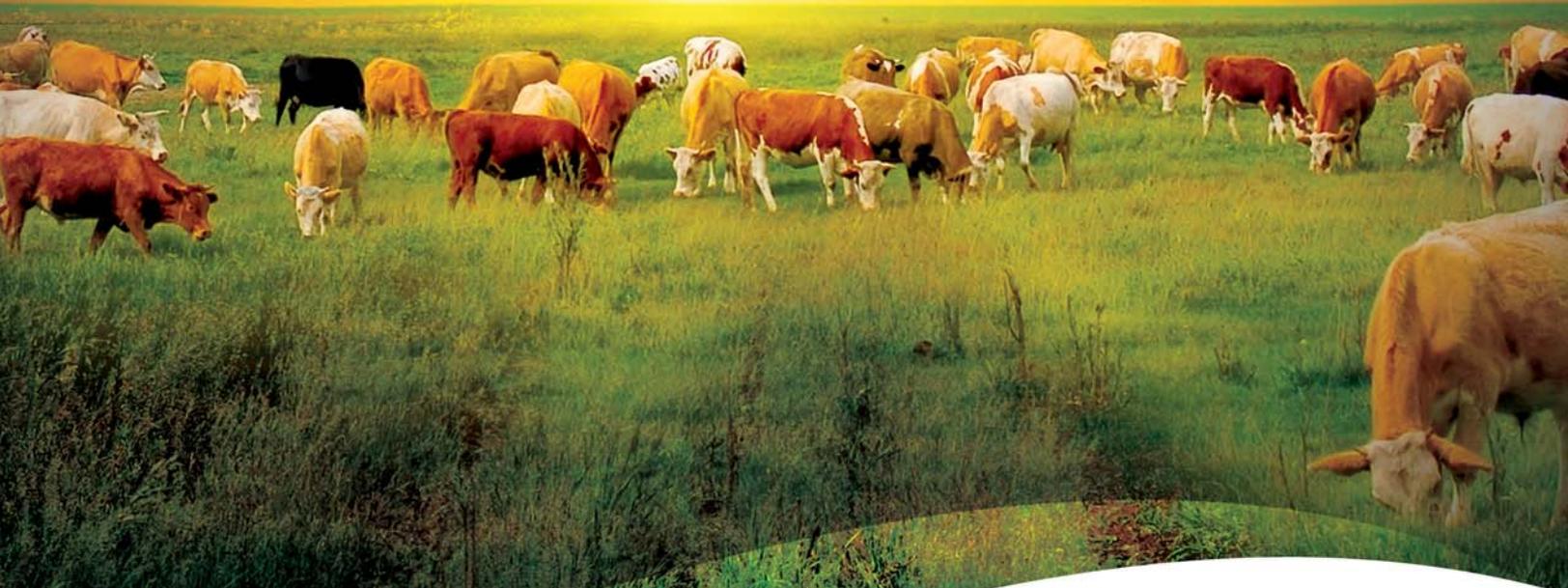




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NEWSLETTER

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Farm Programs and Producer Priorities

By Cam Dahl, MBP General Manager

Farm groups spend a lot of time designing and re-designing subsidy programs. Governments spend even more time on the same subject. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has an entire branch dedicated to farm financial programs.

These debates have been going on since the late 1960s. I wish it were possible to add up the budget expended, hours spent and intelligent minds that have been dedicated to this issue. Someone should conduct a cost benefit analysis for both taxpayers and producers. Even if we do not have these numbers we should still ask “is it worth it?”



Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) is no exception to the pull of the great subsidy debates. We too spend a lot of time evaluating different subsidy options, attending consultation sessions and lobbying for positions that we think will bring the greatest value to the beef producers we serve.

There is a key phrase in the last sentence: “producers we serve.” Too often your voices are lost or never raised in the complicated and politicized (Hey, that province is getting more than us!) discussions over farm support.

Producers should change that. You should contact your associations—MBP’s door is always open—and your governments. As you are reading this, there are hundreds of economists and politicians designing the next suite of support programs and they could use your input. It is always a bit dangerous to openly state where one stands on tax dollars directed into farm support. This is a bit like discussing politics or religion while at the dinner table. But I will take a crack at it.

Agriculture is a key driver for the Manitoba economy and it makes up a significant percent of our GDP. Agriculture is also a key driver of innovation and technology innovation-developments that are often adapted by society at large.

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Upcoming Events

August 3-5: Manitoba Youth Beef Round-Up, Beautiful Plains Ag Society, Neepawa, MB. [Schedule](#)

Sept. 8: Tune in to a brand new season of [Great Tastes of Manitoba](#) featuring Manitoba Beef Producers' Beef Expert Adriana Barros! Watch CTV at 6:30 p.m for the premiere.

September 11-13: AITC-M [Amazing Agriculture Adventure](#). AAA is a hands-on, interactive ag event geared to the Grades 4 and 5 Science curriculum. Volunteers are still needed! If you are interested in volunteering please [email AITC](#).

Trust Fund Donations

Memorial donations may be made in memory of Major Jay Fox to a trust fund for his children Devon, Charlee, Porter and Major. Donations may be made at any branch of TD Canada Trust.

Producer Priorities continued...

The industry supports thousands of jobs in our urban centres, such as Winnipeg, Brandon or Portage la Prairie. Agriculture is also the backbone of our rural communities.

I believe government does have a role to play in ensuring the ongoing stability and viability of agriculture because it is so important to both urban and rural Manitoba. For example, governments should be there when natural disasters threaten to drive producers off the land. The 2011 flood is just one example of a case where it is in society's best interest for government to step in to ensure that this critical industry can thrive in the future.

I also strongly support government investment in research. This is because taxpayers get a very high rate of return when government dollars are invested in agriculture research. For example, a 2004 academic report found that there were \$48.3 dollars generated for every federal dollar invested in beef research.

Governments also have a role to play in insurance programs like crop insurance or a market-based price insurance program for livestock. This is something that MBP has been lobbying for at both levels of government. Governments also have a responsibility to help Canadians secure access to international markets.

Disaster relief, investment in research, insurance programs and ensuring access to markets have one thing in common: while they support the rural economy and help ensure the viability of the agriculture sector, they do not aim to directly subsidize farm income or support a producer's revenue margins.

This leads to a big very big question: Should tax dollars be used to support farm and ranch incomes? We need to have our answers ready.

Consultations on the next suite of federal/provincial agriculture programs (Growing Forward II) will reach a conclusion shortly. MBP will be part of these discussions. When I hear officials ask that critical question, I want your answer as well. How do you think tax dollars should be invested in agriculture? What are your priorities?

COMING SOON!

MBP District Meeting Schedule

Note: Meetings will be held at the end of October and in November. See you there!

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