

Saskatchewan Forage Network
Final Report
March 31, 2018

Submitted by: Saskatchewan Forage Council
Reporting Period: April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018

Project Objectives and Deliverables:

The Saskatchewan Forage Network (SFN) was created in 2012 with a vision to grow the forage and livestock industry's future for producer profitability with a specific focus on collaboration, coordination and communication.

To maintain the positive activities of the Network, the Saskatchewan Forage Council (SFC) continued to lead this initiative during the 2017/2018 fiscal year. Janice Bruynooghe remained in the position of Network Coordinator focusing on the following objectives:

- continued input and participation in the creation and development of the Livestock & Forage Centre of Excellence;
- maintaining conversations and engagement with interprovincial and national partners; and
- a sustained focus on the need for expanded forage research project funding and capacity.

Ongoing dialogue and collaboration with all sectors of the forage and livestock industry was maintained.

Over the total timeframe of the Saskatchewan Forage Network project, including the 2017/2018 year, many successful outcomes and deliverables were achieved including:

- an increased awareness of the critical lack of forage research funding and capacity. The efforts of the SFN played a central role in turning the tide towards increased forage research project funding, greater numbers of forage researchers, and expanded investment in research infrastructure and capacity. For example, investment in forage projects through the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) has increased from 7% (\$282K) of all funded livestock and forage projects in 2014 to 27% (\$1.689M) in 2018. Over the same time period, total ADF funds allocated to forage and livestock research as a percentage of total research funding, including crops, increased from 37% (\$4.188M) to 45% (\$6.364M). Similarly, investments by the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) to forage research as a percentage of total research expenditures have increased from 10% (\$413K) for the 2001-2008 period to 30% (\$6M) for 2013-2018;
- re-investment in research capacity through hiring of scientists within Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (six new scientists across Canada including Dr. Jillian Bainard at Swift Current), by universities (Dr. Jonathan Bennett, UofS) and by SK Agriculture (Dr. Bill Biligetu, Strategic Research Program (SRP) Forage Research Chair). Input through the SFN encouraged the creation of these new positions with a focus on industry-directed priorities;
- re-alignment of research resources including the creation of the Livestock & Forage Centre of Excellence (LFCE). Direct involvement in the development of the LFCE ensured that all facets of the forage and livestock industry are included. Specific focus for the Livestock and Forage Steering Committee over the past year has included development of governance processes, formation of a Strategic Advisory Board, and creation of a Centre Director position. A Research Visioning Workshop (November 2017) provided a forum for direct industry engagement and input to coordinated research strategies;

- input into development of long-term vision/strategy plans with targeted priorities to benefit all sectors;
- streamlined and strategic investment of research funds. The SFN facilitated the active engagement of industry sectors from forage seed to livestock;
- industry investment, directed through the SFN, for Graduate Student Awards (2014-2017). A total of \$129,000 supported seven research projects including digestibility of barley silage for dairy cattle, development of new sainfoin and crested wheatgrass lines, improving grazing capacity through introduction of bloat free legumes, and developing grassland songbird management targets for multi-species conservation of native rangelands. This investment leveraged additional research funding sources while training future scientists; and
- restructure and delivery of the SK Advisory Council on Forage Crops (SACFC) meeting. In partnership with SK Agriculture, this annual forum brings together governments, university, researchers, funders, non-government organizations, industry groups and producers to discuss research priorities and determine future outputs.

Benefits for the Saskatchewan Livestock and Forage Industry:

This project has played an integral role in advancing the forage and livestock industry in Saskatchewan. Research project funding and capacity has been expanded, engagement with stakeholders and partners, both interprovincially and nationally, has grown, and a critical level of focus upon forage research is a key part of the new Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence. These very positive outcomes clearly support and provide a foundation for enhanced profitability for Saskatchewan producers.

Project Partners and Funding Recognition:

Partner organizations' significant contributions to this project, both cash and in-kind, have been recognized throughout the lifespan of project activities and deliverables including any project updates to stakeholders or in dialogue when focusing on collaboration opportunities.

Thank you to the Network partner organizations and steering committee members: Native Plant Society of SK (Chet Neufeld), SK Bison Association (Les Kroeger), SK Cattlemen's Association (Michael Spratt), SK Forage Council (Aaron Ivey/Leanna Rousell), SK Forage Seed Development Commission (David Maxwell/Ray McVicar), SK Leafcutters Association/SK Alfalfa Seed Producers Association (Andrew Lindsay-Hawkins/Jeffery Freedman), SK Prairie Conservation Action Plan (Orin Balas), SK Sheep Development Board (Arlette Seib), SaskMilk (Jack Ford), and SK Stock Growers Association (Henry McCarthy/Chad MacPherson).

Sincere appreciation to the financial supporters of the Network: Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission, Ducks Unlimited Canada, SaskMilk, Saskatchewan Bison Association, Saskatchewan Forage Council, as well as the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and the Canada-Saskatchewan Growing Forward 2 bi-lateral agreement for their funding contributions 2014-2017.