



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Seed sector review targets regulatory change

OTTAWA, ONTARIO – May 5, 2004 – A first-of-its-kind seed industry partnership has recommended major regulatory changes for Canada's seed sector. The changes, if accepted, will modernize and streamline the entire seed regulatory framework, benefiting all participants from the plant breeder through to the consumer.

The establishment of a permanent, multi-stakeholder consultative body to bring about these changes and navigate future regulatory review is the signature recommendation of the report.

Four industry partners representing a broad spectrum from the seed and grain business – the Canadian Seed Growers' Association (CSGA), the Canadian Seed Trade Association (CSTA), the Canadian Seed Institute (CSI) and the Grain Growers of Canada (GGC) – were given logistical and advisory support from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in conducting a review of the seed sector and its current regulatory environment. The review's work was made possible with a contribution by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund (CARD).

The committee's recommendations are contained in *The Report of the Seed Sector Advisory Committee*, a comprehensive assessment, analysis and road map for the seed sector's future.

After a 10-month, industry-wide consultative process and fact-finding mission that included discussions with international seed organizations, these proposed changes are among the highlights of the report:

1. To implement a permanent, industry-wide consultative body that will:
 - provide advice on policy;
 - provide a mechanism for industry consultation and advice on priorities and proposals for regulatory and procedural change; and
 - provide a forum for industry/government dialogue on priority issues that involve many varied stakeholder interests.
2. To restructure variety registration to create a more flexible system of registration information requirements based on crop kind.
3. To streamline the current body of regulations in order to transfer some of the technical standards from regulation into administrative manuals.
4. To ensure that Canada continues to provide a risk-based environment that supports and rewards innovation. For example, that Canada updates its Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) legislation to conform to UPOV'91.

In addition to regulatory flexibility and responsiveness, the report also zeros in on the importance of fostering innovation in bio-based products, sector profitability, consumer acceptance and consumer confidence – providing a wide-ranging discussion on these issues but acknowledging that more debate is required on a path forward.

“This is an unprecedented industry-led, industry-wide review of what it will take to maintain and build upon Canada’s stellar reputation in domestic and international seed markets,” says Barry Reisner, a Saskatchewan seed grower and president of the CSGA. “It’s a very positive step toward building a solid, successful future for our industry.”

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’s been 20 years since a comprehensive review of the seed sector was undertaken and this kind of pan-industry assessment has never been done before,” says Dr. Tom Francis, past president of the CSTA. “I think the stakeholder groups involved can be proud of what they have accomplished and we are united in our decision to make the process of regulatory change the overriding priority. We certainly appreciate the foresight of AAFC and cooperation of CFIA in helping the committee to develop this forward-looking report.”

Echoing the sentiment of all of the review participants, Manitoba grain producer and representative of the Grain Growers of Canada Art Enns says the study was an excellent way to leverage the expertise of the entire industry. “A new consultative body – focused on results -- would help us keep the momentum going. Much has been accomplished, but there’s still more to be done,” he says.

To underscore that point, the report lays out three categories of recommendations. The actionable “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.

The Canadian Seed Sector Review included broad consultation with researchers and plant breeders, pedigreed seed growers, seed processing establishments, seed companies, government regulators, plus various seed analyst, grain growers and trade organizations.

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.

For more information, contact:

Dale Adolphe
Executive Director
Canadian Seed Growers Association
(613) 236-0497
adolphed@seedgrowers.ca

Cam Dahl
Executive Director
Grain Growers of Canada
(613) 233-9954
cdahl@ggc-pgc.ca

Dr. Bill Leask
Executive Vice-President
Canadian Seed Trade Association
(613) 829-9527
bleask@cdnseed.org

Jim McCullagh
Executive Director
Canadian Seed Institute
(613) 236-6451
jimccullagh@csi.ics.com