

**Summary from the Boards and Commissions meeting
March 2 - 3, 2006**

Participants were asked to highlight significant issues and present them as though they had a two-minute ride with the Minister in an elevator. The following points were discussed:

Commercialization:

- Commercialization means different things to groups depending on where the organization is at; for some, it means marketing, others it means royalties attached to research investments.
- Boards and commissions need to have the ability to provide seed money for commercialization and benefit from future worth – what is needed is flexibility for providing service to organization and its membership.
- Investments should be made to move the industry forward, without having the board or commission controlling the commercial activity.

Research:

- Need for producers to lead and direct research priorities through leveraging investments from producers.
- Should target risk-sharing and benefit-sharing research.

Emergency Preparedness:

- Industry must be prepared to respond first to emergencies, with the backing of government and access to resources and experience.
- A timely response plan, with a communication component and a database of available remedial supplies, and ability to test response plan is needed.

Re-organizations:

- Numbers within some organizations are shrinking to a critical state with the consolidation of agriculture. As such, organizations are looking to work collectively within the province with organizations with a similar trade policy or position, or beyond the borders in a western or national capacity.
- Moving beyond the producer: shrinking numbers, harmonization of provincial marketing legislation, sunset clauses to terms of office, effective national negotiations and negotiators must all be considered.
- The TSX approach to governance (out-sourced directors with financial and management experience) of boards and commissions was discussed with feelings both ways.

Governance and Leadership:

- There must remain some flexibility in governance to accommodate the industry needs while maintaining accountability and leadership to producers.
- Framework for our industry – communication – policy development – remain accountable to their constituents.

Strategic planning:

- Without a strategic plan, organizations are adrift and lack focus ultimately dealing with day-to-day challenges, with no long-term vision or goals.
- Benefits of strategic planning: governance, common focus, foundation for business conduct, privatization, communication, directing budgets and minimum duplication.
- Strategic plans should be align or integrated with national and provincial organizations and linked to operational plans.

On-Farm Food Safety Assurance Programs, Environmental Farm Plans, Traceability:

- Good opportunities when tied to a consumer – position industry for profit; not all groups need to tie to the consumer in the same way.
- The challenge is how do we ‘recoup the cost’ or add the cost to the value of the end product.

Hot-button issues:

- As a funder of intellectual property, how to benefit with royalties or shares of the company, with limited or no exposure.
- Governance and leadership for the industry vision – how to achieve and engage; how to maintain accountability to producers; selecting the leadership from what sector, size of your operation, developing leadership.
- An opportunity for Council to assist boards and commission with strategic planning by providing an environmental scan (global-big picture); and perhaps assist some organization (big or small) with facilitation, coaching and guidance.
- When considering ‘re-organizing’ communication, trust, acceptance, contribution and participation (monetary) as well as director stake, must all be considered.

Take home messages and hot-button issues from the discussions concerning MAPA and the framework for the regulatory review is:

- First, we have to identify the type and extent of changes and that will dictate who needs to be consulted.
- Respect the timelines and framework that has been laid out, need to strictly adhere to the plan.
- Industry needs adequate time to respond to proposed changes in regulation.
- Consultation process should involve individual groups/boards; Council should implement an effective consultation protocol to this – that is open and transparent.
- To stakeholders – publicize that the board is entering into the discussion and invite stakeholder input.
- Boards and commissions require flexibility to collect on research and development investments, it would ensure a return to producers in the new realities of private varieties, value chains and value creation.
- A number of boards and commissions requested Council's term of office policy be reviewed to allow for more than a six-year term for board members. The current policy is perceived as limiting Alberta boards and commissions' effectiveness and influence on national boards.
- Individual plans under MAPA need to enable flexibility in definitions and terms such as natural, agriculture, producer and deemed sale.
- How do we fit regional versus national objectives with provincial objectives – producer / processor / retailer consultation; MAPA must allow flexibility.
- Allowing for revenue streams from IP / royalties / commercialization / investments.
- Need for Marketing Council (MAPA) to be more active in helping boards and commissions collect levies, slippage and in going beyond provincial boundaries.
- It is getting harder to recruit new people, both producers and staff, to participate in boards and commissions due to the time commitment, consider the increasing and *ongoing government consultation processes* – legislative reviews for oil industry, forest industry, agriculture, AFSC.
- Refundable commissions, especially new and smaller ones, would like the governments' policy of setting up non-refundable commissions be reviewed.
- The appeal process is seen as a means to delaying resolution; mediation and/or arbitration should be encouraged as an early step in the resolution process with qualified mediators.