

Woodlot/Agroforestry Management Course Development Study

September 2001

Final Report

Acknowledgments

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Woodlot/Agroforestry Management Course Development Committee

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Woodlot/Agroforestry Management Course Development Committee

by:

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with valuable human resource support¹ from

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Executive Overview

Introduction

The 2000-2001 Northeast Regional Needs Assessment Report identified a need for training and skill enhancement in the area of woodlot and agroforestry management. To assist in identifying opportunities and related training needs, an Woodlot/Agroforestry Management Course Development Committee was established with representatives from:

- Cumberland Regional College (CRC);
- East Central Agroforestry Group;
- Farm Woodlot Association of Saskatchewan;
- North West Regional College (NWRC);
- Parkland Agroforestry Products Inc.;
- Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF);
- Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM);
- Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), Woodland Campus;
- University of Saskatchewan (Centre for Studies in Agriculture, Law and the Environment); and,
- Forestry Training Sub-Committee.

It was the intent of the partners assembled as a committee to develop a credit program made up of specialized courses that would address the training needs of woodlot/agroforestry managers. The work was to be undertaken in three phases: Phase I: the research; Phase II: program development; and Phase III: the actual delivery of the courses.

This report presents the results of the research undertaken by Trimension Group in fulfillment of the contract with Cumberland Regional College on behalf of the Woodlot/Agroforestry Management Course Development Committee to complete Phase I activities.

Methodology

Trimension Group carried out primary and secondary research as part of the study. Primary research results were validated through focus groups conducted with participants involved in the industry.

The following provides a brief description of the steps taken to complete the study and produce the final report:

Literature Review

A literature review was completed with the objective of providing the Course Development Committee with the background information necessary to understand the current situation of woodlot and agroforestry management practices in Saskatchewan and the potential to develop an industry with an increase in training. The information for the literature review was obtained from various sources including published and unpublished reports.

Education and Training Database

Research was conducted to develop and compile a database of education and training programs for the Saskatchewan woodlot and agroforestry management. The database included programs offered on a national and international level. The institutions, the course description and the contact information are included. In Saskatchewan, no comprehensive training exists in woodlot and agroforestry management, although there are several relevant resources and courses available. These are provided by SIAST, the University of Saskatchewan and Farm Woodlot Association of Saskatchewan (FWAS), and are included in this report.

Survey

In order to gain a broad understanding of the training and access to information requirements for a growing provincial woodlot industry, Trimension Group developed two survey instruments in consultation with the Woodlot/Agroforestry Course Development Committee. The first survey was conducted by telephone in mid-June, 2001, and was directed at woodlot managers and people interested in selling wood. In order to survey farmers and landowners with wooded land, the Farm Woodlot Association of Saskatchewan, two agroforestry organizations and several First Nations Bands supplied the names of the possible participants.

From these lists, a total of ninety (90) farmers and landowners were interviewed. A second survey was also administered by telephone in late June 2001, and was directed at businesses who purchase timber for wood fiber in the province from private woodlot owners. Seven (7) surveys were completed with the businesses.

Validation

In July 2001, a focus group was completed as part of the validation of the survey results. The focus group was made up of ten (10) producers who volunteered to participate during their respective telephone interviews.

Key Findings

Key findings provide for an overview of the industry and are a result of the primary and secondary research undertaken during the study. The key findings from the Literature Review and the Needs Assessment are as follows:

Literature Review and Review of Existing Courses and Course Materials

- In Canada, the majority of woodlot owners currently do not harvest wood from their land for strictly timber values. They do manage their forested land for reasons other than economic value.
- Currently, woodlot/forestry management courses are offered primarily in British Columbia and Nova Scotia with extension services being offered in Saskatchewan.
- In Saskatchewan, harvesting timber from private lands has the potential to be a profitable industry.
- In Canada, there are no courses offered specifically for agroforestry. However, there are woodlot management courses, including some in Nova Scotia and British Columbia. Saskatchewan provides no such formal training.
- Existing courses in woodlot and agroforestry management are offered extensively throughout the United States, Australia, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

- While there is no comprehensive, formal training courses available in Saskatchewan, there are other related resources and courses available through the University of Saskatchewan, SIAST and the Farm Woodlot Association of Saskatchewan.

Producer/ Woodlot Manager Needs Assessment Survey Results

The following summarizes the key results from the telephone survey and the focus groups:

Current Woodlot Management Practices

- One hundred percent (100%) of all landowners surveyed owned or leased wooded land representing 197,783 acres in Saskatchewan.
- The primary goals set out by the landowners for their land included passing it on to someone in the family, generating income, preserving the ecological aspects of the woodlot and using it for recreational purposes.
- A majority (63%) of respondents were undertaking woodlot management practices ranging from livestock shelter, to harvesting/processing, planting, thinning, developing trails, and conserving woodlots. The reasons given for their decision to do so were primarily environmental (conserving their woodlot) or economical (to generate income).
- Those who were not undertaking any woodlot management practices provided several reasons for this: too expensive; too time-consuming; lack of market incentives; and, a lack of knowledge about basic management practices.
- Just over half (57%) of those who were not currently undertaking woodlot management practices indicated that they were planning to in the near future.
- Seventy-nine percent (79%) of all respondents indicated that they were interested in learning more about woodlot management practices.
- The businesses surveyed agreed that more information on training/management practices would benefit both private landowners and the businesses involved in this sector to produce a prosperous industry.
- The focus group concurred with the survey findings, suggesting that training is very important for woodlot managers in Saskatchewan.

Training Requirements

- For the most part, the respondents have not been seeking advice on managing their wooded land. Those seeking advice have gone to the Farm Woodlot Association of Saskatchewan, the Agroforestry organizations and training providers such as SIAST

and the regional colleges. Others have simply found the information themselves in books and over the Internet.

- The majority of the respondents were unsure and in some cases unaware of the type of training that would be needed. This was largely due to the fact they are unaware of the potential economic and aesthetic opportunities which exist from their native stands of trees on their wooded lands. When explained, many indicated there would be a need for basic wooded land management training
- The focus group participants indicated there was a need for very basic introductory support services more so than actual courses, which would provide the potential managers with the basic information on how to first determine the benefits of getting into woodlot management. This service would be in the form of one-on-one visitations, supplemented with workshops/information sessions. The survey results indirectly reflected this need as well.
- In terms of what they would specifically like to have training in, the respondents saw a general need for all four components discussed by the Woodlot/Agroforestry Management Course Development Committee: basic business development, the environment, and both basic and intensive management practices.
- The majority of the businesses surveyed agreed that training in intensive management practices and business development would assist private landowners in managing their woodlots.

Provision of Training

- Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents indicated that they would take advantage of training if it were available, with informal training (non-credit) being the preferred choice of over 73%.
- The training format preferred would be a combination of self-study/classroom and field exercises.
- The optimal time to provide this training would be in the winter.
- Three main reasons why this training may be difficult for some to participate include: too expensive, too time-consuming and reluctance to travel.
- The focus group indicated a preference for having the option of participating in either a credit or non-credit class with similar content.
- The focus group would like to see the course accredited by an institution such as SIAST or one of the universities, and be recognized by the industry.

Gap Analysis

As previously discussed, there are no woodlot and agroforestry management courses presently being offered in Saskatchewan. According to the survey and focus group results, not enough training is being provided to Saskatchewan private forest landowners. The findings show that Saskatchewan needs a basic, technical course that can be offered in both a credit and non-credit format. This course needs to be accessible to landowners across the province, and although the survey respondents and focus group participants indicated that they are willing to pay for the training, the cost of the course should be kept at a minimum.

Training Module Development

The survey respondents and focus group participants identified a combination of self-study/classroom and field exercises as the preferred method of training format. Some of the suggested modules that should be developed to cover the important training areas include:

- Basic Management Practices (tree-planting, stand-tending, inventory and harvesting);
- Basic Business Development (potential profitability, marketing, planning, processing);
- Environment (health, wildlife, ecology, recreation); and,
- Intensive Management Practices (hybrid poplar, other agroforestry practices).

There are numerous existing programs, at the university, technical institute and regional college levels that could be modified to suit the needs of this sector. There are also several courses and programs throughout North America that could serve as models when developing a course for Saskatchewan landowners/producers.

Delivery Methodology

Various formats and program modes of delivery currently existing in Saskatchewan could be used to provide woodlot and agroforestry management education and are described in Table 1. The goals of these organizations include making education more accessible to landowners and persons interested in woodlot and agroforestry management in Saskatchewan. This list provides a sampling of what program formats and delivery modes currently exist in Saskatchewan. These formats may very well serve and assist in the development of the specific modules.

Table 1: Saskatchewan Based Training Programs

Institution/ Organization	Program	Delivery Mode	Description
University of Saskatchewan	Certificate in Agriculture (CAP)	Off-campus home study (some laboratory meetings in Saskatoon)	Each course requires 6-8 hours to complete assignments. A certificate of completion is awarded upon passing the final examination.
Agricultural Institute of Management in Saskatchewan (AIMS)	Six courses are offered	Quality farm business management education is offered in a user friendly Internet based environment.	Courses include features such as: streaming audio and/or video, live chat, bulletin board, personal course specific e-mail accounts, printable course contents, interactive quizzes with instant feedback, long answer questions, and ability to track your progress.
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science & Technology (SIASST)	Various	Various	Education, training and services are offered and/or administered from four urban campuses in Saskatchewan: Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon, Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw, Wascana Campus in Regina and Woodland Campus in Prince Albert. SIASST offers learning in a variety of methods including: certificates, diplomas, apprenticeships, continuing education, distance education, extension programs, courses and workshops.
Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT)	Various	Various	The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) offers training and education programs to First Nations adults in Saskatchewan. SIIT delivers a variety of programming across the province.
Saskatchewan Regional Colleges	Various Include: Farm Business Management,	Various	Saskatchewan Regional Colleges provide post-secondary education and training opportunities to residents in their local communities. The Regional Colleges throughout Saskatchewan offer a number of programs and resources.
Farm Woodlot Association of Saskatchewan	Various	Extension	Develop and deliver programs to woodlot owners. They offer visits and consultations, management planning and plan implementation, workshops, educational material, research, etc.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed in order for the Woodlot/Agroforestry Management Course Development Committee to undertake and implement:

- Based on the survey and focus group results, it was found that there is a need for a low-cost, introductory course in basic woodlot and agroforestry management in Saskatchewan.
- The introductory course should be developed as non-credit, while a similar credit course should be considered for the future.

- It is important that the introductory courses be inexpensive (no more than \$350/course), short in length, and easily accessible to land managers across the province.
- On-site consultations with land managers should be encouraged, both to provide expertise as well as to encourage participation in further training courses, whether they are credit or non-credit.
- Enhance partnerships with First Nations to address awareness and needs, as there is a need to explore opportunities to enhance and develop strategies that will encourage First Nations' bands in the province to take advantage of wooded land management practices.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy, with distribution of the full report to key stakeholders, focus group participants and First Nations land managers. The Executive Overview should be made available to all parties interested, with the full report being available upon request.
- Enhance the Woodlot/Agroforestry Management Course Development Committee for the continuation and sustainability of long term human resource planning.