

Agri-Food Council

Strategic Plan

2018-2021

The Agri-Food Council

The Agri-Food Council (Council) is an independent board appointed by the provincial government. Council is accountable to the Minister of Agriculture for the supervision of all agencies established under *The Agri-Food Act, 2004* (the Act). Specific activities of the Agri-Food Council include:

- providing advice to the Minister;
- assisting producer groups in establishing new agencies;
- supervising votes on establishing marketing and development agencies;
- ensuring accountability, compliance and dispute resolution;
- monitoring the use of supply management powers;
- approving orders of agencies established under the Act;
- participating as a signatory to federal-provincial agreements;
- monitoring the financial aspects of agencies;
- reporting annually on the performance of each agency;
- reviewing all reports submitted to Council pursuant to the Act, regulations or Council requirements;
- conducting analyses of policies, programs and decisions made or proposed by an agency; and
- promoting the growth and development of industries affected by a plan of an agency by monitoring the impact of strategic plans adopted by the agency on the rate of growth and development of the industry.

Council's role differs according to the two types of agencies under its jurisdiction. Development commissions and development boards administer levies (which are refundable in the case of development commissions) and are responsible to the producers who elect and fund them. As long as these agencies comply with reporting standards and remain in compliance with regulations, there is normally little requirement for additional supervision, other than review of agency orders which may be submitted to Council from time to time for approval, and review of agency annual reports. Marketing boards, on the other hand, have been delegated powers that only government can exercise under competition legislation, specifically, the ability to establish prices and control production. This requires that a higher level of scrutiny be applied to ensure effective economic development.

Council is currently responsible for monitoring the following twenty agencies in Saskatchewan:

Development Commissions

- Canaryseed Development Commission of Saskatchewan;
- Saskatchewan Alfalfa Seed Producers Development Commission;
- Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission;
- Saskatchewan Beekeepers Development Commission;
- Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission;
- Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association;
- Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission;
- Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission;
- Saskatchewan Mustard Development Commission;
- Saskatchewan Oat Development Commission;
- Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission; and the
- Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission.

Development Boards

- Sask Pork;
- Saskatchewan Pulse Growers; and the
- Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board.

Marketing Boards

- Chicken Farmers of Saskatchewan;
- Saskatchewan Broiler Hatching Egg Producers' Marketing Board;
- Saskatchewan Egg Producers;
- Saskatchewan Milk Marketing Board; and the
- Turkey Farmers of Saskatchewan.

Our Vision

The Agri-Food Council looks forward to:

1. Working with agencies operating under *The Agri-Food Act, 2004* (the Act), in developing an expanding and internationally competitive agri-food sector in Saskatchewan; and
2. A harmonious and mutually beneficial working relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Our Mission

The duties and responsibilities of the Agri-Food Council, in accordance with the Act, are:

1. To provide effective and appropriate oversight of, and guidance to, agencies operating under the Act;
2. To contribute to the growth and development of agencies operating under the Act;
3. To facilitate the establishment of new agencies under the Act;
4. To network with other supervisory agencies at both the provincial and the national level; and
5. To advise and make recommendations to the Minister of Agriculture.

Our Values and Principles

The Agri-Food Council believes in and practices:

1. Leadership and the application of sound judgment in fulfilling its supervisory role;
2. Decision making which is transparent, fair and equitable, and which is in the best interests of all stakeholders;
3. Compliance with orders and regulations established under the Act;
4. Accountability for its decisions and actions;
5. Effective and positive communication and consultation with and amongst commissions and boards, and with the Minister of Agriculture and Ministry officials; and
6. Responsible use of public resources.

Our Objectives, Goals and Strategies

The Agri-Food Council is charged with monitoring, supervising and supporting the agencies within its purview, engaging producers in the establishment of new agencies, and providing advice to the Minister of Agriculture on agri-food issues. Council is committed to effective decision making, efficient use of its resources, and good governance. Although Council's role is mainly one of reacting to issues identified by agencies or producers, it envisions a somewhat more proactive role in its interactions with agencies, producers and government. Accordingly, the following strategic goals and actions have been identified as the most important over the next three years.

1. Effective communication with boards and commissions

Communication is fundamental to Council's ability to maintain and improve its relationships with the agencies it supervises. Council will continue its current practice of attending annual meetings of agencies and will meet with development commissions and development boards on an every-third-year basis, and with marketing boards on an annual basis.

2. Improved agency governance

Council believes that good governance is essential to the successful operation of any organization, and is committed to working with agencies in improving their governance policies and practices. The agencies supervised by Council vary widely in the level of resources available for board member and staff development. Council has prepared a governance training manual for use by those agencies requiring assistance with establishment of board policies and procedures, strategic planning, reporting, etc., and will provide or advise on the provision of governance training to agencies, both on request and in a workshop setting. Although Council is committed to a hands-off approach with respect to the operations of agency boards, it will become engaged to the extent appropriate when governance issues arise.

Engagement of new and established producers alike in boards and commissions, i.e. as board members and board chairs, is essential to good governance and the long-term viability of agencies. Council will undertake activities that support agencies in their efforts to recruit and train new board members and chairs. One such activity will be supporting an annual meeting of agency chairs, whereby an opportunity will be provided for the sharing of governance-related and other experiences.

An important aspect of governance for agri-food agencies is strategic planning. Over the next three years, Council will continue its review of agency strategic plans, and will encourage agencies to update their plans as required, or to develop strategic plans where none currently exists.

3. Enhanced Council effectiveness and efficiency

Council's ability to make good decisions lies in the experience, knowledge and skill of its members and their understanding of the agri-food issues of the day, market trends, the Act, *The Agri-Food Regulations, 2004*, etc. Therefore, Council will continue its practice of including educational and skill development sessions such as market and policy updates, industry tours, and training workshops in its meeting agendas. It is important that Council be aware of national and interprovincial issues impacting the agencies it supervises. Therefore, Council will continue its practice of attending meetings of the National Association of Agri-Food Supervisory Agencies (NAASA) and annual meetings of national agri-food agencies. In addition, Council will work to improve its knowledge and understanding of federal-provincial-territorial agreements, and commodity pricing mechanisms, quota allocation and other aspects of supply management. Council has a particular interest in understanding the mechanisms used by the marketing boards it supervises for determining costs of production and the impact of this determination on the establishment of producer prices.

Council's knowledge of the policies and procedures of other provincial supervisory bodies will be enhanced through its hosting of, or participation in, meetings of its Western Canadian counterparts.

The work of Council would benefit from its meeting more frequently. Since the schedules of Council members and their geographic separation make this difficult, we will explore options such as greater use of teleconferencing and the use of videoconferencing for increasing our meeting frequency.

4. Updated legislation, regulations and orders

Council will continue to work with agencies on updating regulations and orders governing their operations to ensure they are current and reflective of their mission and objectives.

Summary

The Agri-Food Council is committed to providing effective oversight and support to the agencies it supervises and to producers wishing to establish new agencies. It also is committed to improving its service to, and its relationships with, agri-food agencies to the greatest extent possible within the limits imposed by the resources available and the knowledge and abilities of its members and staff. It also is committed to arriving at fair and informed decisions which are in the best interests of agencies, producers, the agri-food industry and the people of Saskatchewan.

To assist it in achieving its mission, Council has prepared this three-year (2018-2021) strategic plan which commits it to a process of continual improvement in its skills, knowledge base, and policies and procedures, along with reviewing and updating legislation, regulations and orders which affect its own and agency operations. Council fully intends to attain the goals outlined in the strategic plan over the next three years, and will report on progress in its annual reports to the Minister of Agriculture.