

Alberta Agricultural Research Institute Annual Report 2003-04 A Year in Review

Overview

The Alberta Agricultural Research Institute (AARI) is an unincorporated board comprised of representatives from industry, academia and government, established under the *Alberta Science and Research Authority Act*. It is the primary agency for funding, facilitating and coordinating strategic agricultural research for the province.



Message from the AARI Board

It has been an eventful year for the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute with several achievements as well as challenges being faced in 2003-04. The AARI Board has directed a number of strategic initiatives in support of Alberta's Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework which was announced and approved by Cabinet in March 2003, and this Framework will continue to be the foundation for our activities in the coming year. Several key initiatives have been developed in response to the Framework which include Agri-Fibres, Bovine Genomics, and Bio-Polymers.

The discovery of a case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in Alberta in 2003 has caused significant challenge for our agriculture community, and AARI has taken the lead in establishing a prion research initiative to support the development and dissemination of relevant scientific evidence to help Alberta address research in this area in a knowledgeable and scientific manner.

The announcement by the Government of Alberta in the Spring 2004 Throne Speech that a Life Sciences Institute would be established is encouraging, as it will support cross-collaboration of research initiatives within the range of sectors within life sciences, including agriculture. We look forward to supporting this initiative as it moves forward.

We would like to also thank Bob Church, now Chair Emeritus of the Alberta Science and Research Authority for his advice and support for agricultural research over the past number of years. His participation and encouragement has been critical to our goal of research excellence in Alberta.

Original signed by:

Hector Goudreau, M.L.A.
Co-Chair

Original signed by:

Neal Oberg
Co-Chair

June 2004

Key Activities

Activities undertaken by AARI over the 2003-04 fiscal year support the directions established by the Alberta Science and Research Authority, and also support the Alberta Innovation and Science Business Plan 2003-06, **GOAL 4:** To foster excellence in life sciences research that contributes to Alberta's continued prosperity.

- AARI is leading the implementation of Alberta's Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework in partnership with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD). AARI activities carried out in support of the objectives in the Strategic Framework include:
 - Established the strategic research priorities that will be addressed through the research and development performers, including the Institute for Food, Agri-Industrial, and Agricultural Sciences, Alberta (IFASA) – a collaborative agreement between AAFRD, the University of Alberta, and the Alberta Research Council (ARC) which will pool resources, staff and facilities valued at over \$750 million, to collectively manage and deliver agricultural R&D programs.
 - Funding support was provided for several key initiatives in the areas of Sustainable Production (Crops and Livestock), Bio-Products, and Agri-Health and Value-Added Products.

Other activities include:

- Continued to manage the Agriculture Funding Consortium to ensure R&D priorities are aligned with industry and public needs, to ensure effective communication internally and externally, and through collaboration and partnerships, to achieve new and enabling capacity. Collectively, the Consortium funded \$10 million in agricultural R&D in 2003/2004.
- AARI invited Climate Change Central to join the Agriculture Funding Consortium to enable the review and analysis of agriculture R&D funding initiatives focused on climate change issues including greenhouse gases.
- Established BioProducts Alberta to identify strategic agriculture research opportunities for Alberta in industrial products.
- A Joint Investment Agreement was developed for all R&D projects funded by the Agriculture Funding Consortium. All R&D institutions and members of the Consortium signed off on the Agreement and use it for all R&D funding.
- AARI participated in discussion on the implementation plan for the Life Sciences Strategy with input from both government and external participants. An implementation workshop was held which secured support for three flagship initiatives that build upon the Life Sciences Strategy directions in health, platform technologies and bioproducts.
- Initiated an Alberta Prion Science Initiative, with the support of AAFRD. AARI will be collaborating with other ministries, such as AHW, on this initiative

- Launched “Reach and Discover”, an agriculture publication created and funded by AARI and the Funding Consortium.
- A study on bioenergy potential was initiated, to be completed in early 2004, which involves collaboration with AERI and AFRI.

Financial Details

AARI Annual Budget (millions)

2002-2003 Actual	2003-2004 Budget	2003-2004 Actual	2004-2005 Estimate	2005-2006 Target
9,117	8,875	8,607	8,675	8,675

AARI Investment Portfolio for 2003/2004 Fiscal Year:

