

SEED GROWERS

Wayne Amos & Lori Erhardt

Wayne Amos and his wife, Lori Erhardt, operate Big Dog Seeds, a 4000 acre Select Seed Grower operation near Oxbow. They grow cereals, pulses, oilseeds, and some native grass seed. A farmer for close to 30 years, Wayne doesn't shy away from the term "activist." Pointing out that farming is an entire lifestyle, he says, "We live our work, hence we live our politics."

Wayne has spent time working as a volunteer with farmers overseas. He has also worked with a number of Canadian farm organizations to address the increasing challenges facing farmers and their communities. He actively seeks ways to improve his own economic outlook and introduced pedigreed seed, which now accounts for approximately two-thirds of his seeded acreage, as "a way to do some value adding." His environmental awareness, Wayne believes, "relates to the whole notion of what I'm doing here on the farm." Noting that some good friends have chosen to farm organically as a way to add value he says, "So I'm always questioning what I'm doing and how I'm doing it."

Several years ago, Wayne had become intrigued by an Ontario-based environmental program for farmers. In 2004, he was in an Estevan farm machinery dealership when a poster on the bulletin board caught his eye: a home-grown version of the program had recently been launched in Saskatchewan. To Wayne, a farmer with a global perspective and a willingness to act locally, the EFP looked like a perfect fit. He was quick to follow up.

What is the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)?

The Environmental Farm Plan is designed to help producers assess the current and future environmental impact of their farming practices. Delivered in Saskatchewan by the Provincial Council of Agriculture Development and Diversification Boards (PCAB), the EFP is an awareness and educational tool that, for producers who successfully complete its



5-step process, may open the door to potential funding support through the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program (CSFSP). The program is open to anyone interested in understanding and addressing environmental issues in agriculture, and is completely voluntary. Information provided by producers who choose to take part is kept strictly confidential.

Participants are introduced to the concepts at a workshop led by a trained facilitator. Later, at home, they use a workbook to analyze their own operation and farming practices, to identify potential environmental risks and to learn about possible solutions. After completing the workbook assessment, participants attend a second workshop where, with the facilitator's assistance, they choose the most appropriate steps to take, prioritize their activities, and finalize their personal Environmental Farm Action Plan.

Each completed action plan is then delivered to a committee of producers whose Environmental Farm action plans have already been endorsed. Once the action plan has been approved by this Peer Review Committee, producers receive a Certificate of Endorsement from PCAB and may, if they choose, apply for cost-shared funding from CSFSP to implement qualifying aspects of their Action Plan.

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Sustainable farm communities

Wayne's priority was assessing where he stood from an environmental perspective, not accessing a source of funding. One of his long-standing practical concerns, for example, was how close his fuel storage tanks were to the farm's domestic water supply. Still, some of the objectives he identified in his Action Plan did qualify for cost-shared funding. He was approved for, and completed, modifications for improved residue management on his combine. He was also approved last year for fuel tank upgrading, but cash flow concerns forced him to defer the project. "We've reapplied for that project," he says, "and hopefully we can do it this year."

When he began the program, Wayne wasn't clear on whether funding was even available. "I was driven by wanting to specifically look at what we were doing on this farm and what we might need to change," he says. The financial incentives turned out to be valuable but ultimately, Wayne believes, the greatest benefit of the EFP is its ability to focus attention on the long-term sustainability of rural communities.



ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN

EFP

Sustainable Futures

Provincial Council of Agriculture Development and Diversification Boards for Saskatchewan Inc. (PCAB) is an independent non-profit organization representing grassroots agriculture in Saskatchewan. We work closely with industry and government to ensure timely and effective delivery of agriculture programs in the province. PCAB is committed to working with both government and industry to ensure a cooperative, efficient approach to agricultural program delivery.

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