



In 2003, the Canadian Seed Alliance undertook a review of the seed sector as a first step towards building an improved policy and regulatory framework for Canada's seed industry. The review involved a broad inclusion of views from farmers, processors and others across the country, culminating in recommendations for a new consensus-based approach to sector-government consultation on regulatory change. In particular, the Seed Sector Review called for establishment of an industry-wide consultative body to enable consensus building and advice to governments on key issues. An implementation proposal was circulated in December 2004 and following further feedback from interested parties, a meeting was convened in Winnipeg on April 6 and 7, 2005, to decide on initial membership and governance structure and to discuss priority actions.

**The purpose of this report is to summarize the outcomes of this inaugural meeting of the National Forum on Seed.**

## EXPECTATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS FOR THIS INAUGURAL MEETING

The participants were asked to share their objectives and expectations for the proposed national body.

### Key reasons cited for attending the forum included:

- to build better understanding among seed industry, crop producers, regulators, end users and other stakeholders;
- to create an all-inclusive consultative process leading to consensus on major issues;
- to foster a more predictable, responsive regulatory change environment;
- to ensure transparency and full involvement of primary producers in the consultative process;
- to move forward with the process and start making a difference on current areas of concern;
- to contribute to an environment that will attract ongoing innovation and investment;
- to "mold" a future seed industry, profitable for all in the value chain.

The meeting format provided opportunities for input by other attendees at the outset and at intervals throughout the agenda.

## SEED SECTOR REVIEW - 2003-2004

Members of the Seed Sector Review Steering Committee briefed participants on the process and conclusions of the review, expanding on the factors underpinning the future of the industry and issues and concerns raised by various groups, including regional and commodity organizations. Now that the review is complete, the proposed activities approved for funding under Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food (ACAAF) Program over the next two years will carry forward on the recommendation for a national forum to build stakeholder consensus on matters of seed policy and regulation. The full set of approved activities under this phase of the ACAAF contribution is presented in Appendix 2.

## GOVERNANCE OF NATIONAL FORUM ON SEED

An overview of the proposed National Forum process was presented, including suggested aim and mandate, expectations regarding consensus, and a possible structure and membership which incorporated feedback from groups previously consulted. These elements were discussed and debated over the next two days. A number of additional considerations, models and ideas were put forward and consensus was reached to proceed on the following basis.

### AIM ▼

"To create a timely process for consensus-based advice to governments on policy and regulatory issues related to Canada's seed sector."

It was understood that "advice to governments" was a broad term that could comprise industry self-regulation or other actions taken independent of government. The Aim Statement is further clarified by inclusion of the following sentence: "The National Forum is intended to create the means for broad-based consultation and consensus building across the seed sector and with its primary customers and other stakeholders."

### MANDATE ▼

"To facilitate broad consultation and consensus building in the Canadian seed and crop sectors on all proposals for seed sector policy or regulatory change."

The Mandate Statement also includes a secondary sentence of elaboration: "This mandate supports the larger goal of shared economic benefit throughout the entire value chain, from the plant breeder through commercial production to the end-user."



## MEMBERSHIP ▼

Following extensive discussion on the importance of regional balance and adequate representation of producer groups; how to ensure input from the entire value chain and other stakeholders without making the consultation process unwieldy; and, whether Forum membership should comprise “wise persons” or “representatives” of organizations, participants coalesced around a simplified core membership for the Forum Round Table.

This consensus structure is detailed in Appendix I.

It was decided that a renewed invitation of membership in the Forum should be extended to the National Farmers Union. Participants also noted that membership may evolve over time based on experience with the consultation process and the ability and commitment of organizations to sustain the Forum and its constituent Working Groups.

## CONSENSUS APPROACH ▼

There was general agreement that the Forum and its Working Groups should strive to reach consensus when identifying issues, setting priorities, and providing substantive advice to governments. However, it was recognized that unanimity would not always be achievable and that majority votes would not necessarily be an appropriate measure of consensus. Documenting dissent was also seen as important. The following principles were adopted:

- The decision process is centered on a collaborative approach to shaping a best-balanced option – i.e. one that most parties can agree with and none are fundamentally opposed to.
- Voting is a tool to determine the degree of support for a given option or motion.
- If an organization or sub-sector is fundamentally opposed to a direction or emerging consensus, every effort should be made to bridge the disagreement. Failing that, both the consensus view and the dissenting view(s), including reasons, will be documented and reported to government as a “State of Debate” report.

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES ▼

Different governance models were proposed and discussed, with consensus being developed around the following respective roles and responsibilities: The Forum Round Table will act as the governing body to identify issues of interest in keeping with the aim and mandate; organize consultation processes to explore these issues including Working Groups; determine scope and membership of Working Groups, objectives, deliverables, timelines and so on; review progress of Working Groups and provide comments, feedback and advice; receive final reports and present these to government with such additional comments as might add value to the advice.

**The Working Group(s)** are to be the primary vehicle to develop consensus-based recommendations on specific policy and regulatory issues which impact the seed sector.

**The Executive Committee** (4 persons named by CFA, CSGA, CSTA, and GGC) will plan meeting agendas and provide operational guidance to the Forum Secretariat and Management Committee.

**The Management Committee** (Executive Directors of 4 Canadian Seed Alliance organizations) will carry out work assigned to it by the Forum Round Table and the Executive Committee.

**The Forum Secretariat** (secretariat manager and officers) will support the entire governance model in the implementation of plans and activities.

Participants expressed interest in getting further information on the functioning of other national and international fora. Dr. Bryan Harvey, University of Saskatchewan, and Mike Scheffel, CFIA, were requested to seek out and report additional information that might be pertinent to this seed sector consultation process.

## MEETING FORMAT, PROCESS & FREQUENCY ▼

There was general agreement on the following:

- A Forum Chair (or Co-chairs) will be elected to direct the meetings. Meetings of the Forum Round Table will normally be held 3-4 times per year, with meeting dates set, wherever possible, at least two months in advance.



- Member organizations will have a single “seat” at the meetings, but attendance will be open to accompanying representatives and other stakeholders – these additional attendees will have opportunities to participate on agenda items of interest to them, with time limits possibly applied at the discretion of the Chair.

## VARIETY REGISTRATION

- There was full agreement that Variety Registration was the logical first priority for consultation activity for the new National Forum on Seed. The results of the Variety Registration Working Group meeting held in Ottawa in late January were considered and commended. These will serve as a platform for further work.
- Members strongly expressed the need to move forward as quickly as possible on the areas of Variety Registration reform where consensus has been identified. Questions were raised regarding the CFIA’s reaction to the Working Group report, as well as the timing and nature of the Agency’s own plans for changes in the variety registration process. CFIA representatives indicated that the Agency intends to come forward soon with a proposal, but the exact timing for this is uncertain. They said the January Variety Registration workshop, held jointly with CFIA’s own Advisory Committee on Variety Registration, had proven helpful, but more internal work is required before the Agency proposal can be finalized.
- A consensus decision was made that the Working Group on Variety Registration should continue. Members agreed that the Management Committee should consult with CFIA representatives to determine the timing and extent of the Working Group’s further work to ensure it will contribute effectively to timely action on this important regulatory initiative. In addition to timeliness, Forum members expressed a desire for the Working Group to seek input from end users not already consulted and to pursue consensus, where practical, in the areas identified in the Working Group report for further work and consultation.

## OTHER BUSINESS

Time permitted only a brief introduction of the proposed agenda items on Innovation and Co-existence. The Management Committee will prepare materials on these topics for the next Forum Round Table meeting tentatively planned for late May via teleconference.

## COMMUNICATIONS

For the time being, the Secretariat will field media and other queries, directing specific questions to Management Committee members and others where appropriate.

Members agreed on the importance of pro-active communications to inform government decision-makers and other stakeholders about the plans and activities of the National Forum on Seed. The Management Committee will work with the Secretariat on a communications plan/strategy for consideration at the Forum's next meeting. In the interim, members are encouraged to communicate the outcome of the inaugural meeting, particularly within their own organizations, underscoring the following key points:

- The Seed Sector Review was completed in Phase I.
- As recommended by the Seed Sector Review, a new broad-based industry consultation process is being launched to develop advice to governments on major policy and regulatory issues related to Canada’s seed industry.
- This National Forum on Seed will facilitate broad consultations and consensus building among all interested stakeholders.
  - An important goal of this consensus building is shared economic benefit from plant breeders, through seed and crop producers, to processors and consumers.

Besides further development of the new consensus-based consultation model, other priorities for the Forum are to move forward on the recommendations of the recently-convened Variety Registration Working Group, to foster an environment which encourages innovation, to streamline standards and delivery mechanisms and to explore and undertake a case study/gap analysis of regulatory impediments and opportunities related to co-existence.

- **The Forum members emphasized the important distinction that consultations regarding Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) legislation are a separate activity of government led by the CFIA and are not part of the Forum’s agenda. CFIA has no plan to consult the National Forum on Seed regarding PBR. Nor does the Forum have any plans to engage in a consultation on proposed changes to this Act.**



## Membership and Attendance Structure for Meetings

### Member Organizations of the Forum

**The member organizations are:**

- Canadian Federation of Agriculture
- Canadian Seed Growers' Association
- Canadian Seed Trade Association
- Canadian Wheat Board
- Commercial Seed Analysts Association of Canada
- CropLife Canada
- Grain Growers of Canada
- l'Union des Producteurs Agricoles
- Plant Breeder Communities
  - Private
  - Public
  - University
- Provincial Government Representative East
- Provincial Government Representative West
- Registered Seed Establishments

Each member organization has one (1) seat at the Forum Table. However, any member organization may send additional attendees. These additional attendees would include that organization's alternate Forum member and others who might assist the official representative with advice or information during meetings.

### Ex-officio Members of the Forum

The following Ex-officio members will attend the meetings. They will have seats at the table and may contribute to the discussion to provide advice, guidance, or support to Forum members.

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (2 seats at the table)
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency (1 seat at the table)
- Canadian Grain Commission (1 seat at the table)
- Executive Directors of the four ACAAF applicant organizations

### Invited guests

These will include guests invited to join the Forum Table for a particular meeting based on topics to be covered. The guests may be invited to make presentations or serve as resources for such topics.

### General Attendees

Interested stakeholders are welcome to attend the Forum meetings. Opportunities will be provided in the Forum meeting agenda for these stakeholders to express their views on the topics under discussion.

All attendees will be asked to contribute to the cost of the meeting expenses for breaks and meals.



# APPENDIX 2



Winnipeg – April 6 & 7, 2005

This chart presents the scope of ACAAf funded Activity related to the Seed Sector and accountability for each activity.

ACTIVITY <small>as approved and funded by ACAAf</small>	SUB-ACTIVITY	SPECIFIC PROJECT
<p><b>Activity 1:</b> National Seed Sector Consultative Process</p> <p>The activity is under the direction and responsibility of the NFS members. The role of the Management Committee is to ensure that the NFS adheres to its mandate and accounts for expenses, activities and outcomes to ACAAf.</p>	Create National Forum on Seed (NFS)	Convene Meetings
	Create Working Groups	Establish Working Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety Registration</li> <li>• Innovation and Co-existence</li> <li>• Other working groups as determined</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activity 2:</b> Streamlined Seed Crop Production Standards and Delivery Mechanisms</p> <p>The ACAAf applicants are accountable</p>	Production of revised <i>Canadian Regulations and Procedures for Pedigreed Seed Crop Production</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise Circular 6</li> </ul>
	Develop pilot projects on electronic (web-based) management of the delivery of seed crop inspection and seed certification activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs Analysis</li> <li>• Infrastructure Development</li> <li>• Develop Pilot Project</li> </ul>
	Review of public and private third party verification models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of 3<sup>rd</sup> party verification models.</li> <li>• Cost/Benefit and Value analysis of private inspection</li> <li>• Consult all affected stakeholders</li> <li>• Develop recommendations for future direction</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activity 3:</b> Investigating Analysis-based Verification Systems and Test Methods</p> <p>The ACAAf applicants are accountable</p>	Produce a Certified Reference Material (CRM) that will permit the validation of quantitative determination of glyphosate tolerant canola in samples of canola seed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop “bench-scale” method</li> <li>• Develop and validate quantitative PCR-methods for determination of glyphosate tolerant canola</li> <li>• Promote development of Canadian centre for GM crop CRMs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activity 4:</b> Managing and Regulating Co-existence of new bio-products Accountability as in Activity 1.</p>	Determine the needs for managing and regulating co-existence of new agricultural products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A case study or gap-analysis identifying barriers to commercialization</li> <li>• Convene with partners a symposium in 2006</li> </ul>