
WELCOME

The Ontario farm business operator is increasingly in need of qualified professionals to function as a partner on their farm management team. Recently, a representative from the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association remarked that she knew of four primary producers in one small geographic area in need of a qualified farm business advisor. Farm business operators need to know where to turn to get advice from a qualified professional. In 2009, though many are hired to practice Agrology and provide farm management advice through word of mouth reference, Ontario farm businesses and producers are requesting the creation of a central registry of qualified practitioners. Industry and sector organizations are coming forward in support.

As many practicing Agrology without membership standing or their professional designation (without CAFA or CCA membership or Professional Agrologist status) have suggested, degrees, memberships or licensing are not the only consideration when a producer/farmer chooses a professional to give them advice or propose business solutions. However, as we all know, it does provide some assurance of core competency. Proof of competency, commitment to continuous learning, stewardship, public accountability and professionalism is in high demand. Many will continue to practice through word of mouth networks; however, the new Growing Forward initiative seeks to provide proof and confidence of core competence to producers through required adherence to a code of conduct and professional standards. This is where licensure by the OIA as a qualified professional will create value and accountability.

To this end, I will outline more information in this issue of The Post on the Growing Forward initiative and the creation of a new roster of farm business advisors that will be made available through an Ontario government online system. Professional designation and insurance coverage will serve as a basis for qualification for inclusion on the roster. It is very exciting progress toward provincial acknowledgement that professionals in Agrology should be held to the same professional standards as the other regulated professionals (lawyers, veterinarians, accountants to name a few) that participate on farm business management teams. Enhanced professional standards among practitioners of Agrology are long overdue and this is the first step. OIA membership is already starting to grow as individuals that are willing to meet professional standards and competency requirements are coming forward to seek their professional designation and inclusion on this roster of qualified farm business advisors.

Kindest Regards,



Terry Kingsmill, M.A., P.Ag.
Acting Registrar, OIA

BACKGROUND ON GROWING FORWARD

In July 2008 the federal, provincial and territorial governments signed the Growing Forward Framework agreement. Growing Forward replaces the Agricultural Policy Framework and runs until March 31, 2013. The agreement commits \$300 million in Ontario government funding over this five year period for non-business risk management cost-shared programs. With this new Framework and initiative on the horizon, efforts began in Ontario in 2008 to assess farm business management resources and determine recommended training for farm business advisors. A research firm was engaged in January 2008 and a roundtable was held in November 2008 to bring industry stakeholders together to help identify the best ways to ensure that Ontario producers have access to knowledgeable and professional farm business advisors.

Through Growing Forward the federal and Ontario governments have agreed to pursue three outcomes:

1. A competitive and innovative sector;
2. A sector that contributes to society's priorities; and
3. A sector that is proactive in managing risks.

In Ontario, Growing Forward programs have been developed around two suites: Best Practices and Innovation and Science.

The Best Practices suite will provide programs in the following areas:

- Environment and Climate Change - encouraging the adoption of environmentally sound practices to improve the quality of our soil, water, air and biodiversity.
- Food Safety and Traceability - helping the sector meet market demands by supporting the adoption of practices that improve food safety on farms and in the food and beverage processing industry. These programs will also help producers and processors respond to market demands and improve risk management, by supporting facility-level traceability systems.
- Business Development -helping producers and processors improve their business success by identifying and implementing key management best practices. And
- Biosecurity - committed to protecting plants and animals from disease and pests, and to protecting industry from economic losses.

The Innovation and Science suite will encourage ongoing research and the commercialization of research ideas through the following initiatives:

- Science Clusters, industry-led applied science and technology research centres. In Ontario, the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is becoming a centre of excellence in research and commercialization focused on the horticulture sector.
- The Farm Innovation Program, supporting the development and adoption of innovative on-farm technologies that can increase the ability of producers to respond to changing demands and opportunities and improve on-farm profitability. And
- The Agri-Tech Commercialization Centre, expanding opportunities for new agri-based products in Ontario by accelerating the commercialization process and attracting investment.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is the lead for Growing Forward programs in Ontario. OMAFRA will work in co-operation with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to establish partnerships with provincial agri-food organizations to deliver specific Growing Forward programs and initiatives.

APRIL 15TH DISCUSSIONS IN OTTAWA

On April 15th a Farm Business Management Roundtable presented by the Canadian Farm Business Management Council was held in Ottawa. This meeting served as a follow-up to the November 2008 Roundtable Discussion the Agricultural Management Institute (AMI) held with organizations that support farm business advisors in Ontario. The decisions and direction of the November session carried forward into the recent follow-up meeting in Ottawa. The role of an advisor is to function as part of the management team on the farm. As a result, advisors need to be seen as part of the farm management team of qualified professionals and as impartial experts who can be trusted to help with management decisions.

Of significance was the identified need for the creation of a roster of farm advisors available through an online system. It was deemed necessary to ensure that farm business advisors on the roster worked within a code of conduct/ethics and any new online system provides advice to producers on how to select a qualified professional farm business advisor. It was clear that the ethical and professional conduct of farm business advisors was paramount and that advisors need to meet minimum competency requirements and possess the skills and training to ensure quality assurance standards. This meant that a qualified professional farm advisor would require mandatory training in ethics, business planning, soft skills training and a commitment by advisors to meet professional expectations.

During the recent Ottawa meeting I could not help but recall the 2008 OIA AGM comments made by Bruce Hobin, P.Ag. and former Registrar of the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists (SIA). Bruce said that the SIA began in 1946 arising out of concern by farmers; that people were being taken advantage of so a professional body was created with a code of ethical practice to ensure the accountability of the agriculture professional providing the advice. Here we are in 2009 and Ontario, despite decades of effort and advocacy, is starting to recognize producer needs.

Following from the April 15th Roundtable Meeting in Ottawa, OMAFRA is compiling a list of qualified farm business advisors to assist Ontario producers undertake a Farm Financial Assessment as part of the Business Development program under Growing Forward.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The goal of the Business Development program is to increase the economic viability of Ontario's agriculture and food industry. Based on their reviewed Action Plans, it is believed that producers may require the services of a professional farm business advisor to review past financial performance, analyze their current business situation, discuss objectives and prepare financial projections based on identified goals.

Producers may be eligible for a maximum of \$2,400 for up to four days of one-on-one consultation with a private sector farm business advisor (to a maximum of \$1,900), as well as up to one day of follow-up within a year's time (to a maximum of \$500). The farm business must provide a payment of \$100 as its cost-share contribution.

QUALIFICATIONS TO BE ON THE ROSTER OF FARM BUSINESS ADVISORS

To be put on the list, each farm business advisor must submit his or her individual application package to OMAFRA. The package should include the following:

- Covering letter;
- Resume indicating education and/or experience;
- Two references;
- Proof of Errors and Omissions insurance; and
- Proof of membership in good standing with a professional organization.

Advisors interested in being included on this list must have one of the following combinations of education and/or experience:

1. A post-secondary degree; references for two years experience as an agriculture lender or business advisor with farms and/or small business with a background and/or experience in agriculture; or
2. A certificate or diploma in agriculture and/or economics or business and financial administration; references for five years experience as an agriculture lender or business advisor with farms and/or small business with a background and/or experience in agriculture; or
3. Seven years experience as an agriculture lender or business advisor with farms and/or small business with a background and/or experience in agriculture.

The fact that the OIA is able to provide licensed Agrologists (including Technical Agrologists) with access to discounted errors and omissions insurance coverage will expedite the ability for an OIA member to be placed on the roster of qualified professional farm business advisors.

Updated communications and Q & A responses from OMAFRA are provided on the OIA web site.

HOW TO GET ON THE OMAFRA ROSTER OF QUALIFIED FARM BUSINESS ADVISORS

Application packages can be submitted in hard copy to:

Farm Financial Assessment Roster
c/o Agricultural Business Management Unit
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
95 Dundas Street East
Brighton, Ontario K0K 1H0

Electronic copies can be sent to John Molenhuis at john.molenhuis@ontario.ca. Inquiries regarding the farm business advisors list should be directed in writing to John Molenhuis.

Applications must be received by May 8, 2009 to be included on the initial list. Please note that acceptance to the list does not constitute a guarantee of work on the part of OMAFRA or its delivery partner(s). Additional advisors will be added to the list at a later date as warranted.

Information sessions on Growing Forward and its Business Development initiatives will be held on May 12th in Cobourg and on May 14th in Ingersoll. Further details on sessions are available at www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/growfwd.html.

The Growing Forward Business Development Program will also include an Advanced Business Planning Program. A list of specialized advisors interested in working with producers on Advanced Business Planning will also be compiled. This will be a separate process and details will be forwarded to OIA members when they are available.

OIA's 50th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 50th Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Institute of Agrologists (OIA) was held on April 4th in Milton at the Country Heritage Park. It was a very festive event complete with an anniversary cake and the Honourable Michael Chan to help cut it! The Minister spoke very positively about the OIA's operation of the Internationally Educated Agrologists program. Luc Bourgeois, P.Ag. provided an excellent presentation on Bayer CropScience's research and addressed questions related to pesticide bans. Our Master of Ceremonies, Kalima Mwange, P.Ag. and Ahmed Bilal, P.Ag. reminded us all of the value of the Professional Agrologist designation and the importance of the Internationally Educated Agrologist program. Mr. Gord Barr, C.A. (RLB) reported on the significant improvement of the organizations financial status over the past year. Don Good, P.Ag. in his final Report to the membership as OIA President, echoed the Auditor's comments in complementing the staff's commitment and capability.

All proposed by-law changes were passed by the membership. The vacant OIA Board of Directors positions were filled through election. Your OIA Board of Directors for 2009-2010 are: Robert Gordon, P.Ag. (President); Ahmed Bilal, P.Ag. (Vice President); Lianne Appleby, P.Ag.; Brian Ellsworth, P.Ag.; Claudia Escandon, P.Ag.; Bruce Hobin, P.Ag.; Sajjad Rao, P.Ag.; Rene Van Acker, P.Ag.; Ted Young, P.Ag.; Dr. Ozair Chaudry; Ron MacDonald, P.Eng.; and Deborah Whale.

Bayer CropScience received the first ever OIA Corporate Award of Honour for its support of the Ontario Institute of Agrologists, the recognized work of licensed practitioners of Agrology and its commitment to innovation, leadership and the advancement of the profession in Ontario. Mr. Mike Jenkinson was also recognized with the first ever OIA Award of Honour. Practicing for over 40 years within the highest ideals of the Agrology Profession, Mike exemplified leadership within the profession, demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the public and at all times provided assistance to the Institute and led the advancement of the profession in Ontario. Recovering from recent surgery, Terry and Phillis visited Mike at his home to present his award and gift from the OIA Board.

A picture gallery from the event is located on the OIA web site. We would like to make a special mention of our corporate sponsors for the event; RBC Insurance and AON Risk Services for their support and contribution to OIA's celebratory occasion.

IN MEMORIAM

It is with sadness that we report the passing of Ivan Jackson in his 92nd year. He was a member of the OIA Central and later the Hamilton Branch. At the time of his retirement in the early 1980's he was president of the Canada West Indies Molasses Company. Outside of Agrology Ivan was very active in

humanitarian causes. He worked for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration after WWII and volunteered for the Canadian Executive Services overseas on every continent upon retirement.

The farming community also lost a staunch supporter in the passing of Murray Gaunt (P.Ag. Hon.). During his 19 years as a MPP for Huron-Bruce he served in a number of leadership positions including Agriculture Critic as well as Environment Critic and Chair of the Ontario Liberal Caucus. As a broadcaster he focused on advancing the health and well being of rural communities and the people that make these communities vibrant. He also served as Chairman of the Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission and on the Ontario Beef Marketing Commission. In 2005 Mr. Gaunt was inducted into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame.

We must also note the passing of Dr. Allen Knight in his 96th year. Dr. Knight joined the OIA in 1981 and remained an active participant in OIA and Niagara Branch activities until the age of 90. He graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College in 1939 and then headed to Michigan State College to complete his M.Sc. and Ph.D. He will be remembered for his passion to serve as an agricultural missionary. His first trip abroad was to Angola in 1946. When the war broke out he headed to the Congo. It was in Africa where he engaged in farmer education. His focus was teaching farmers how to combat soil erosion, as well as expanding knowledge in the areas of nutrition and technology. Even in retirement he worked in outreach with the United Church of Canada. He was a crusader for the needs of Angola; was a member and president of the Angola Memorial Scholarship Fund and he supervised the Seeds for Africa program. In 1981 he was the proud recipient of the Order of Canada for his work and compassion for the people of Africa.