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# Alberta Federation of Agriculture insight

## Increase in rail cars to help grain backlog

### AFA works with farm leaders to advocate solutions to grain transportation delays

**ON MARCH 7, 2014 THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON AN ISSUE THAT ALBERTA FARMERS HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT FOR QUITE SOME TIME.**

Minister of Transport Lisa Raitt announced that rail companies would be subject to minimum shipping levels for prairie grain over the following 90-day period.

According to AFA President Lynn Jacobson, this new policy is a victory for common sense. "This will allow last year's record crop to finally reach export markets," he said, "alleviating some of the cash flow pressures producers have been facing."

The Order in Council, which spans 90 days from March 7, requires CN and CP to provide

a minimum of 5,500 rail cars each per week to move grain, up from the current level of 2,500 cars per week. The rail companies face up to \$100,000 per day in penalties for non-compliance.

This announcement suggests that a concerted effort by AFA and other farm organizations had an impact. It's an issue that AFA, British Columbia Agricultural Council, Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, Keystone Agricultural Producers (Manitoba) and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) have been vocal about since last fall.

AFA President Jacobson and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Humphrey Banack appeared as witnesses via video conference in front of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture

and Agri-Food about the Grain Logistics System study on February 12.

AFA also joined agricultural leaders in Ottawa in February for the CFA annual meeting, where grain movement was discussed extensively. The leaders met with Transport Minister Raitt, Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Gerry Ritz, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair, Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau and other MPs to keep a high profile on the detrimental effect the grain backlog is having on producers.

What happens after the 90-day Order in Council? On March 26 the federal government tabled Bill C-30, the *Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act*. This bill sets minimum quantity levels the railways must move for the next two years and introduces more transparency and



## Pilot program shines light on farm safety

AFA 2nd Vice President Humphrey Banack feels passionate about farm safety. That's why he joined nine other Alberta farmers to test a pilot safety program being developed by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD).

Banack, his wife Terry, and AFA Director Grace MacGregor volunteered for the pilot program. The Banacks are no strangers to this issue, having known people who have been injured, and even killed, on farms.

"We've been lucky, but we can't continue to rely on luck," Banack said. "We have to look at farm safety and plan to be safe."

According to Laurel Aitken, Farm Safety Coordinator for ARD, an average of 18 farmers per year are killed in Alberta. Her team began the pilot after seeing a Farm Credit Canada survey that indicated fewer than one in 10 farmers has a written agricultural safety plan on their farm or ranch.

Working with the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, ARD staff developed an Alberta version of the Canada FarmSafe Plan. The pilot includes a written program documenting safety on the farm. Ten farmers were asked to go through the plan and give their feedback.

Although the Banacks already have safety procedures in place on their Round Hill grain farm, they didn't have a written plan. They appreciated the chance to develop and polish the ready-made guidelines in the ARD pilot.

In Banack's experience, farmers in Alberta want to be involved in developing solutions for farm worker health and safety. AFA has made farm safety a resolution for 2014 (see next page) and will continue to work with the provincial government to create a dialogue around safe working standards.

For more on farm safety, or to watch a video interview with the Banacks, visit [www.agsafetyweek.ca](http://www.agsafetyweek.ca).

## United Nations celebrates family farms in 2014

In November 2013, the United Nations designated 2014 as the *International Year of Family Farming* to recognize the potential of family farmers to eradicate hunger and preserve natural resources.

According to José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): "Nothing comes closer to the sustainable food production paradigm than family farming. Family farmers usually run non-specialized, diversified agricultural activities that give them a central role in securing environmental sustainability and preserving biodiversity.

Around the world, the FAO will celebrate family farms as a significant component of world food security, a critical boost to local economies and a key to the well-being of the rural environment.

This year, Albertans will come together to celebrate our province's family farms through Open Farm Days on August 23 and 24. It's a provincial celebration of food, farms and rural families. For more information visit [www.albertafarmdays.com](http://www.albertafarmdays.com).



## UPDATE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE OPPORTUNITIES

At the AFA AGM in January, J.P. Gervais, Chief Agricultural Economist for Farm Credit Canada, outlined some key issues around international trade affecting Alberta and Canada.

He pointed to the EU trade deal with Canada – and the fact that China continues to grow its economy at 7.7% – as opportunities for agriculture and food producers. Domestically, Gervais indicated that strong immigrant inflows to Canada each year are also a bright spot for agriculture.

Darren Chase, Executive Director of Policy, Strategy and Intergovernmental Affairs for Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), said Alberta's trade offices in foreign countries provide expertise for Alberta companies wishing to access market opportunities overseas.

For more information on what ARD's Growing Forward 2 program is doing in terms of international work, visit [www.growingforward.alberta.ca](http://www.growingforward.alberta.ca). The GF2 Spring 2014 newsletter, *Agri-Business Forward*, covers some of these activities and will be available online by the end of April.

# 2014 AGM Resolutions: working for Alberta producers



THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS WERE CARRIED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ALBERTA FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE ON JANUARY 21 & 22, 2014

BE IT RESOLVED that Alberta Federation of Agriculture:

- advocate that Canadian Grain Commission inspectors perform inward inspections on producer cars, with fees applied to the producer.
- encourage the Canadian Grain Commission to extend the deadline to 10 days for re-inspection of a producer car sample.
- initiate discussions with livestock producer groups and government to develop a standardized contract for livestock sales in Alberta between producers and slaughter facilities.
- urge the provincial government to expand wildlife damage compensation to include swath and winter forage grazing.
- urge the provincial government to extend the hunting season in areas where ungulates create significant damage to crops, property and vehicles.
- investigate their role in the development and delivery of a farm safety program for producers.
- urge the provincial government to require that the Alberta Utilities Commission review the current 8.75% guaranteed ROR granted to electrical Transmission and Distribution utilities and reduce it to make it current with prevailing market-based RORs with similar risk and investment.
- ask that the provincial government require the Alberta Utilities Commission to implement performance-based regulation that requires the electrical Transmission and Distribution utilities to demonstrate ongoing efficiency increases before granting a guaranteed ROR.
- request that the provincial government require a “needs assessment” be conducted (at the developer’s cost) before new wind turbine licenses are granted. The assessment must satisfy the Alberta Electrical System Operator that additional capacity is needed, and costs for electrical system reinforcement are justified at the site.
- advocate that “Farmers’ Privilege” be enshrined in the Plant Breeders’ Rights legislation.
- advocate that the variety registration recommendations of the Working Committees of the Prairie Grain Development Committee be accepted by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.
- support the research funding model for varietal development proposed by Alberta Seed Growers and other interested Prairie farm groups, allowing strong producer input and funding.
- advocate that the Canadian Plant Breeders’ Rights Act incorporate “endpoint levies” on commercial grain sales by a producer-controlled organization which would collect levies and allocate them to research.

WITH TODAY’S FINANCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL PRESSURES ON AGRICULTURE, THE NEED FOR A STRONG GENERAL FARM ORGANIZATION IN ALBERTA IS INCREASINGLY CLEAR. AFA PROVIDES PRODUCERS WITH A MUCH NEEDED FORUM TO VOICE THEIR OPINIONS AND ENSURE THEY ARE HEARD.

While not every producer will agree with every AFA strategy or stance, it’s important to remember the direction of the organization is set by our members. If you know someone who is concerned about issues in agriculture, why not encourage them to join AFA?

Members also benefit from offers by our corporate partners including product discounts with Chrysler Canada, The Co-operators and Mark’s Work Wearhouse; membership discounts with Farmers of North America; and preferential consideration for scholarships for post-secondary studies in agriculture or a related field at universities and colleges throughout Alberta.

Membership applications are available at [www.AFAonline.ca](http://www.AFAonline.ca) or 1-855-789-9151.

## AFA PIONEERS: call for nominations

Do you know a long-standing AFA, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, or Unifarm member who has made a difference to our organization? We’d love to recognize their contribution and support by naming them as an AFA Pioneer! To nominate an AFA Pioneer, fill out this form and mail it to 5033 - 52 Street, Lacombe, AB T4L 2A6; fax it to 403-789-9152; send an email to [info@AFAonline.ca](mailto:info@AFAonline.ca); or phone us at 855-789-9151. We thank you in advance.

PERSON TO BE RECOGNIZED

TOWN OR CITY

PERSON MAKING NOMINATION

A FEW WORDS ABOUT WHY:



### Vote of confidence for AFA executive team

Delegates provided a resounding show of support for those who successfully guided AFA through major changes and restructuring in 2013.

At the AGM in January, delegates re-elected the executive team of:  
Lynn Jacobson, President  
Keith Degenhardt, 1st VP  
Humphrey Banack, 2nd VP

For a complete list of the Executive and other members of our team, visit [AFAonline.ca](http://AFAonline.ca) and click on About AFA > Our People.

  
Farm Credit Canada

[fcc.ca](http://fcc.ca)



accountability into the crop transportation and logistics system. Additionally, the new legislation will increase inter-switching distances in the Prairies from 30 km to 160 km, providing more grain shippers with alternatives to access rail capacity.

The Alberta government has also introduced measures to ensure that spring road bans won't keep grain from moving to market. To get a no-cost road ban exemption permit, contact Alberta Transportation at 1-800-662-7138.

Further, the CFA has established the Crop Transportation and Logistics Committee, with AFA President Jacobson as Chair. Comprised of crop producers and shippers in Western Canada, this group is developing recommendations that will be presented to government for consideration in the context of Bill C-30.

AFA will continue to work with stakeholders to bring about lasting solutions to strengthen the entire logistics chain.

## SHARE YOUR VIEW: investing in the future



Coming off a record crop in 2013, investment in agricultural research is good news for the industry. That's according to Garth Patterson, Executive Director of Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF).

Patterson told delegates at the AFA Annual General Meeting that WGRF is investing \$9 million in agricultural research this year. This includes more than \$6 million for wheat and barley varietal development, plus another \$3 million for agronomic, new crop and post-harvest research.

The WGRF Endowment Fund supports research in agriculture to provide producers across Western Canada with enhanced profitability and sustainability.

Patterson noted that the organization is seeking input from producers about how to allocate WGRF research funds. AFA will continue to work closely with WGRF on these important matters.



## Planning to visit the U.S. this year?

Do you enjoy going to the U.S. for a vacation, but don't like the thought of medical bills if you get sick or hurt while there? Even if it's just a quick weekend getaway, travel medical insurance is a wise choice. The Co-operators Group Limited (an AFA partner) has a multi-trip travel insurance plan that lets you buy coverage once and get protection for multiple trips in a policy year. The multi-trip plan provides great value, costing less than two single-trip plans. AFA members receive an additional 15% discount. Multi-trip plan highlights:

- ideal for travellers taking two or more trips in a year
- up to \$5 million in emergency hospital and medical protection
- includes unlimited travel within Canada
- 24/7 access to multilingual emergency assistance worldwide.

For more information, call The Co-operators at 1-800-958-8210, or purchase your coverage online at <http://www.cooperators.ca/en/insurance/travel.aspx>. Don't forget to identify yourself as an AFA member.

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## introducing the new AFA website

Our newly branded website [www.AFAonline.ca](http://www.AFAonline.ca) has a wealth of information to make it one of your favourite agricultural sites.

Along with information about AFA, our staff, news, events, membership and our partners, you'll also find a robust *Resources* section. Under this section, producers have access to *Publications*, *Links*, and *Price Index*.

The *Publications* section includes papers on AFA's policies, organization and proposals, as well as information brochures, manuals and workbooks. The *Links* section will connect you to websites for weather, rural life, commodities, crops and seeds, animals, agriculture education, tools and equipment, science and research and much more.

The *Price Index* section gives you quick links to Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development information on farm costs.

"We've always had a lot of great information on our website," says AFA Executive Director Sheryl Rae. "Now, we've made the website a little more organized and included a lot more material under *Resources*. We invite you to have a look around the site. We think you'll be impressed by what you see."



5033 - 52 Street  
Lacombe, AB T4L 2A6  
p: 403.789.9151 f: 403.789.9152  
Toll Free: 1.855.789.9151  
info@AFAonline.ca  
www.AFAonline.ca