

DAIRY PRODUCERS

Rick & Patricia Zomer

Relatively new to Saskatchewan dairy farming, Rick and Patricia Zomer bought their land near Laird in 2004. They were approved for a 60-cow operation the next year, and began building their yard from scratch. Rick, who had immigrated from Holland, had spent years learning the dairy business but Patricia was a city girl, born and raised in Saskatoon.

With a brand new operation, and a baby on the way, the Zomer's were looking to the future.

The couple learned about the Environmental Farm Plan at the Western Canadian Livestock Expo in Saskatoon in 2005, and immediately signed up. "We both really wanted to do it," Patricia says, adding, "For different reasons, though."

Rick, she says, was motivated by the possibility of qualifying for funding support to help him tackle some of the important projects he had in mind. Patricia, four months pregnant with the couple's first child, was thinking of the long-term health of their community, their farm and their family. "We didn't want to do anything that could pose a health problem, for our cattle or for us," she says. "We're hoping to have our children farm in the same spot."

Rick and Patricia were both interested in learning what policy changes might affect them in the future, and in making sure they were prepared to implement them.

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 Agricultural 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, the producer receives a Certificate of Endorsement from PCAB.

Building it right the first time

Since Rick's time was taken up with the cows, and because it was something she was interested in anyway, Patricia attended the workshops. Despite not having a farm background, she found the information in the workbook to be straightforward and, with Rick's occasional help, moved quickly through the chapters.

Saskatchewan Environmental Farm Plan Testimonials

continued

Two of the projects Rick and Patricia had identified on their action plan qualified as Beneficial Management Practices (BMP) eligible for cost-shared funding support through CSFSP. Once they had received their Certificate of Endorsement the couple applied for, and received, approval to move a corral, and to cover the cost of additional labour on a shelter belt.

Although Patricia already had a strong environmental awareness, she found the EFP workshops to be a great learning experience. "It's good to have everything laid out for you," she points out, "because you know every question they're asking you is a possible hazard." Perhaps thinking of her growing family, with baby number two on the way, she concludes, "I always wanted to have a healthy farm."



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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