to excess water and lack of water resources
 - Tile drainage
 - Clean water
 - Protecting the health of waterways
- Food safety:
 - Food reputation
 - Brand products
 - Support consumers

- Biosecurity and traceability
- Carbon tax
- Supporting sector specific problems
- Support adoption of innovative practices or processes on farm

Government needs to be nimble in the ability to address industry challenges. BMPs need to be reflective of all stakeholder groups and inclusive to new stakeholder groups as they arise. These mechanisms can support producers in responding to sudden changes in production practices and environment. This requires that government continue to engage in regular consultations with producer groups, associations, value chain participants and new stakeholder groups on BMP development.

Funding:

Industry identified that changes to the funding process may further support adoption of best management practices. This may include consideration for a multi-year funding process in support of BMP adoption. Funding consideration needs to apply to the ability of the sector to pay and the immediacy and magnitude of the change required.

Focus on individual producers may not result in a change that benefits the entire value chain. Small benefits to individual farmers may not have the same impact as a large investment into industry wide change.