



Manitoba's Forages and Grasslands Well-Positioned in Province's Protein Plan

MFGA applauds province's sustainable protein strategy; role of grasses and forages seen as critical component of strategy

Winnipeg, Mb (Jan 22, 2019) – Manitoba's forage and grassland industry appears to be getting some well-deserved sunshine within the Manitoba government's first-of-its-kind sustainable protein strategy announced by Manitoba Agriculture Minister Ralph Eichler at Manitoba Ag Days in Brandon today.

"With world demand continuing to grow for high-quality protein, Manitoba producers have an exciting opportunity to feature their products in an increased global market," said Eichler in a media release. "Our strategy will seek to grow livestock herds for animal protein and new acres for plant protein, while ensuring our province remains a strong environment for investment and that our government is attuned to the needs of producers."

While consultation on the plan was clearly identified as the next step ahead, several key priorities of the announced strategy merge easily into Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association (MFGA) vision of vibrant grasslands and prosperous forage crops on Manitoba's agricultural lands such as increasing the beef-breeding herd, continuing to develop the sheep industry, new investments in new plant protein extraction, and positioning Manitoba as a leading research and development centre in North America for plant protein extraction technology. MFGA leaders were keen to learn more as to how MFGA can help shape the plan and then take the plan forward to MFGA's producers, networks and partners.

"MFGA works towards and promotes the economic prosperity and environmental benefits of forages, grasslands, cover crops and healthy soils," said Darren Chapman, MFGA Chair. "These healthy and prosperous lands will benefit forage and grassland producers, local communities and society as a whole. They also seem to have a strong fit with and align seamlessly with some of the key components of the Minister's announcement."

The strategy will also maintain the Manitoba government's focus on creating an environment for and attracting investment while supporting research and innovation

"On a national scale, Manitoba is a forage and grassland powerhouse and clearly the Minister's plan involves our industry in our province," said Darren Chapman, MFGA Chair. "Any high level strategy like the Minister's announcement today always has an upside for the industry it supports. We are very interested in learning more on the strategy and how we can help."

According to Chapman, the provincial focus on grasslands and forages is super timely and welcomed. He sees improved range management, improved water quality via landscape and nutrient management and

the retention of fragile lands that are better left for livestock production as immediate players in discussions ahead around the strategy.

“It is clear that the Minister and Manitoba Agriculture leaders clearly understand the importance of the grasslands and forage industry as a livestock food source and also as great providers of benefits to society around water management, air quality and soil health,” said Chapman. “This plan could support a push for on-farm producer-focused research, extension efforts and resulting communications around grassland benefits provided by grassland and forage producers would encourage stronger management, a bigger network and cohesive efforts of forage production and grasslands retention. We are very keen to be part of the future conversations and programs. We are 100 per cent onboard.”

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