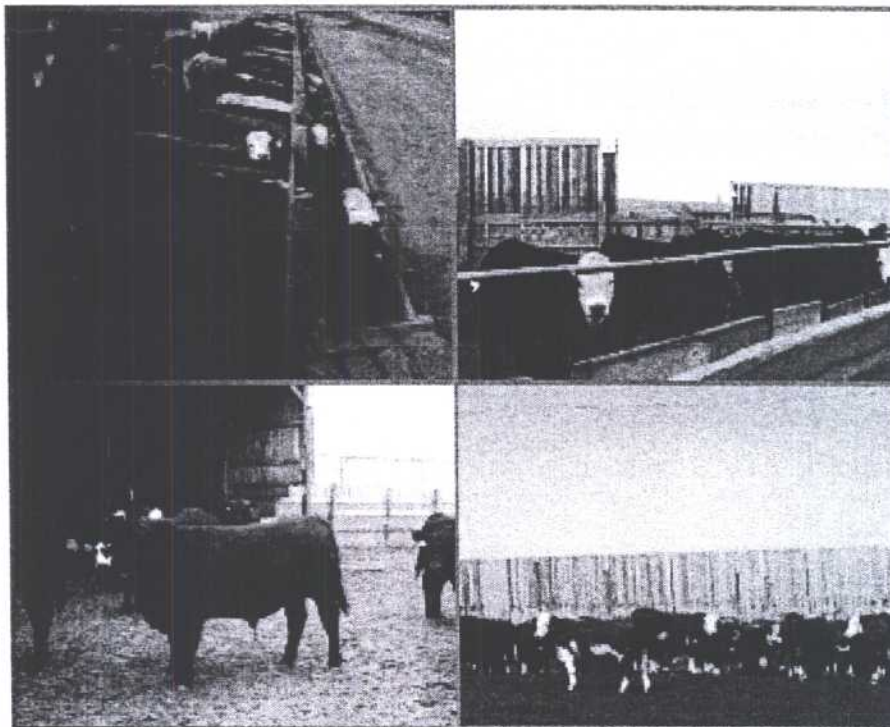


***Human Resource,
Education and Training
Needs Assessment***

for the

***Saskatchewan Beef Cattle
Feedlot Industry***

May 2002



Final Report

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Executive Summary

Introduction

- The agricultural community is experiencing many changes. Some of these are coming as forced changes, others are voluntary in nature. As within other industries, workplace needs, demands, and values are shifting. This shift reflects both changing personal, corporate and societal values such as the importance of meaningful and stimulating work, and balance between work and social lifestyle. It also includes current issues such as food safety, the environment, and personal health within the local, regional, national, and international marketplace. The challenges to change, adapt, and compete are the potential opportunities for agriculture.
- In response to impending and ongoing change, the Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association passed a resolution at their 2001 Annual Meeting calling for a study into the development of supportive education and training programs for the feedlot industry. An examination and review of current and future training and human resource needs for the industry was identified as the focus of the investigation. Funding for the project was received from Saskatchewan Learning (formerly Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training) through the Job Start/ Future Skills Sector Partnership Program.
- A sector partnership, or Steering Committee, was created comprised of industry, government, education, and Aboriginal representation.
- The mandate of the study was expanded to include the identification of current available training opportunities in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba.
- A process for the study was developed, including study objectives, and a project consultant was hired.

Methodology

- A historical overview was completed.
- A database was compiled that identified available education and training opportunities for the feedlot industry in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba.
- Survey questionnaires for feedlot managers and employees were distributed within Saskatchewan.
- Focus groups were held in Saskatoon and Moose Jaw.
- Several key stakeholders in direct and indirect feedlot education and training were interviewed.
- A gap analyses for human resource needs and training needs was completed.
- The Steering Committee and the project consultant developed recommendations and Next Steps.

Sector Overview

- The feedlot industry, as an important part of Saskatchewan's agricultural community, contributes both economically and socially to the province.
- With increased interest in value-added activity and diversification, expansion of the industry has begun, with greater expansion anticipated.
- The fed-cattle industry is extremely competitive in the local, regional, national, and international marketplaces.
- Industry growth has occurred more rapidly in other regions, such as Alberta, yet the potential exists within Saskatchewan to expand significantly.
- There currently are human resource and training issues within the province that need to be addressed in order to support the industry in remaining competitive, and to assist new feedlot ventures in establishing a solid foundation for the future.
- The competitive nature of education/training institutions in Saskatchewan and Alberta limits some of the available data about past and current training and employment opportunities for students.

Summary of Human Resource and Training Needs Analysis

- Feedlot workers include both management and employee levels.
- Most feedlot training occurs at the feedlot and is done by feedlot staff.
- There are very few specific programs/courses available to train feedlot workers.
- Feedlot work is multi-dimensional, requiring employees to have many skills. Some examples of the diversity of these skills are cattle handling, animal health, nutrition, equipment operation, maintenance, and office administration.
- Feedlot work is very specialized.
- Most feedlot workers come from a farm/ranch background.
- The industry is characterized by a mix of regulations and suggested voluntary best practice standards for work quality. Sensitive issues such as the environment, health, worker safety, and animal care are addressed through a combination of regulations, recommended codes of practice, and industry-driven information. The need to be competitive yet accountable drives many efficiencies and practices.
- There is interest within Saskatchewan's education and training institutions to develop and deliver feedlot training.
- There will be future employment opportunities for both feedlot employees and managers as the industry grows and matures.
- Safety is a big issue when untrained employees are in the workplace.
- Untrained employees contribute to preventable costs in areas such as cattle death loss and repairs.
- The feedlot workforce is supportive of future training opportunities.

Sector Partnership

- The Steering Committee should be maintained for the long-term, to assist in the process of implementing recommendations and strategies.
- There is a need to enhance partnerships with Aboriginal groups.

Action Plan

- Currently, Saskatchewan feedlots tend to either hire trained workers or train new employees on-the-job using their own staff, facilities, and methods.
- There are limited training opportunities in Saskatchewan for feedlot managers and employees. Both SIAST and the University of Saskatchewan offer general programs that do provide some excellent foundational learning for potential workers. However, specialized education and training opportunities are not offered in their present programs. The University of Saskatchewan is developing a Feedlot Management Extension Course but its offering date is still unknown at this time.
- Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food's Green Certificate Program has been used effectively within the industry. It is not widely known as a training opportunity and hence its application has been somewhat limited.
- The Regional Colleges can play an important role in brokering and delivery of training programs.
- Out of province colleges such as Lakeland, Olds, and Lethbridge in Alberta do offer some specific training programs for feedlot workers.
- Does the Saskatchewan industry need new programs, re-vamped programs, or should existing programs, perhaps from out-of-province, be introduced? There is not a clear answer to the question. But there is clarity that a gap does exist between current training needs and future training needs and that there is desire to have those needs met through Saskatchewan-based education and training.

Priorities and Recommendations

- Development and delivery of specialized training programs/courses for both managers and employees are needed immediately.
- Training must incorporate knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- Institutions and organizations with direct linkages to the feedlot industry need to coordinate programs/courses in order to assist the industry with quality training.
- Develop positive relationships between the feedlot industry and Aboriginal groups.
- Commitment by industry, educators, and government to long-term growth must occur and plans need to be developed to sustain it over time.

- The development of additional training resources, such as a training feedlot, will be necessary to ensure that the desired type of quality education/training will occur over the long term. Practical or hands-on learning is a must for this industry.
- Training delivery methods need to be sensitive to meet the needs of a rural clientele. This might support the use of distance education such as the Internet. Seminars and workshops are recognized as good delivery formats. Module-based programs are a very practical form of design.
- Mentoring and job shadowing could work very effectively in this industry.
- The understanding and image of the industry in K-12 schools and with the general public is not accurate. Curriculum change could strengthen this. In addition, supportive materials for teachers such as videos, handouts would enhance public awareness.
- The use of tools to properly measure training needs and learning should be introduced and promoted.
- In order to embrace change, personal and group change skills are required to assist and support the process.

Next Steps

1. Facilitate a review of present feedlot job functions. This could be done through a job profiling process such as DACUM. This investigation needs to be done for both feedlot managers and employees.
2. Identify unique training needs and opportunities for First Nations' people pertaining to the feedlot industry.
3. Work closely with Agriculture in the Classroom to create more positive and balanced awareness for the general public about agriculture in general. This could incorporate more information for youth about potential employment opportunities in agriculture, or more specifically, the cattle industry.
4. Continue the function of the Steering Committee as a liaison and support to the process.
5. Recommend a time-line for the development and implementation of training initiatives.
6. Clarify the level and type of commitment of stakeholders such as government, industry and supportive services such as educational institutions, towards improved education and training opportunities, and growth of the overall industry.