



**Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Association**

PO Box 147 Yorkton SK S3N 2V6

P: 1.306.740.9558

www.saskfsa.ca // info@saskfsa.ca

Twitter: SaskFSA // Facebook: SaskFSA

February 1, 2016

**RE: Agriculture on the Political Agenda**

Agriculture is one of the main pillars of the Saskatchewan economy. Saskatchewan represents 43 per cent of Canada's farmland, totaling more than 60 million acres. Saskatchewan's agriculture industry is a leader in keeping Saskatchewan strong through managing our land and water resources to economically and sustainably grow safe food for the world.

*However, there are some serious challenges in this equation that need to be addressed as they directly impact the producer's ability to farm efficiently, to earn an income, support their family and support the economy of the province. Of particular importance is the issue of anti-agriculture groups pushing for legislation to convert productive farmland into wetlands, predominantly in the prairie pothole region (PPR). This also directly correlates to responsible surface water management. Whether it be agricultural, industrial or urban drainage or a conservation group that leaves land to abandonment which then encroaches on productive agricultural land. We are all responsible and we can all work together.*

The Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Association (SaskFSA) an organization of like-minded farmers who believe that more needs to be done to ensure economic viability and sustainability for agriculture in Saskatchewan. SaskFSA is run by farmers, for farmers and is dedicated to providing a strong united voice for agricultural land use policy & legislation. The core objectives of our organization are to advocate for the right to farm, educate the public on the value of agriculture and agricultural land improvement, to promote responsible surface water management and realistic farm stewardship and to serve as a resource and liaison for producers when it comes to challenges pertaining to land and water stewardship.

SaskFSA is proud of the important role that Saskatchewan agriculture is playing in meeting challenges related to global food production, food security and the environment. ***SaskFSA would like to draw your attention to some specific challenges facing Saskatchewan agriculture and to ask for your consideration and support:***

- . Global crop production must increase by 70 per cent to feed nine billion people by 2050. Meeting the demand for nutritious food will require the *efficient use of valuable resources and support for the producers* responsible for that production.
- . *Development of agricultural land is a key component to maximizing the productivity of the land. Surface water management is a large part of land development and improvement.* SaskFSA is a strong advocate of organized and controlled water management strategies that take into account sustainability of the environment while retaining an agriculture focus. Responsible surface water management is critical to removing excess water and directing it to an adequate outlet. When properly managed, drainage projects are a very effective tool in flood mitigation. Tile drainage is also a beneficial management practice (BMP) to effectively control flow, reduce erosion and promote deeper root development enabling crops to deal more effectively with lack of moisture. *SaskFSA would like to encourage our political leaders to endorse regulations that take in account the producer's ability to improve the land.*



**Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Association**

PO Box 147 Yorkton SK S3N 2V6

P: 1.306.740.9558

www.saskfsa.ca // info@saskfsa.ca

Twitter: SaskFSA // Facebook: SaskFSA

- *SaskFSA is working with the Water Security Agency (WSA) on developing the “New Approach to Agricultural Water Management”.* The new risk-based regulatory system will be designed to minimize the negative impacts of downstream flooding and infrastructure damage; degraded water quality from erosion and increased contaminants; and negative impacts on wetlands and beds and shores of other water bodies and watercourses. *SaskFSA strongly believes that the responsibility of surface water management be expanded to include all stakeholders.* Anyone who has water on their land, whether it be naturally shedding rainfall, a conservation area, rural municipalities, industry, urban or agricultural drainage. Collectively it all has an impact and collectively we can all work towards a plan for managing its impact during peak flows. *Critical to the collective approach will be utilizing provincial resources such WSA and the watershed stewardship associations, along with the local conservation and development boards (C&Ds) and watershed groups and you, our Saskatchewan MLA’s and Candidates, to educate and unify all stakeholders.*
- Stewardship towards tomorrow and more specifically, *the support of water stewardship and conservation programs that work in conjunction with agriculture such as the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program.* ALUS is designed to preserve existing wetland and upland habitat with an enhancement component that converts marginal acres to perennial forage. It also provides a level of annual compensation to the producer for their role in environmental stewardship. Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers are some of the best environmentalists around. SaskFSA endorses ALUS versus the anti-agriculture conservation groups that use scare tactics in their advertisements to portray a negative image of agriculture. Currently the anti-agriculture conservation groups are pushing for legislation to convert productive farmland into wetlands. Our SaskFSA membership land base already has a significant per cent of land designated as habitat land and we strongly feel that taking productive agricultural land out of production will decrease food production and negatively affect Saskatchewan's economy. This strategy will not move the Saskatchewan economy forward, but rather the exact opposite.
- *Endorsement and public education around the efficiency of agriculture.* Specifically relating to the BMPs for nutrient management planning, cropping rotations, precision farming and responsible surface water management which are all positively related to technical efficiency of the operation while simultaneously advancing environmental stewardship.

***SaskFSA encourages our government to bring these challenges to the forefront. We welcome any discussion or questions and thank-you for your leadership and support for Saskatchewan agriculture.***

*Sincerely, Your Partners In Moving Forward:*



Myles Thorpe . President &

Candace Mitschke-Hiller . Executive Director & Communications

On behalf of the SaskFSA Board & Membership