



Western Barley Growers Association

A STRONG VOICE FOR A VIBRANT, MARKET RESPONSIVE BARLEY INDUSTRY IN WESTERN CANADA

Barley Council of Canada

Barley has always been an important part of cropping intention for farmers in Canada for generations. In the 1950's Canada was a source of pearling barley for overseas customers. As the malting industry grew, malt barley varieties were developed to meet the increasing demand. In the 1960's the feed industry began to develop and by the 1970's evolved to become the major domestic market for barley. By the 1990's a little over 14 million acres of barley were grown in Western Canada to meet the domestic and international markets. However, with the increased competition from alternative crops such as canola, pulses and other oilseeds, barley production began to decline. In 2004, 12.1 million acres of barley were seeded but by 2008, the acreage had decline to 5.8 million acres in Western Canada. Malt companies were struggling to access enough barley to meet their needs. Barley acres have recovered to an estimated 7.9 million acres last year but still struggles to be considered a cropping alternative in farmers crop rotations. What is the future for barley in Canada?

Three years ago, the Western Barley Growers Association initiated the *Business Case Assessment of the Western Barley Sector: In Search of an Optimal Marketing Structure* to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the barley industry. The study identified that a national voice for barley which included all players in the barley value chain was needed to rebuild the industry in Canada. Two years ago, a working group was established with representation from the malt industry, the brewing industry, grain handlers, feed users, research community and producers groups from across Canada to develop a strategy focusing on expanding and growing the barley industry. The idea of forming a Barley Council of Canada (BCC) with representation from all sectors of the barley value chain, from across Canada, working collaboratively, became the priority of this working group. The challenge became "Where do we start?"

Very early on in the process the working group realized that every sector of the value chain had differing opinions of our barley industry and what steps were needed to encourage farmers to include more barley in their cropping plans, to encourage investment in barley processing and encourage more emphasis on breeding and agronomic research. The BCC working group determined we were working in a vacuum. We had not consulted the barley industry and the decision was made to survey of the entire industry to, first, identify whether stakeholders supported the idea of a Barley Council and second, what the strategic focus for the BCC should be. Last summer, the working group contracted the services of Synthesis Agri-Food Network to conduct a nationwide survey of entire barley value chain to verify the acceptance of the BCC concept and to identify the focus areas the council should target. The survey was completed last fall which confirmed industry support for a BCC. Survey respondents also provided insight into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the industry. A strategic plan was developed outlining five focus areas that the BCC should concentrate on to help promote and rebuild the industry.

The first focus area is to support innovation and research. By bringing all players to the table, the BCC will be able to align the research needs of both growers and end users. The BCC will provide a national unified voice to attract both private and public financial investment in innovation and research for the barley sector. The council will through

collaboration, lend support for barley breeders and researchers.

The second area identified was a need to promote crop production and best practices to ensure the barley production meets the needs of the industry. The BCC will work with agronomic researchers to help barley producers engage production practices that will best ensure their barley meets the quality requirements of end use customers.

The third focus area is to support market development. The BCC will not duplicate or compete with existing market development initiatives already underway by others in the barley industry but will be there in a support role if needed. The BCC will help promote barley in four commercial areas; malt, feed health food and industrial. The BCC serves as a national voice for both domestic and international customers.

The fourth focus area is to work for improve market access. BCC brings a national voice on behalf of barley to trade negotiations involving market access issues, new trade policies and agreements. The value of a national council is bringing all players in the barley value chain into negotiations involving barley in trade discussions.

The final focus area is to enable a better understanding of the barley industry throughout the barley value chain. Through communication and education of all players in the value chain, the BCC can address challenges and strengthen the industry, to build stronger relationships throughout the value chain. Communicating with and enlightening governments understanding of the barley industry is important to rebuilding and growing the barley sector.

The BCC will not be funded by another check-off from producer sales. It is intended that it will be funded by regular and associate membership fees and by stakeholders in the barley value chain. The strength of the BCC will be in the support it receives from the industry.

The Barley Council of Canada will bring a national voice for barley to the Canadian farm scene. The first Board of Directors was elected on February 5, 2013. The Board of Directors is made up of seven directors from producers groups from all regions of Canada and seven industry directors representing the malt, brewing, feeding, feed processing, grain handling, research, seed and crop life sectors. The board of directors has finalized the by-laws for the BCC. The Board will now concentrate on building a funding model that does not exclude any stakeholder in the barley value chain. The BCC is sharing staff with Alberta Barley Commission (ABC) to reduce overhead and we are also sharing office space with the ABC.

The BCC will not be duplicating other initiatives in the industry. The BCC will be there to collaborate with the barley industry and serve in a coordinating role to bring all players to the table giving a national perspective and a national voice for barley.

The BCC would like to acknowledge and thank the Alberta Barley Commission (ABC) for their financial and staff support in enabling the formation of the Council. Also, the BCC Board of Directors would like to thank all of the working group members who volunteered their time and effort to develop the concept.

BCC: "Working together to ensure the long-term profitability and sustainable growth of Canada's Barley Industry"
Web site: www.barleycouncil.com

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