

Weekly Report – Week of March 25, 2002

1. Statistical Summary

1.1 Overview										
Number of Events	4		Number of Participants			61		Number of Observers		31
Participants by Category	45 Producer	7 Processor	1 Distributor	1 Retailer	0 Consumer	2 Academic	2 ENGO	3 Other		

1.2 Event Summaries				
Floriculture	<u>11 participants</u> 8 producers 1 distributor 1 retailer 1 academic	<u>5 observers</u> 1 federal 3 provincial 1 portfolio	Hamilton, ON	28 March 2002
Fruit	<u>23 participants</u> 20 producers 2 processors 1 environmentalist	<u>10 observers</u> 3 federal 6 provincial 1 portfolio	Truro, NS	28 March 2002
Grains & Oilseeds	<u>12 participants</u> 7 producers 1 processor 1 environmentalist 3 other stakeholders	<u>12 observers</u> 4 federal 5 provincial 3 portfolio	London, ON	27 March 2002
	<u>15 participants</u> 10 producers 4 processors 1 academic	<u>4 observers</u> 1 federal 2 provincial 1 portfolio	Lethbridge, AB	28 March 2002

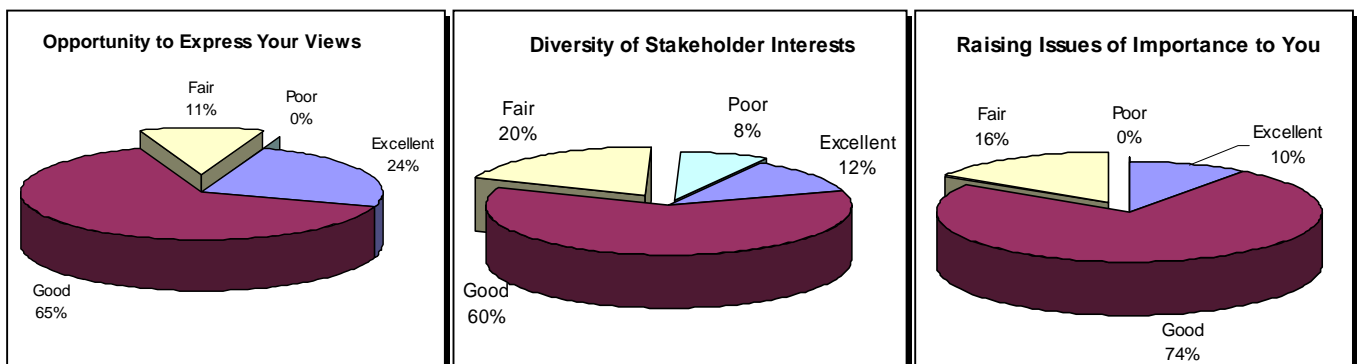
2. Participants’ Evaluation

2.1 Views on the Consultation Process

- Participants expressed initial skepticism with the process and distrust of governments’ sincerity in conducting an open consultation, and are looking for continued demonstration of good will on the part of the government.
- Participants at all four events asked to be kept involved in the process and requested copies of the reports from their events and from the consultations as a whole.
- Participants at three of the four events expressed concerns regarding the insufficient notice about the consultations. Some participants did not receive packages until the day before or the day of their event.

2.2 Views on the Consultative Meeting

- Participants were asked to complete an Exit Survey at the end of the day. Despite some initial concerns and criticism of the process, respondents rated the consultative meetings very positively, with the following results:
- When asked to rate the value of the workshop:
 - 89% rated the event GOOD or EXCELLENT as an effective forum for providing them with an opportunity to express their views;
 - 72% rated the event GOOD or EXCELLENT as an effective forum for bringing together diverse stakeholder interests; and
 - 84% rated the event GOOD or EXCELLENT as an effective forum for raising issues of importance to them.



2.3 Changing Views on the APF

- Participants were asked to indicate to what degree their views on the APF had changed as a result of the consultation process. Approximately half of the participants indicated that their views had changed “somewhat or a great deal”, with the other half indicating “not very much or not at all.”

3. Discussion Summary

3.1 General Comments	
Positive Observations (top three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participants were generally pleased to be consulted and welcomed the opportunity to comment on the APF. ▪ There was general agreement with the direction outlined in the APF, although some groups felt that there were more pressing issues facing agriculture than those outlined in the APF documents. ▪ All groups indicated that industry is already leading the way in many of the areas outlined in the APF and that it should continue to do so.
Negative Observations (top three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was a general view that the consultation process has been rushed and a concern that the policy framework appears to be a done deal. ▪ Most groups highlighted international trade issues as a significant gap in the APF, with one group suggesting that it should become a sixth component. ▪ There was a general sense that APF discussion is too high level and that governments need to assign resources at this stage towards implementation and transition arrangements.

3.1 Discussion Summary – Floriculture

The floriculture event had good representation across the sectoral chain, although consumer and environmental groups were notably absent. Despite the breadth of representation, however, consensus was achieved on most points, particularly in the two following areas. First, the floriculture industry wanted recognition from the government and the public that it was an instrumental and vital part of the agriculture sector. They did not feel that governments registered their concerns or understood the benefits they provided to society. Specifically, they would like to see research dollars directed to their industry, which they felt had not received the attention that other sectors had.

Second, the floriculture sector viewed itself as different from other sectors in agriculture and agri-food. In this regard, participants indicated that the APF does not “fit well” with their sector. They stressed that they did not want subsidies or other government interventions in their markets. Rather, they wanted the tools and opportunities to prosper in a free market. Specifically, they would like tax breaks, research and development (R&D) support, access to labour, ease of movement across borders and marketing incentives to market Canada as world leader in floriculture. Ideally they would like to develop a government-supported industry-wide association to market and brand their products as the best in the world.

3.2 Discussion Summary – Fruit

The fruit event in Truro was well-attended by producer and processor representatives and by government observers from the four Atlantic Provinces. The views of consumers, retailers, academics and researchers, however were not represented. Participants were generally positive, expressing their support for the food safety and environmental components of the APF. They were also constructively critical about the need for governments to commit the resources necessary to implement programs, rather than having new costs be borne by the already cash-strapped small farmer.

Participants agreed that the APF does not sufficiently reflect the international factors that threaten Canadian agriculture. Examples cited included international subsidies, the World Trade Organization and import policies that resulted in poor quality and low price commodities entering Canada. Nor did they believe that the APF dealt appropriately with the erosion of profit margins for primary producers in favour of large retail and processing companies, which they felt was destroying rural renewal and confidence in the future of the sector. There was a general comment that profitability should be considered a stand-alone component, although there was recognition that it is tied to business risk management and “rural” renewal.

3.3 Discussion Summary – Grains & Oilseeds

Producers were well-represented at both grains and oilseeds events in this period. While participants at both events began their sessions with strong expressions of concern and skepticism about the consultation process, both groups moved beyond these issues to address the components of the APF in a constructive manner. There was broad support for the food safety and food quality, environmental protection, and science and innovation components, however participants worried about cost to producers, the burden of excessive regulation and the degree to which these initiatives would be consistent with international trade commitments.

Both groups concluded that international trade is the primary concern for the grains and oilseeds sector in Canada. Many participants called for matching programs in Canada to address US and EU subsidies, as well as strategies to deal with trade disputes and multilateral negotiations. Many agreed that trade issues, and their impact on prices, significantly hindered the overall sustainability of the grains and oilseeds sector. Participants look to governments to dedicate resources (financial and otherwise) to these issues and to defend Canadian agricultural interests abroad as well as at home.