



March 31, 2023

Sustainable Agriculture Strategy Consultation  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
Email: [aafc.sas-sad.aac@agr.gc.ca](mailto:aafc.sas-sad.aac@agr.gc.ca)

**Re: Sustainable Agriculture Strategy Consultation Discussion Document**

The Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission (Sask Wheat) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) on the proposed Sustainable Agriculture Strategy (SAS) consultation document. Sask Wheat has appreciated the opportunities provided by the Canadian Government to date to consult on the SAS.

Sask Wheat is a producer-led organization established to grow the Saskatchewan wheat industry, representing 24,000 wheat producers in the province. From 2018 to 2022, these Saskatchewan producers annually grew, on average, 80% of Canada's durum wheat and 41% of Canada's non-durum wheat. Sask Wheat provides leadership in identifying and supporting research, market development and advocacy that contributes to profitable and sustainable wheat production for Saskatchewan farmers.

Agriculture is a critically important segment of Canada's economy, and Saskatchewan plays a vital role in Canada's agriculture sector, accounting for 43 percent of Canada's cropland.<sup>1</sup> Saskatchewan contributes roughly 40% of Canada's annual total field crop production. Saskatchewan producers grow this vast amount of production through a rotation consisting of largely grains, oilseeds and pulses on their individual farms, and Saskatchewan producers through innovations such as expanded rotations, continuous cropping, and reduced tillage have been making meaningful emissions reductions on-farm for decades, while consistently growing more food, largely through per acre yield increases.

AAFC has increasingly focused on reducing absolute GHG emissions and ultimately reaching net-zero emissions by 2050, while still seeking economic growth and increased production from the agriculture sector. The Canadian Government has emphasized the role of Canadian farmers as crucial contributors to global food security, including in the current SAS discussion document, and has targeted a significant increase in Canadian agrifood production and exports by 2028 (which will necessarily include increases in Saskatchewan production and exports). This goal is concurrent and conflicts with the targeted 30 percent reduction in fertilizer emissions by 2030 in production agriculture. If both production and environmental policy targets are to be achieved, the contribution of Saskatchewan annual crop producers as major producers of sustainably produced, high quality products that feed both domestic and export markets will be fundamental. Saskatchewan producers are committed to sustainably producing high quality and needed products for consumption in Canada and globally, but they must be competitive globally in order to continue doing so.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, 2022. Canadian Agriculture at a Glance. Saskatchewan continues to live up to the title of breadbasket of Canada <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/96-325-x/2021001/article/00008-eng.html>

Wheat provides roughly 20% of the total daily caloric and protein intake, globally.<sup>2</sup> Thus, wheat, as a global food staple, has been and will continue to be fundamental to global trade and food security. Given that Saskatchewan farmers, alone, produce much more than the equivalent of domestic Canadian demand for both durum and non-durum wheat, and, thus, largely export these crops, their contributions to both Canadian agrifood exports and global food security cannot be understated. Because of this important role played by Saskatchewan farmers in both the Canadian economy and in global trade as major producers and exporters of wheat, the perspectives of Saskatchewan wheat producers and Sask Wheat should be afforded a strong voice and genuine and informed consideration in the development of the SAS.

Research and variety development play a significant role in the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of producers. In fact, Sask Wheat views research and variety development as the primary way to increase the sustainability and the resiliency of Saskatchewan wheat producers. We believe, and history shows, breeding activities that develop trait technology and innovation ‘ingrained’ in the seed will help to meet sustainability goals by providing farmers with higher yielding varieties with improved nutrient use efficiency, reduced herbicides needed, and better ability to withstand abiotic and biotic stressors. Additionally, agronomic research and extension can also help to identify BMPs that result in improved environmental performance, more effective input use and more efficient carbon capture, furthering wheat farmers’ contributions to Canada’s climate change and sustainability goals.

Sask Wheat has committed over 50 million dollars since 2014 to research, especially in the area of variety development with emphasis on yield increases, input efficiency including nitrogen and water-use efficiency, and environmental stress response. These commitments have been made by Sask Wheat as an individual organization and through various partnerships, the largest being the multi-year, multi-million-dollar funding partnership with AAFC wheat variety breeding programs through the Canadian Wheat Research Coalition (CWRC), along with the other prairie wheat commissions.

Recent research conducted at the University of Saskatchewan shows that over the past 27 years, for every \$1 of farmer investments in wheat breeding, farmers have received \$32.60 in benefits.<sup>3</sup> The research also found a benefit cost ratio for the total producer and taxpayer investment in varietal development of almost 35:1. Any reductions in producer or public funding leave considerable returns on investment forgone, including foregone opportunities for the environmental gains that the federal government seeks in agricultural production.

Sask Wheat, as a member of the SaskCrops group has collaborated with and fully supports the SaskCrops submission to the SAS consultation, which has been included in Appendix A to this submission. Saskatchewan farmers have been, and remain, at the forefront of innovation in global agriculture.

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<sup>2</sup> Shiferaw, B., Smale, M., Braun, HJ. et al. Crops that feed the world 10. Past successes and future challenges to the role played by wheat in global food security. *Food Sec.* 5, 291–317 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-013-0263-y>

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Richard Gray, 2023. *The Future Directions for Public Agricultural Research and Breeding in Canada*. SSGA Industry meeting on public plant breeding and Seed Regulatory Modernization.



Through innovations, they have been making meaningful emissions reductions on-farm for decades, while consistently growing more food, largely through per acre yield increases. It is vital for Canada that Saskatchewan agricultural producers remain competitive and profitable, producing food for a growing world population and, at the same time, ensuring a healthy sustainable environment for future generations. Saskatchewan producers must be profitable to be sustainable. They must be globally competitive to be profitable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brett Halstead".

Brett Halstead,

Chair, Sask Wheat