

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Panel's Mandate and Process

In March 2000, the Government of Manitoba formally announced its Livestock Stewardship Initiative (LSI) with the aim of ensuring the sustainable development of Manitoba's livestock industry. In essence, this means giving consideration to environmental stewardship and social factors as well as to economic viability. A Livestock Stewardship Panel was appointed by the Government of Manitoba on June 7, 2000 with a mandate to seek the views of Manitobans on the expansion of the livestock industry in Manitoba, and to present these to government in a report along with recommendations.

After the release of *Livestock Stewardship 2000: A Public Discussion Paper* in June 2000, six public meetings were held throughout Manitoba. The Panel heard more than 225 presentations from a wide cross-section of people and organizations. In addition, the Panel received approximately another 150 written submissions and additional information pieces. The Panel also attended a series of one-on-one follow-up meetings with key industry, government, and public interest stakeholders to gather further elaboration on points made during public presentations.

After reviewing the material presented in oral and written submissions, the Panel concluded that we needed a better scientific understanding of a number of technical issues. To that end, the Panel convened four research roundtables at the end of August to further explore questions relating to water quality, air quality, manure management, and monitoring and information systems. Scientists and practitioners knowledgeable in these matters were invited to meet with the Panel for further discussions.

The Panel also met with a wide range of provincial and federal officials, university and industry researchers, producer organizations and public stakeholder groups to enhance its understanding

of these issues and explore alternative solutions. These discussions took place in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Quebec and Ottawa.

Key Conclusions

Many conclusions were drawn throughout the report. What follows is a synthesis of key themes.

- Public apprehension about intensive livestock operations (ILOs) is being driven by several factors: experiences in other jurisdictions, declining familiarity with what is happening on farms, the occasional local "horror story", and the perception of insufficient monitoring of ILOs.
- The government is seen as the custodian of public interest in the environment. The public needs to be confident that government is ensuring that "things are being done right", and must have access to information to be assured of this.
- Current regulations and guidelines for ILOs, for the most part, are adequate; however, monitoring and enforcement are not.
- Progress towards sustainable livestock development in Manitoba must be based on reliable information, and not emotion. This information should be drawn from research and practical experience, and must be relevant to the Manitoba situation.
- It is important to recognize that there are two broad types of farms: large commercial farms that produce primarily for export, and farms that derive limited income from agriculture, or are in transition. The same policies and regulations will not work for both groups.
- Although much of the Panel's focus has been on hogs, it believes that beef production in Manitoba is sustainable, providing the issues of

riparian management and processing capacity are addressed.

- Manure is a valuable product, capable of replacing expensive inorganic fertilizer and improving the soil, and should not be treated as a waste.
- The Panel believes that expansion of ILOs can be sustainable in Manitoba, provided that government follows the recommendations contained in this report.

Synthesis of Key Recommendations

The Panel has identified four key recommendations that are critical to achieving sustainable livestock development in Manitoba. A series of supporting recommendations are contained in the body of the report.

1. Role of Provincial Government in Sustainable Livestock Development

Of the 40 or so recommendations presented in this report, about two-thirds address the involvement of the provincial government directly in the intensive livestock industry. It is not surprising, therefore, that the overarching recommendation from the Panel stresses the need for the commitment of staff and financial resources to be devoted to two tasks: first, to gain a full understanding of the present situation of such operations in the overall milieu of agriculture in the province, and secondly, to provide a regulatory framework and a monitoring and enforcement effort in which expansion can take place without damage to Manitoba's people or environment.

In this regard, the Panel **strongly recommends** that:

- **Government focus substantially increased resources on the intensive livestock industry in Manitoba to provide analysis, guidance, inspection, monitoring, enforcement and technological assistance that can accommodate the present scale of the industry and anticipate**

its expansion.

- **Capability to undertake comprehensive analysis of the potential impact of new or expanded ILOs upon both local and larger area environments should be enhanced immediately in order to lead to strong critical decisions.**
- **Government develop and make public the policy framework through which livestock expansion will take place, stressing its concern for sustainability.**

2. Publicly Available Information

Policies for the future are shaped by past experience, knowledge of present circumstances and reliable information. This reliable information must be available not only to government and industry, but also to the concerned public.

The Panel recommends:

- **The Government of Manitoba should accumulate all relevant data concerning livestock operations in a central openly available information system in a geographic information (GIS) format to provide Manitobans with a realistic assessment of the sustainability of current operations and their effect on both the local and provincial environments.**

3. Role of ILOs in Rural Development

The provincial government is challenged to promote rural development in a sustainable manner. The Panel believes that ILOs can play an important role in rural development through generation of employment and income, but they should not be seen as the only option. Farmers who wish to produce and market animals without going the ILO route should be assisted.

The Panel recommends:

- **In light of socio-economic concerns about livestock expansion, the Government of Manitoba should take a two-pronged policy approach to encouraging sustainable livestock development in Manitoba.**

- **For large scale livestock operations, monitor and enforce environmental and health regulations with a view to enabling these farms to be competitive in export markets while ensuring environmental stewardship.**
- **For farmers in transition and those who currently derive limited income from farming, develop a package of programs that will enable these farmers to adjust their farming operations to a level that will provide them with an acceptable quality of life. This could also include a greater focus on higher animal welfare production systems.**

4 Decision Process for Siting ILOs

The Panel regards a carefully considered decision on the siting of ILOs to be of prime importance in sustainable livestock development, particularly in protecting the environment. It is essential that local circumstances, especially as pertaining to land use, be very thoroughly thought through. It is also essential that the province, being in a better position to assess environmental factors on a larger area basis in depth, have a say in the siting of ILOs.

The Panel recommends:

- **New and expanding ILOs should require formal approval by both the host municipality for compliance with land use by-laws, and the province for environmental impact before construction is allowed to begin.**

Concluding Comment

The Panel is convinced that “common ground” can be found for sustainable livestock development in Manitoba. It will require a commitment by the provincial government and the livestock industry to deal with many concerns about the impact of livestock on Manitoba’s environment and rural landscape. It will also require a greater willingness on the part of opponents of the livestock industry to recognize that sustainable livestock development is not inherently bad. We believe our report contains recommendations and suggestions that can be used by all to find the “common ground”.

