



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

Seed Sector Review: Q & A

Q. Who was involved in the Seed Sector Review?

A. The Seed Sector Review was driven by a collaborative effort of four national seed sector organizations: the Canadian Seed Growers Association (CSGA), the Canadian Seed Trade Association (CSTA), the Canadian Seed Institute (CSI) and the Grain Growers of Canada (GGC). Representatives of the four organizations formed a steering committee to provide overall direction and financial comptrollership with involvement from AAFC and CFIA.

An 18-member pan-sector Advisory Committee – with representation from the steering committee organizations, as well as the Commercial Seed Analysts Association of Canada (CSAAC), the Canadian Grain Commission and provincial governments – focussed the discussion and debate. Throughout the process, the advisory committee was aided by experts from the CFIA who could provide background on the current regulatory regime, rationale, international protocols and other information that was necessary to assess the current environment and provide a strategic outlook for the seed sector's future.

Q. How long did the review take?

A. The review began in mid-2003 and took about 10 months to complete. It is the first major assessment of the regulatory framework governing the Canadian seed sector in 20 years.

Q. Who does the seed sector encompass?

A. The Canadian seed industry includes researchers and plant breeders, 4,500 pedigreed seed growers, 1,400 seed establishments, more than 165 seed companies, plus various analyst and trade organizations.

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Q. Why do we need a Seed Sector Review?

A. There have been a number of significant changes in the role seed plays in Canadian agriculture since the last time a major review of the sector was conducted two decades ago. Globalization, technology and industry concentration have made a difference in how seed is produced and how the commodities grown from that seed are produced, processed, used and marketed in Canada and around the world. Furthermore, there is an evolution in the role of both government and industry in the sector. One example would be the growth of private-sector plant breeding. The seed sector review provides an opportunity to enhance the competitiveness of Canadian agriculture with industry-government cooperation.

Q. What did the review accomplish?

A. The report outlines key concerns of stakeholders and confirms the value that seed quality assurance plays in all sectors of the Canadian seed and grain industry. Four key result areas focus on the need to:

1. Improve regulatory flexibility and timeliness.
2. Foster an environment where science and innovation encourage product and market development.
3. Improve sector profitability through the entire industry, from cost recovery for research and plant breeding, to increased use of Certified seed and Identity Preservation (IP) programs at the commercial and farm-gate levels.
4. Build consumer acceptance and foster consumer confidence of new crop traits through quality assurance systems.

It is important to note that while much was accomplished, the report is also emphatic in noting there is much more to be done. To that end, the report details three categories of recommendations – categories A, B and C.

“Category A” recommendations are those where consensus was reached on the need *and* the direction of proposed changes. “Category B” recommendations encompass areas where there was consensus on the need for change, but more discussion is required on the direction. Finally, “Category C” details areas where there was agreement that more discussion should take place.

Taken together, the recommendations provide a road map for short and medium-term action.

Q. What about the recommendations of the report?

A. The *Report of the Seed Sector Advisory Committee* calls for the establishment of a permanent consultative body to coordinate progress on review recommendations. The new body would also facilitate future consultation and priority setting for regulatory change. The report also identified three priorities:

To restructure variety registration to create a more flexible system of registration information requirements based on crop kind. In pursuing this, the recommendation is that the starting point for each crop kind be the proposal developed by CFIA over the past few years.

To streamline the current body of regulations in order to transfer some of the technical standards from regulation into administrative manuals.

To ensure that Canada continues to provide a risk-based environment that supports and rewards innovation. For example, that Canada update its Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) legislation to conform to UPOV'91.

While these are the highlights, the complete set of recommendations are categorized under each section of the report – based on the triage of consensus (category A, B and C recommendations), as noted above.

Q. What is UPOV '91?

A. UPOV is an acronym for *l'Union pour la protection des obtentions végétales (International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants)*. The latest plant breeders' rights convention was signed internationally in 1991 by most countries with significant plant breeding activities – including Canada's major trading partners. Canada is a signatory to UPOV '91 but has yet to update its PBR legislation to reflect this international convention.

Q. Who funded the report?

A. The Seed Sector Review was made possible by a \$600,000 contribution from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund (CARD). The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) assisted the four partner organizations backing the Seed Sector Review with in-kind support, including professional expertise, staff services, and office infrastructure.

Q. How important was it that government and industry worked together on the report?

A. The report recognizes a continuing evolution or shift in the roles of industry and government in the regulation of the seed and grains sector – with industry acting as a consultant to government in a co-operative effort.

It is crucial that industry and government work together to plan updates to the regulatory framework that will ensure the international competitiveness and long-term viability of the sector. This working relationship is a model for the future and other reviews of regulating bodies and industry sectors.

Q. What happens now? What are the next steps?

A. For each of the four key result areas, the report identifies recommendations that were agreed to by the advisory committee and are therefore ready for implementation. It is now up to government and industry to consider implementing these recommendations – perhaps, as recommended, through a permanent consultative body.

In those areas under each key result where consensus on action was not attained, the consultative body could continue to work over the next one to three years on these particular topics.

Q. How will the recommendations be implemented?

A. We are encouraging all stakeholders involved in the seed industry to provide comment on the recommendations over the next three months. Voice your opinion by going to the Web site at: www.seedsectorreview.com

Should the report's recommendation of a permanent consultative body be adopted, the vision is for that body to support the implementation of the regulatory recommendations in this report, tackle some of the areas where the need for further consideration was identified in the report, and provide the mechanism for ongoing regulatory flexibility and responsiveness in the years ahead. See page 27 of the Report.

Q. Who is expected to be on the permanent consultative body?

A. A “permanent” consultative mechanism that can help facilitate regulatory flexibility and responsiveness is one area supported by the Review. It, however, is also one of the areas that do require further study, consultation, and assessment to ensure the consultative mechanism is constructed in a manner that does draw input from an even broader range of interests. In this regard, we look forward to working closely with all interested parties to form and implement the recommendation for a permanent consultative body. See page 27 of the Report.

For more information, or to read the complete report, visit www.seedsectorreview.com. This Web site is also open for a comment period of three months for feedback on the report and its recommendations.

The partner organizations in the Seed Sector Review process gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development fund (CARD) towards the success of this project.