

Executive Summary from Five Year Strategic Plan for Forage Seed Industry in Peace Region

The Alberta and British Columbia Peace Region is the world's 2nd largest turf and forage seed production region. Traditionally, the Peace Region has 220,000 to 250,000 acres of turf and forage seed production, translating into \$30 to \$40 million of farm gate sales per year. Certified seed production is on the rise as this region becomes recognized for its ability to produce quality cool season turf and forage seed crops. The production of native grass seed has blossomed in recent years. This region will continue to have a competitive advantage over other forage seed producing areas in the world and the trends of growers producing top quality seeds is expected to continue.

There is currently a willingness by growers, seed trade and researchers to work cooperatively together on a number of research and extension initiatives. This atmosphere of researchers, growers, seed processors and marketers pulling together is one of the region's most important strengths and represents a great opportunity for the forage seed industry in the Peace. The region's forage seed industry recognizes the Peace Region Forage Seed Association as the most logical and credible for a single voice to represent their interests.

The Peace Region Forage Seed Association coordinates forage seed activity in the Peace River Region of both Alberta and British Columbia. In order to have continued growth in the forage and turf seed industry, there must be a consistent supply of high quality seed produced. As the Peace Region Forage Seed Association entered its seventh year, this relatively new association faced some unique challenges and opportunities. Funding programs to maintain a part time manager were disappearing and government support was declining. The association had reached a stage where it had to make decisions about whether it should decrease its activity level to mostly extension projects (e.g. newsletters, tours, seminars) or continue with its goal of further developing the forage and turf seed industry in the Peace River Region.

A strategic planning process for the forage seed industry in the Peace River Region was initiated with 25 stakeholders, including a balance of growers, processors, researchers and extensionists. It became apparent during this process that stable funding for the association was critical to continue to enhance the development of the region's turf and forage seed industry. This highly prioritized goal was supported by subsequent meetings of the seed trade companies and by the general membership at the annual meeting. A Stable Funding Initiative Committee was formed and a contractor was hired to facilitate the next steps.

The goals of the forage seed industry in the Peace Region were identified and detailed with strategies, proposed actions and budgets. The goals are:

1. Stronger forage seed research capabilities and increased producer directed research.
2. Higher quality, consistency and profitability of forage seed production.
3. Peace Region producers making informed responses to global and regional opportunities and markets for forage seed.
4. A stronger voice for the Peace Region forage seed industry through the Peace Region Forage Seed Association.
5. Stable funding for research & extension through a forage seed levy in the Peace Region.

A refundable forage seed levy will be collected at a scale appropriate for the size of operation and sales, on all forage seed crops at point of sale in the Peace Region of Alberta and British Columbia. The levy rate will be based on total annual sales of forage and turf seeds as follows:

0.75 % on sales of \$0 to \$200,000; 0.50 % on sales of \$200,000 to \$500,000 and 0.25 % on sales of \$500,000 and over. The levy will be collected at all points of sale at the time of sale over the whole year. It will be submitted to the Peace Region Forage Seed Association a minimum of two times annually. Confidentiality of information and accountability of funds will be assured.

The Peace Region Forage Seed Association will undertake a comprehensive communication plan to ensure the majority of turf and forage seed growers in the region are aware and in favour of the proposed levy and have an opportunity to have input into its development.