

# AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVES LAND USE AND STEWARDSHIP POLICY IN ALBERTA'S AGRI-FOOD

Prepared by Environmental Policies Initiative Committee, Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta

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For nine years, the Agriculture and Food Council (AFC) has been involved in developing policy options aimed at addressing environmental issues affecting the long-term growth and sustainability of the agri-food industry. In 2000, the Council partnered with the provincial government to sponsor Ag Summit 2000, in which land use and environmental stewardship were identified as high industry priorities. Council members then participated in the Agrivantage Environmental Stewardship and Land Use Core Action Teams that in 2002 presented recommendations to industry and government to position Alberta "ahead of the curve" in these areas. The Council's AGSASI (Ag Summit and Agrivantage Strategic Initiative, 2002-2005) and EPIP (Environmental Policy Initiatives Project, 2006-2009) have built on and carried forward this legacy by identifying contexts, issues, and opportunities through research, consultation, discussion, and publications. The Council is proud of its contribution on advancing innovative policy options for a sustainable agri-food industry and agricultural land base in Alberta that will remain profitable for future generations.

This report chronicles the milestones, progress and partnerships that made them possible. It also provides a perspective on current accomplishments, goals, gaps, and next steps required to keep improving the agri-environmental policy architecture in Alberta. AFC acknowledges the basis set for land use and stewardship policy in the provincial Land Use Framework and the Institute for Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment, looking forward to their rapid progress. The Council also reiterates its expectation that federal and provincial policies and programs, particularly Growing Forward, will significantly address environmental concerns and support a sustainable agri-food industry.

Out of nearly a decade of experience and intensive activity, a few observations are offered for industry and government on priorities and gaps. Further distinction is necessary on policy goals for retaining and stimulating sustainable land management practices and the provision of public goods. Also required is discussion and decisions on topics such as climate change, agriculture's relationship to oil and gas, water issues, energy dependency and efficiency, urban sprawl, and surface rights with leadership, awareness, consultation and collaboration.

## AG SUMMIT 2000

The 1980s and 1990s was a period of growth for Alberta's agri-food industry. By 2000, that growth had levelled off and was challenged by a more global, competitive, technology-oriented and market-driven environment. New approaches were necessary. The Agriculture and Food Council and the provincial Ministry of Agriculture partnered in a consultative process with the industry, Ag Summit 2000, to address issues and opportunities.

Hundreds of stakeholders from all industry sectors and several government departments and agencies were engaged in the Ag Summit 2000 consultation. Ag Summit 2000 generated ten challenge/opportunity clusters to be addressed and a short list of overarching issues. Of the 45 areas considered, land use and stewardship surfaced as second and third, respectively in order of priority.

Volunteer "Action Teams" of industry and government leaders, including Council members, were formed to examine these issues in greater depth and to provide action and strategy frameworks. Agrivantage was charged with overseeing the completion of these Action Teams' mandates. By 2002, the findings and recommendations were summarized in the report ***Building Tomorrow Together***, as well as in topic specific documents such as ***Towards the Development of a Provincial Land Use Strategy for Alberta*** and ***Environmental Stewardship Strategic Action Plan***.

Concurrently, the federal government released the new Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) that included an Environment pillar. The large suite of APF Environment programs was aimed at achieving meaningful and measurable improvements in soil, water, air quality and the industry's impact on biodiversity; researching and developing new on-farm beneficial management practices; and making environmental information available for better land use planning and management. There were promising synergies for amplified results in land use and environmental stewardship policy development.

# AGRIVANTAGE 2002

## Land Use Core Action Team

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was clear that the land base in Alberta was at risk due to a number of pressures including large growth in natural resource-based sectors (oil and gas, forestry and agriculture); increased conflict and competition for land among these sectors; and urban, industrial and country residential development. There was no indication these pressures would disappear or slow down. From 1976 to 2000, an average of 55,000 acres of agricultural land was annually converted to other uses. Though legislation and policy was in place to regulate land use, they were inadequate and lacked the means for monitoring or enforcement. All sectors of Alberta's economy acknowledged the need for commitment with current and future generations for a unified, provincial, intelligent, collaborative, science-based, and publicly-supported land use plan.

The Land Use Core Action Team provided five key recommendations aimed at achieving a long-term sustainable land use policy framework:

- 1. Partnership** – Between the province and municipalities (urban and rural), all industry sectors and society, to establish a philosophy of sustainable land use, improve communications and coordination, and develop strategies. A multi-sector land use advisory and liaison body should be established to develop and implement the long-term vision.
- 2. Province-wide framework for land use** – Comprehensive policy and regulation framework adopted by the provincial government that is rigorous, enforceable and based on input from Albertans. It should align municipal and provincial policies and initiatives, set apart priority protection areas, and identify performance standards and compliance mechanisms.
- 3. Resources and tools** – Providing technical and financial support to planners and decision-makers; enabling identification of priority areas and best management practices; and considering long-term costs, benefits and cumulative effects.
- 4. Fiscal incentives and conservation programs** – Sufficiently investigated, to retain sustainable agricultural landscapes by matching environmental decisions with good business decisions through market incentives for ecological goods and services (to be identified by the Environmental Stewardship Action Team). The government should involve landowners and communities through education and extension and allow municipalities to test and adapt these new tools to their planning processes.
- 5. Continuous communication, strategic planning and liaison** – With industry and government, through consultation, discussion papers and a multi-sector conference.

## Environmental Stewardship Action Team (ESAT)

If degradation of land and natural resources was a concern, it made sense that initiatives for sustainable management were a high priority for Albertans in Ag Summit 2000. The main problems comprised loss of land, water quality, pesticide and fertilizer use, waste disposal, and even food safety and animal welfare. These pressures were coupled with two main dynamics: 1) increased consumer demand for safer and environmentally-sound food production, and 2) global commitments to agricultural policy reform, trade liberalization, conservation of biodiversity, and reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions.

Not all agricultural practices are positive, but there have been many landowners acting as good stewards of the ecosystem and providing environmental goods and services (EG&S) such as cleaning water and air or providing habitat for wildlife, thereby enabling the availability of public goods which everybody enjoys. They have been doing so without compensation, with their own resources, because society does not value and reward their effort and contribution. Should a value be attached to these EG&S and an economic return provided to these landowners, more would be willing to engage in environmental stewardship.

Four goals and respective strategies were identified by the ESAT to advance this vision:

- 1. Land managers understand benefits and opportunities from EG&S** – Benchmarking current knowledge, collecting and evaluating information on EG&S, synthesizing and disseminating this information, and gaining political acceptance of these concepts.
- 2. Society understands agricultural landscapes help achieve environmental goals** – Understanding what Albertans want from these landscapes, disseminating information on EG&S, and demonstrating that land managers can provide EG&S.
- 3. Value EG&S through market-based solutions, incentives and other economic instruments** – Using socio-economic analysis, identifying production types that generate EG&S, recognizing economic instruments that value EG&S monetarily, testing options through pilots, and finding funding sources.
- 4. Removal of policy barriers for EG&S development** – Analysing current policies that motivate landowners' practices, and reviewing related policies, programs and legislation.



*"I appreciate the contributions of all who have been involved throughout the years in this important, visionary and timely initiative that has led to better policy decisions."*

—Kenton Ziegler, Farmer, EPIP Member

The Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) Council took the lead on evaluating the feasibility of EG&S in 2003 as per the recommendations of Agrivantage's ESAT. Members of the Agriculture and Food Council participated in the steering committee that would identify opportunities for agricultural producers and develop a business case for implementing EG&S programs in Alberta. The group moved forward on the identification of the effects of agricultural practices on water, soil, air and biodiversity, and the classification of risks and best management practices. They concluded that more planning, clear policies, awareness and education, monitoring capacity, and coordination with government, academia, industry and not-for-profit organizations was necessary to proceed, but that there was potential for these programs to maintain and restore the environment. It was also noted that a number of pilots with relevant participation from industry would pave the way to widespread adoption.

A later component of the AESA-led project was an evaluation of EG&S competitiveness undertaken by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. A few summary notes of that report are worth reviewing. First, regulation should be complemented with other policy instruments, depending on the source of ecological degradation, goals, regional contexts, and cost effectiveness. Market-based instruments are not only more cost-effective but are also flexible and allow innovative solutions to emerge, thus spurring competitiveness. These instruments had been tried in other parts of the world and a SWOT analysis was recommended to understand mechanisms such as cap and trade, subsidies, fees/charges/taxes, information disclosure, voluntary actions, and liability. Finally, it was concluded that these economic instruments can have a positive impact on value creation from crops and EG&S. AFC engaged in these discussions, adding information and an industry perspective, as detailed below.

## AG SUMMIT AND AGRIVANTAGE STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2003–2005

The Agriculture and Food Council continued with consultation, research, and information sharing with stakeholders to better understand the opportunities and challenges related to land use and environmental stewardship policy. In 2003, under the direction of a Council Committee of industry leaders, the Ag Summit and Agrivantage Strategic Initiative (AGSASI) was established with two objectives: 1) assess options for land use policy and legislation that can be consistently applied and will balance various interests, and 2) examine if and how value can be ascribed to the rural environment and assess ways in which EG&S can be incorporated into the agriculture economy. Two public documents were released in 2005.

The report ***Land Use Policy and the Agri-Food Industry in Alberta*** comprises a thorough review of the trends and issues affecting the land base: expansion of land uses onto unaltered land, competition for land among uses, and intensification of these uses, which are a result of industry growth (in oil and gas, forestry, and agri-food), expanding urban populations, acreage subdivision, increased demand for tourism and recreation activities, heightened concern for the natural environment, and changing expectations about the role of governments.

The analysis used an innovative approach: natural capital. This concept enabled understanding that land is an asset to be maintained and protected for future generations because it supports important economic, ecological, and social processes and activities. The reconciliation of land uses and interests among industries and stakeholders is paramount to the preservation of natural capital and sustainability goals. Working agricultural lands are a major component of Alberta's natural capital and thus their fragmentation is concerning.

The AGSASI Committee offered a set of recommendations for consideration by the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, as well as an agenda for the agri-food industry in developing new land use policy frameworks in Alberta. The recommendations were:

- 1. Develop a shared vision and goals** – Acknowledging and accepting land as a component of natural capital.
- 2. Commit to new strategic policy priorities** – Including strategic and business plans, performance measures and desirable outcomes for government and industry.
- 3. Develop and implement a province-wide data measurement and monitoring system** – Providing timely and relevant information for decision-makers on key environmental, economic and social indicators.
- 4. Increase communication and collaboration among stakeholders** – Raising awareness and building consensus on policy issues.

5. **Mandate coordinated and integrated planning** – By policy-makers and government departments and agencies.
6. **Review provincial policies** – Providing clear and consistent direction in economic, social and ecological elements.
7. **Increase the capacity of municipalities to plan and manage within the provincial policy framework** – Allowing effective, enforceable, and appropriate land use decisions.
8. **Support the preservation of agricultural land** – Protecting natural capital value with new policy approaches and tools.

In view of the need for increased discussion and awareness, AGSASI offered a concise agenda for consideration by industry:

1. **Agree on shared principles** – Starting with the protection of natural capital as a common platform.
2. **Engage and stay engaged** – Ensuring the industry is informed and aware.
3. **Ensure the agri-food industry is an active participant** – In dialogue with other resource industries, governments, and the public.
4. **Promote understanding among other industry stakeholders** – Increasing communication, collaboration and dialogue.
5. **Partner with governments** – Federal, provincial, and municipal, communicating the industry perspectives to policy and decision-makers.

Consolidating Alberta’s land use policy and planning framework remained a challenge to be addressed if the ecological, economic, and social benefits provided by the province’s land base were to be sustained. Consideration of agri-food industry needs, perspectives, and issues is critical in developing the shared vision and goals that will guide land use policy and decisions.

In Alberta, the majority of landholders are agricultural producers. They own or lease the vast majority of the private land in the province, and land is their principal capital input resource. Through ownership and by virtue of what they do, primary producers are stewards of the natural environment. If their farming practices are sustainable, they provide EG&S that society enjoys. However, the costs of these environmental and social benefits are borne by producers at their own expense. The report *Recognizing and Supporting Environmental Stewardship within the Agri-Food Industry* begins with this argument and seeks to identify options to recognize and reward good stewardship by primary agricultural producers.

The “natural capital” concept is a useful approach because it enables the ecological and social values of the environment to be defined and discussed in economic terms. The monetary value of stewardship becomes clear, as does the rationale that supports rewarding producers who make sustainability of the environment a priority and provide enhanced EG&S.

The policy options to protect and enhance natural capital include education and awareness, government regulation, and economic instruments. In general, the use of economic instruments can be more cost-effective than regulation and include a number of choices such as subsidies, incentives or tradable permits. Several jurisdictions in other parts of the world have established policies and programs that reward stewardship with economic instruments. The report points out that most of these initiatives are publicly-funded, voluntary subsidy programs, supplemented by regulatory frameworks. One of the important contributions of the AGSASI report on stewardship is the comparative summary of EG&S initiatives in other jurisdictions.

Back in 2005, Canada was ready for solid program development in this area. A number of trends and pressures kept pushing, like stronger public opinion about the protection of natural capital, science-based evidence linking ecosystem function to human health, cumulative impacts on the land, and public acceptability of related programs. The Council’s AGSASI report offered valuable observations to be considered in the pursuit of innovative stewardship policies:

1. **A common understanding is essential** – Within the industry, and with policy makers and the public.
2. **It’s a win/win/win** – For agricultural producers, society, and the environment.
3. **Stewardship is more than mitigation** – And policy options should differentiate between mitigation of negative impacts and the encouragement of stewardship of natural capital.
4. **A balance of instruments is required** – Including voluntary, flexible, cost-effective options.
5. **Initiatives should be complementary to public program and policy frameworks** – Taking into account agricultural policies and international trade agreements.
6. **Diversity within industry should be considered** – Considering different types of operations, regional characteristics, management styles, and producer attitudes; recognizing those that have made stewardship a priority.
7. **Program planning and design are critical** – Regarding governance, program objectives and administrative details.
8. **It’s already happening** – Successfully implemented policies that reward stewardship.

Specific actions were suggested for the industry in order to capture opportunities in stewardship and the commodification of EG&S:

1. **Embrace the notion of stewardship** – Realizing the industry's contributions and inherent responsibility to sustainability.
2. **Walk the talk** – Committing to high environmental standards and ensuring stewardship is valued.
3. **Promote the concept and engage others** – Gaining support from all levels of government, other industries and the general public.
4. **Lead change that results in a culture shift** – Enabling recognition of the contributions of agri-food in a new way, as an EG&S provider.
5. **Collaborate to support implementation** – Based on a common understanding, defined policy and program objectives, as well as appropriate instruments and options.

Of course, governments also have significant interests and roles in ensuring the protection of the environment. The observations offered by AGSASI for consideration by government in pursuit of stewardship policy and programs follow:

1. **Industry supports a non-traditional approach** – It may be time to explore alternative options to traditional policy development, administrative and operational processes, including economic instruments.
2. **Collaboration and communication are key** – Within government, with the public and with industry, for effective design and implementation of any initiative.
3. **The removal of barriers is imperative** – Reviewing current policies and programs, removing disincentives.
4. **A pilot program may be appropriate** – Focusing on environmental outcomes, with tiered incentives, that will lead to better planning and implementation.
5. **Perfection is unattainable** – Trade-offs need to be considered in open consultation with industry and the public.

The concluding observations of AGSASI were optimistic. There was tangible momentum to move forward adequate policy options and innovative instruments to reward environmental stewardship in the agri-food industry. Both industry and government were well positioned to recognize, develop and work collaboratively to seize this opportunity. At the same time, further consideration and consultation was needed and AFC stayed involved to enable this, consistent with its ongoing mission to act as a catalyst.

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INITIATIVES PROJECT (EPIP) 2006–2009

Both AGSASI reports were widely circulated among industry stakeholders, government officials, and the public at large, and the Council received positive feedback and support for continuing this type of policy work. Furthermore, pressures on land were escalating due to rapid growth in the province, increasingly jeopardizing available quality agricultural lands. These growth pressures included expanding urban populations; increased demand for acreage subdivisions; growing demand for tourism and recreational activities; expansion of natural resource industries such as oil, gas, and forestry; and intensification of agricultural operations. At the same time, consumer interest and demand for sustainable food production continued to increase, including questions and concerns around land use and environmental stewardship.

The Council launched the Environmental Policy Initiatives Project (EPIP) in July 2006 to consult on the land use and stewardship reports and to further explore the concepts and policy options they presented. The initiative included a policy event, numerous meetings and consultations with stakeholders involving nearly 300 participants engaged in comprehensive discussions of topics such as land use zoning and planning, policy development and leadership, information needs, engagement in environmental stewardship, and new problems. Again, a public report capturing the findings of our consultation and research, entitled ***Reviewing Land Use and Environmental Stewardship in Agriculture. Observations from the 2007 Public Consultation*** was produced and circulated to stakeholders. Over 900 stakeholders have accessed this document.

The consultation confirmed the need for a long-term vision on land use and environmental stewardship. This vision needs to reflect desired economic outcomes of stakeholders while respecting environmental and societal values. It should recognize that the agri-food industry will remain viable only with well-managed natural resources as well as access to quality land, education, research, innovation, and public policy supporting the foundation of a sustainable industry. Such a vision should come from the Government of Alberta and be a guiding, unifying principle implemented throughout the province.

EPIP included further refining and better understanding of the concept of natural capital, linking economic prosperity and environmental protection. Sustaining natural capital is a precondition for economic prosperity and the value of natural capital needs to be incorporated into public policy and programming. Agricultural land, if managed in a proper and sustainable way, has the potential to offer environmental goods and services indefinitely and, as such, is renewable natural capital.

Another innovative proposition was a long-due integration of these two issues. A comprehensive approach marrying the goals of land use policy with environmental stewardship tools can ensure that future generations of farmers and ranchers in Alberta will have the land base necessary to operate while all Albertans will enjoy the benefits of clean water and air, aesthetically pleasing landscapes and ecologically-sound habitats that ensure a wealth of biodiversity. Transcending traditional views of agriculture beyond land for food and fibre production to include preservation and enhancement of natural capital may yield enhanced economic, social, and environmental benefits.

EPIP offered seven summary observations that emerged from the public consultation process and its other activities that resonate with previous recommendations and provide further detail:

- 1. An integrated provincial land use planning agency** – With government and industry representation that should be able to:
  - a. Coordinate the provincial land use strategy** – Ensuring land use decisions at the municipal level reflect the shared vision set out by government;
  - b. Assist municipalities with land use planning and strategies;**
  - c. Coordinate regional discussions and negotiations** – Where land use decisions extend beyond municipal boundaries;
  - d. Allow dispute resolution** – Making recommendations, particularly on issues conflicting with economic growth;
  - e. Work closely with pertinent agencies** – Ensuring appropriate consultation takes place with affected stakeholders;
  - f. Develop appropriate monitoring systems** – Guaranteeing planning and municipal development upholds to the provincial vision, legislation and regulations;
  - g. Report on progress, issues, and limitations.**
- 2. A province-wide inventory of natural capital** – Setting appropriate baseline information on land, water, habitats, wildlife, infrastructure, and non-renewable natural resources for the identification and implementation of good management practices.
- 3. Incorporation of environmental stewardship principles** – Guiding economic development and land use decision-making.
- 4. Appropriate policy incentives** – Supporting economic instruments such as transfer of development credits, tradable permits, conservation easements, tax credits, or labelling initiatives to ensure municipalities and industries embrace sound environmental stewardship.

- 5. Pilot projects** – Testing the merits of various economic instruments and allowing the development of expert capacity in the design and implementation by communities and municipalities.
- 6. A review of current land use and environmental stewardship policy effectiveness** – Evaluating current implementation and enforcement.
- 7. Communication activities** – Increasing awareness by highlighting progress on land use and stewardship initiatives, advancing competitive advantages and market access.

This consultative project concludes with the expectation that, given the current trends and pressures, government and industry will respond with enhanced planning, coordination, discussion, partnerships, and awareness that will allow primary agricultural production to be viable and sustainable.

*“There is a significant opportunity for agriculture, as a land and water-based industry, to expand its current food-focused context to one of food production and provision of high value ecological services. To accomplish this will require strategic leadership and intent, policy development capacity, the best science we have, and a willingness of industry to support the journey.”*

—Kim Schmitt, Biologist, AGSASI and EPIP Member

## 2009 – LOOKING AHEAD

Many of the issues and challenges identified in 2000 are still present and pressing. On some, however, there has been progress.

In 2008, the provincial government released the Land Use Framework (LUF), built in consultation with stakeholders. The Framework includes key elements of the original vision out of Ag Summit 2000, and enriched by AFC and others, such as:

- a land use advisory and liaison body;
- consideration of regional diversity; and
- a mandate for developing technical and financial resources for preserving agricultural land in market-based instruments.

Council activities and reports were shared with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development staff leading the development of the LUF. We note with pride and satisfaction that the main findings, observations, and policy options we identified through our research, analysis, and industry consultations are reflected in the Framework. The LUF is the first step of an important initiative, which will require continuous reviews and improvements as any policy process. However, the Council is excited and honoured that the industry has this solid base on which to build.

The development of environmental stewardship options has progressed more slowly, not because society has lost interest or ecosystem degradation has stopped; quite the opposite. The Institute for Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment (IAFE) was announced early in 2008 by the provincial government with the mandate to identify environmentally-friendly products and practices to green Alberta's agriculture and forestry industries and help make them more innovative, competitive, and profitable. The Institute is expected to develop a policy framework for EG&S markets within Alberta; develop an approach to documenting the environmentally-sound production practices used to produce renewable resource products in Alberta, and identify how to use this information to brand Alberta's environmental stewardship; and identify environmentally-sound practices used in other parts of the world that can be adopted to increase market access for Alberta's renewable resource industries. IAFE's board was appointed in full by June and has begun to examine some issues based on research currently underway. The Council looks forward to rapid and necessary progress in this area that will allow sustainability and competitiveness for the agri-food industry by recognizing stewardship of our natural capital.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is replacing the Agricultural Policy Framework with a new suite of policy and programs: Growing Forward. Canada's federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Agriculture endorsed Growing Forward in July of 2008. This new agenda is focused on three strategic outcomes, one of them being "A sector that contributes to society's priorities", which includes research into agricultural practices that improve environmental performance; support for the adoption of management practices that create benefits or reduce risk in priority areas; the dissemination of knowledge and information on environmentally-sound practices; and measurement of the sector's environmental performance. At the time of writing this report, the federal and provincial governments are negotiating bilateral agreements to finalize program details prior to March 31, 2009. The Council reiterates its expectation that Growing Forward programs will significantly address environmental stewardship concerns based on an understanding of the crucial role they play in a thriving and sustainable agri-food industry.

Out of all of these activities and initiatives, over nearly a decade, a recurring recommendation has been to configure pilot projects of the economic instruments that recognize and reward stewardship. Several government, academic and industry initiatives (sometimes in partnership) have opportunely taken on this task. One example is the pilot projects on EG&S led by AAFC. These projects offer the opportunity to test different approaches to EG&S programming in various circumstances and will help the federal and provincial governments build the common understanding necessary to develop effective policies. The Council would like to point out and anticipate the next steps, when the findings from these pilots are identified and embedded in institutional frameworks that enable the implementation and adoption of widespread innovative land stewardship policies and programs.



Principally because of limited resources, effective April 1, 2009, AFC will be concluding its land use and stewardship initiatives. However, we perceive there are a number of issues and trends still unaddressed, some urgent and requiring explicit policy direction, commitment and collaboration. Out of nearly a decade of experience and intensive activity in these areas, AFC would like to offer the following observations on priorities and gaps for consideration by industry and government:

- clear distinction between policies aimed at minimizing environmental degradation and those for rewarding and enhancing land stewardship that provides EG&S;
- clear distinction on whether the goal of land stewardship policies is the conservation of undisturbed land, the preservation and enhancement of agricultural land managed in a sustainable way, or both;
- increased government support for land management practices with low private rewards but high public benefits;
- more opportunities for bundles of EG&S in land, water, air, and biodiversity, including cross-sectoral collaborations and community approaches;
- climate change and its potential impacts;
- agriculture's relationship to the oil and gas industry;
- water, irrigation, and wetland issues;
- energy dependency on non-renewable sources;
- energy efficiency in agri-food;
- urban sprawl and planning; and
- clarification on property rights.

Addressing these successfully will require leadership, increased and improved communication and awareness, wide-ranging consultation, and balanced ecological, economic, and social perspectives.

## SYNERGIES, PARTNERS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Other organizations have shared these important activities with us, sometimes consolidating mutual interests and synergies into formal partnerships. One of the strongest has been with the Government of Alberta, beginning with Ag Summit 2000 and through Agrivantage. Council's AGSASI project was possible thanks to seconded staff support from Alberta Agriculture. Both AGSASI and EPIP were financed jointly by federal funds administered by the Council and provincial grant contributions. Cordial communication and trust have been primary characteristics of this long-lasting relationship.

As mentioned, a mutually productive partnership was also developed with the AESA Council. Other friends, supporters and collaborators over these years include the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company, AAFC, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Canada West Foundation, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Action for Agriculture, Land Stewardship Centre of Canada, Agricultural Fieldmen, Alberta Institute of Agrologists, and, more recently, the IAFE.

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*"The values of society shift with time. Since Ag Summit 2000 there has been a gradual shift to recognize that the way land use and environment are handled can have profound effects, either positive or negative, on the economic, social and environmental health of our rural and urban communities, food producers and consumers and on the general health and welfare of our country. It is gratifying to see that some increased awareness has been achieved, in part through such work as has been conducted by the Agriculture and Food Council, though much is left to be done in terms of enabling such emerging concepts to contribute to sustainable futures."*

—Jim Smith, PAg, ESAT and EPIP Member



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