
National Beef Industry Development Fund
Investment in Knowledge and Education
Beef Industry Human Resource Development Symposium

Symposium Proceedings

December 11&12 2003

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Executive Summary

The National Beef Industry Development Fund (NBIDF) is a \$9.25 million investment by the governments of Canada, British Columbia, and Alberta, with the purpose of promoting and enhancing the competitiveness of Canada's beef industry. As a result of recommendations by the Fund Committee, investment in knowledge and education has been identified as a strategic direction for the NBIDF fund. As a result of the above strategic direction a symposium was held to develop a blueprint to address the human resource needs of the various sectors of the beef industry. Participants included key individuals from universities, colleges, government, and industry.

Symposium participants identified their vision of the ideal future for the industry. This included the industry being profitable, and competitive in the world market with an increase in beef consumption and high consumer confidence. In terms of the human resource component to reach those goals, the ideal future would include a readily available, skilled, and motivated work force. The means for accomplishing that future includes greater awareness of industry careers; low job vacancy rates; competitive employment opportunities; and a proactive education and training environment.

Forces hindering the ideal future were also identified. These include issues such as perception of a meager lifestyle image; and a lack of strategic vision for human resource needs. Conversely, forces helping the industry reach its ideal future include a desire for an industry strategic plan encompassing human resource strategies and succession plans; and a wish for the building of partnerships and collaborations.

Several recommendations resulted from the one and one-half day symposium. These were divided into objectives, and activities to reach those objectives. Under the auspices of the IKE pathway included developing a long term human resource vision; and developing a public relations and communications program and hiring a coordinator to manage that program.

Background

The National Beef Industry Development Fund (NBIDF) is a \$9.25 million investment of the governments of Canada, British Columbia and Alberta. The NBIDF is managed and directed by an industry/government committee for the purpose of promoting and enhancing the competitiveness of the beef industry in Canada through funding research and/or development programs. The fund commenced in March of 2002 and sunsets in March of 2006.

To assist in the identification of the strategic direction for the Fund, the Fund Committee chose to hold an industry consultation meeting September 19 and 20, 2002. The meeting brought together stakeholders from all sectors of the industry to review and discuss development priorities for the Canadian beef cattle industry. The workshop was facilitated in a manner that identified the past successes of development funding but also allowed ideas and suggestions to emerge that were not necessarily reliant on current industry practices.

The workshop identified and recommended the following industry development priorities to the Fund Committee:

- A customer driven industry committed to 100 per cent customer satisfaction
- Expand markets and increase market security
- Level and enhance Canadian beef image to facilitate product differentiation
- Develop integrated food safety and foreign animal disease strategies
- Add/optimize value to beef and beef cattle products – branded products, new products
- Beef quality and consistency
- Facilitate improved knowledge and technology transfer
- Improve co-operation, coordination and information sharing and transfer between different industry sectors

These recommendations were reviewed by the Fund Committee at a meeting on September 20, 2002 and at a second meeting on October 28, 2002. As a result of these meetings, the following four development areas were identified as forming the strategic direction of the Fund:

- Expand market share and security
- Increase product value
- Improve alignment of the supply chain
- Invest in knowledge and education (through innovation and adaptation)

Human Resources Symposium

To facilitate the last development area - investment in knowledge and education, the Canadian beef industry recognized there must be an increase in human resource capabilities through enhanced focus on educational programs and information resources. To this end a symposium was held that developed a strategic blueprint to address the human resource needs of all sectors of the Canadian beef industry. Key people from universities, colleges, government and industry participated in this comprehensive review of human resource needs, with the purpose of identifying actions to address the issues. The remainder of this document provides a summary of results of that symposium.

Process

To draw upon the diversity of expertise in the participant audience, and to do so in such a way that participants broadened their own perspectives before narrowing their focus to solutions, a three-stage process was designed to examine the issue:

1. Identifying gaps in the ideal situation versus the current situation
2. Analyzing the driving and resisting forces that result in the current situation
3. Identifying ways to overcome the gaps

1. Identifying gaps:

As a stimulator, participants identified the similarities and differences in what they would have expected to hear in presentations of the same topics 15 years earlier. Following a brief sharing of their perspectives, participants focused on the “ideal human resources situation in the beef industry” 15 years into the future. Participants generated their ideas individually, following which they pooled their ideas in small working groups and added ideas as their group’s thoughts were being posted to flipcharts. The working groups then presented their ideas to the rest of the participants.

2. Gap Analysis:

To better understand the reasons for the current situation, working groups conducted a “Force Field Analysis”. In doing so, they identified forces that are driving the current situation toward the ideal situation (as identified in the gap analysis), and those forces that are limiting movement toward the ideal situation. Again the process began with individuals identifying forces, followed by the pooling and addition of ideas in the working groups.

Participants were assigned to new *reviewing* groups. Each of the reviewing groups had representatives from each of the original working groups. The reviewing groups circulated to the stations where force field analyses prepared by each of the working groups were posted. At each station, the respective member from the original working group assisted the other members of the reviewing group to understand the flipchart postings. In this manner, all participants were able to review the all of the output.

3. Ways to Overcome the Gaps:

Back in their working groups, participants identified the top three forces that could have the most impact on the human resources in the beef industry. Each group examined those forces to determine “what initiatives/opportunities are possible if:

- a. The major “forces against” were reversed/eliminated/significantly reduced?
- b. The weaker “forces for” were substantially strengthened?

Each working group presented their ideas for overcoming the gaps to the rest of the participants.

The Ideal Future: Summary

Symposium participants were tasked with visualizing the ideal future for human resources in the industry. Participants provided comments in two distinct areas: 1) An ideal future in terms of the success of the beef industry and its place in world and domestic markets, and 2) An ideal future in terms of ways and means of accomplishing the former in relation to human resource needs.

In summary, the vision of the ideal future as outlined by the group included: 1) A profitable industry competitive in the world market, 2) An increase in beef consumption with high consumer confidence, and 3) An available, skilled, educated and motivated work force. The means for reaching those goals include things like greater awareness of industry career choices; low job vacancy rates; competitive employment opportunities; and a proactive education and training environment.

Forces: Summary

Following participants’ analyses of the ideal future for the beef industry, and their establishing means of reaching that future, a discussion took place on the forces that would either hinder or help reaching that future. The following is a synopsis of that discussion.

Several forces that could potentially hinder the industry in reaching its ideal future were identified. The image of the industry was a common theme. There is a lack of awareness of available career opportunities, and a negative public perception of the industry. It was also believed that the industry lacks a strategic vision with regards to human resources. Specifically, there is no concerted effort to address human resource needs.

Conversely, the group also recognized the forces that are moving the industry *toward* its ideal future. There is a momentum for change with both the industry and government aware that a strategic plan encompassing human resource

strategies and succession plans is needed. This might include partnerships between industry, government, and learning institutions. The opportunity for industry to develop a successful human resource plan is enhanced by governments' recognition of the importance of agriculture, and an excellent public educational system.

Following the listing of the various forces with the potential to help or hinder the industry reach its ideal future, participants were asked to identify which of these forces they envisioned would have the most impact. That is, given their desire to see a competitive industry in a world market, with continued consumer confidence, what forces are most likely to enhance or impede those objectives vis a vis human resources.

There was consensus that the industry needs to use its infrastructure to build an effective communication plan in order to attract more people. There must also be an effort to build cross-cultural understanding between the rural and urban sectors of society. The making of human resources as a priority must be a mandate for the industry, with a dedicated team being used to develop an effective plan for addressing industry needs. There must also be an identification of markets, collaboration and coordination between sectors, and an evaluation of opportunities throughout the value chain that enable strategic alliances to be built between all sectors of the industry.

Recommendations: Summary

The groups' work resulted in a series of recommendations. These recommendations can be subdivided into objectives and activities, which if undertaken would result in the industry moving toward its ideal future with regards to human resources.

Suggested objectives included developing a long-term human resource vision and making human resources a priority. Key activities to reach desired objectives focused on developing a public relations, a marketing and communications program; forming a task force to develop a strategic plan; and identify other groups with similar human resource issues and form strategic alliances.

Subsequent to the symposium, a business plan was developed. This plan outlines achievable activities identified from the event and matches these against available resources. These activities include post secondary curriculum development and work experience opportunities.

Appendix A

Symposium Agenda

Thursday, December 11, 2003	
1:00 p.m.	Opening remarks – <i>Dave Plett</i> , Chair, National Beef Industry Development Fund - will provide an overview of the objective of the symposium Overview of beef industry – <i>Rob McNabb</i> , Assistant Manager, Canadian Cattlemen’s Association Rob will provide an overview of the beef industry
1:15 p.m.	<i>Brian Rhiness</i> , Assistant Deputy Minister, Industry Development Sector, Agriculture Food and Rural Development, will provide an overview of his ministry’s role in human resources for the farm sector
1:45 p.m.	<i>Miki Wood</i> – Associate Regional Director, Human Resources and Employment, Calgary Region Miki will discuss the role her ministry has in human resource planning and development
2:15 p.m.	<i>Betty Grudnizki</i> , Head, Agriculture Education and Training, Agriculture, Food and Rural
2:30 p.m.	<i>Dan Fullerton</i> , Dean, Business Development, Olds College Education
2:45 p.m.	<i>Rob Hale</i> , Manager Human Resources, Cargill
3:00 p.m.	Coffee Break
3:15 p.m.	<i>Mike Bird</i> – Cow/calf operator
3:30 p.m.	<i>Ryan Casco</i> , feedlot operator – Feedlot sector
3:45 p.m.	<i>Marty Carpenter</i> , Beef Information Centre – Food Service
4:00 p.m.	<i>Dr. Duane Landals</i> , Alberta Veterinary Medical Association
4:15 p.m.	<i>Graeme Proudfoot</i> , Merit Contractors Association, and <i>Kristy Knudson</i> , Calgary Construction Association - overview of the construction industry in terms of human resource issues, challenges, and solutions
4:45 p.m.	Day’s closing comments
5:30 p.m.	Reception (Dinner on your own)
Friday, December 12, 2003	
7:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Please join us for a buffet breakfast
8:30 a.m.	Roundtable discussion – Facilitator, <i>Richard Stringham</i> , Executive Director, Alberta Institute of Agrologists
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Roundtable resumes

Appendix B

Symposium Participants

Ron Axelson	Alberta Cattle Feeders Association
Michael Bird	National Beef Industry Development Fund
Jock Buchanan-Smith	Beef Cattle Research Council
Marty Carpenter	Beef Information Centre
Bob Christie	Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Mary Dean	Mary Dean Associates Inc.
Bob France	B.C. Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Rick Frederickson	Alta. Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Neil French	Olds College
Dan Fullerton	Olds College
Betty Grudnizki	Alta. Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Rob Hale	Cargill Foods
Wayne Holland	J.D. Sweid Ltd.
Sandy Horne-Price	Olds College
Ryan Kasko	Kasko Cattle Company
Kathy Keeler	Beef Information Centre
Duane Landals	Alberta Veterinary Medical Association
Hugh Lynch-Staunton	Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Rob McNabb	Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Jeff Milland	Alta. Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Freda Molenkamp	Alberta Agriculture Research Institute
Zahir Mir	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
John Morrison	National Beef Industry Development Fund
Francis Nattress	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Richard Perlow	University of Lethbridge
David Plett	National Beef Industry Development Fund
Mick Price	University of Alberta
Graeme Proudfoot	Merit Contractors Association
Steven Pylot	Lakeland College
Brian Rhiness	Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Richard Stringham	Alberta Institute of Agrologists
Ted Sutton	Lakeland College
Larry Helland	National Beef Industry Development Fund
Miki Wood	Alberta Human Resources and Employment

Appendix C

The beef industry's ideal future:

- Competitive in world markets
- Increase in per capita beef consumption
- More diversified/branded products
- Businesses apply best practices generated by applied research
- Industry profitable at all levels of the value chain
- Science and research and development applied to beef industry results in increased profitability
- Employment statistics better reflect industry
- Reached 20/20
- Quality beef products being exported across world markets with people wanting to be involved
- High tech industry in appropriate situations
- Profitable enough to be competitive with rest of business especially for labour level jobs
- Demand for educated personnel
- Available skilled, motivated and adequately compensated workforce
- Students requesting education and training to enter/stay in workforce
- Competitive workforce as compared to rest of society
- Rise in beef consumption
- Within an operation non-urgent tasks would be completed and time would be frequently allotted for creativity
- Jobs for students and students for jobs
- Less shortage of staff, e.g. veterinarians
- 100 per cent employment with low turnover, and zero unemployment
- Integrated industry, i.e. farm to fork
- Consumer confidence in product and process
- Healthy, profitable, sustainable, green industry
- Industry human resource needs are fulfilled
- High degree of consumer confidence in industry
- High degree of consumer confidence in product

Means for accomplishing the ideal future:

- Full effective employment across industry
- Youth awareness of opportunities
- Everyone in beef chain finds trained employees
- Unrestricted access to learning
- Profitable career decision
- Job vacancy rates lower than competitors'
- More students enrolled in higher education

- Trained people for next level of technology
- More opportunities for youth to test preferences
- Benefits – competitive, flexible, adequate and comparable, compensation
- Recruitment/retention
- Interest, popularity, and on par as a career choice
- Integrating education to agriculture, i.e. business as an agriculture career choice
- Strategic human resources plan for the value chain
- Public links agriculture to food careers
- Industry involved with others to find solution
- Good recruitment and retention program
- Knowledge of today's current HR needs
- Strategic HR employment plan exists
- Affordability
- Vision for human resource needs for the next 15 years
- Career counselors/students seeking information on entering agricultural workforce
- Benefits and human resource compensation competitive
- Proactive training environment
- Innovation, progression, responsiveness
- Effective succession
- Inter-industry career path
- Employment immigration
- Multi-career employees
- Customer focused
- Positive image for beef industry
- Career in agriculture fits lifestyle
- Prospects for sustainable growth
- Structured training programs
- Technology opportunities
- Give agricultural workers opportunity to grow with operation
- Inclusive approach to have a diverse and representative workforce at all levels
- Workplace satisfaction and pride
- Training: access, continuing, evolving, hands-on
- Education is desirable, appropriate, available
- Employee adaptable to change
- Consistency through training
- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- Competitive employment opportunities
- Happy worker, stress is down
- Pride in work – good job to have

- Industry engaged in training on the job, curriculum development, financial support
- Happy employers – productive, competitive, sustainable

Appendix D

Forces with the potential to hinder the industry reaching its ideal future

Theme	Detail
Demographics and Structure	Many producers continue to have difficulty adopting new technology
	BSE has had irreversible negative effect on the industry
	A lack of ability to pay competitive wages
Image	Industry has poor lifestyle image
	Market uncertainty
	Lack of awareness of available careers
	Producers don't consider indirect compensation methods
	Industry practices 'negative self-talk'
	Public has negative perception of the industry
	Negative publicity about sustainability of industry
	Unpleasant working conditions
	Lack of profitability
	Family operations don't attract outsiders
	External challenges such as animal welfare
	Product image e.g. fat and cholesterol
	Lack of Strategic Vision
Lack of industry wide human resource strategy	
Industry's focus on present rather than future	
Lack of communication between educators and employers	
Lack of school co-op programs	
Band Aid solutions	
No concentrated effort to address human resource needs	
Industry organizations don't have human resource development mandate	
Political/government environment	Negative effect of free trade agreement
	Eastern Canada versus Western Canada mentality within government
	Trade barriers
	Fragmentation within the industry
	Political lack of awareness of industry
	Market availability
	Strong government tends to paralyze initiatives
	Low level of producer support
	Government fiscal restraint hinders new programs

Human Resources	Lack of human resources
	Demand on primary agricultural labour
	Lack of information on agriculture career choices
	Need to more effectively work with schools, especially guidance counselors
	Other sectors competing for personnel
	Lack of definition of need
	Limited number of people
	Lack of training plans
	Lack of training
	Industry and education not talking enough – lack of collaboration
	Lack of integrated approach
	Some salaries are not competitive with other sectors
	Career opportunities are not widely known
	Low income
	Not attracting the best students
Organization	Lack of organization
	Lack of collaboration on HR issues
	Fragmentation
	Entrenched organizations and thought process
Attitude	Generation gap (old thinking)
	Mailbox thinking
	Tradition
	Unwillingness to change
	Protectionist backwoods thinking
	Recruiting
Funding	Funding challenges (courses)
	Sustainability
	Lack of resources
	Limited capital
Economics	Booming economy provides for a lack of available skilled workers
	Lack of integrated immigration policy to support processing
	Consumer resistance to paying
	Fragmented industry
	Economic reality of industry
Public Perception/Health	Confused consumer
	Industry health is variable and vulnerable to outside forces (trade, weather, disease, etc.)
	Lack of understanding of the breadth of the industry and associated opportunities

	Societal attitude
	Negative perception of agri/food industry
	Urban disconnect with agri/food industry
	Poor image of industry
Industry Health	Canadian dollar
	BSE
	Export markets

Appendix E

Forces moving the industry toward the ideal future

Theme	Detail
Momentum for Change	Industry strategic plan encompassing HR strategies and succession plans
	A sense of pending crisis
	Government awareness for recognition of problems
	Safety issues now being addressed
	Improved industry communication and cooperation
	Value added and marketing opportunities provide new roles and challenges
	Increasing awareness of market needs and opportunities to differentiate products
Consumers	Consumer perceptions
	Consumer demands
	Strong consumer loyalty
	Consumer choice
Collaboration	Desire for partnerships with industry by government and learning institutions
	Collaborative nature of agriculture
Government	Government lobby and support for international trade
	Alberta government supports agriculture
	Alberta economy allows for flexibility and input
Misc.	Employment opportunity
	Advancing technology will make agriculture more attractive
	Lots of educational opportunities
	Lifestyle choice
Responsiveness	Crisis forces change
	Tight margins create need for new approaches
Work Force	Younger work force
	Untapped labour
Good Will	Good provincial support for agriculture
	Beef industry has positive public image
	Political goodwill
Innovation	We have managed change in the past and been innovative
	Industry has adopted new technologies
	Desire to change
Knowledge Transfer	Training programs
	Many training avenues
Image	Undeveloped resources
	Lifestyle has appeal

	New industry philosophy of professionalism
Demand	Strong beef demand
	Unrestricted free trade
	Market development opportunities
	Value added opportunities
Resources	Availability of resources to move forward
	CCIA trace back ability
	Beef quality assurance
Opportunity	For industry development
	Government recognition of the importance of agriculture, i.e. Growing Alberta
	Integrated desire to move forward
	Agriculture has a large variety of possible careers
Product	Good product
Education	Excellent systems of public institutions
	Agriculture colleges and universities
	High quality post secondary
	Have enough educational capacity
	Progressive approach to training by industry leaders
	Innovative training and delivery models

Appendix F

Recommendations

Objectives

- Develop a long term human resource vision.
- Endeavor to make human resources a priority issue for the beef industry.
- Ensure sufficient financial resources are available to develop and promote human resource programs.
- Ensure more human resource training targeted toward the beef industry is available.
- Endeavor to improve working conditions at the primary production level.

Activities

- Develop a program that includes public relations, marketing, and communications to positively position the beef industry as a career choice.
- Hire a coordinator to manage beef industry human resource initiatives such as the above program.
- Identify organizations and develop strategic alliances with other segments in the industry with similar human resource issues.
- Form a task force with the mandate of developing a strategic plan for incorporation in a larger industry plan to address human resource issues.
- Develop a recruitment campaign to increase the level of interest in a career in the beef industry.
- Develop ways of providing educational opportunities for older workers.

Appendix G

Human Resource and Educational Statistics Relevant to Agriculture

Alberta

Employment Rates: Alberta Agricultural Sector

- 1993 – 94,000 Albertans working in the farm sector
- 2002 – 71,800 Albertans working in the farm sector
- 2003 – 65,600 Albertans working in the farm sector
- Of these workers 69 per cent are male and 31 per cent are female
- 28 per cent are over the age of 55

- Unemployment Rates: Alberta
- 2003 – unemployment rate in Alberta was 5 per cent
- 2003 – unemployment rate for occupations unique to agriculture was 2.4 per cent; for veterinarians less than 1 per cent

Farm operators by age for 2001

- Under 35 years – 11.7 per cent
- 35-54 years - 53.1 per cent
- 55 years and over- 3.3 per cent

Farm operators by education 2001:

	Male	Female
Less than grade 9	12.7 per cent	4.6 per cent
Grades 9 to 13	50.0 per cent	52.7 per cent
Post secondary (cert/dip)	29.2 per cent	29.7 per cent
University degree	8.0 per cent	12.9 per cent

British Columbia

Employment Rates: British Columbia Agricultural Sector

- 1999 – 28,600 employed in the B.C. agrifood chain
- 2000 – 29,700 employed in the B.C. agrifood chain
- 2001 – 25,900 employed in the B.C. agrifood chain

Employment by Gender

	2000	2001
Men	15,200	15,600
Women	14,500	10,400

Farm operators by age for 2001

- Under 35 years – 7.9 per cent
- 35-54 years - 54.0 per cent
- 55 years and over- 38.1 per cent

Farm operators by education 2001:

	Male	Female
Less than grade 9	12.9 per cent	6.2 per cent
Grades 9 to 13	41.7 per cent	46.3 per cent
Post secondary (cert/dip)	31.0 per cent	32.2 per cent
University degree	14.4 per cent	15.3 per cent

Canada

Farm operators by age for 2001

- Under 35 years – 11.5 per cent
- 35-54 years - 55.1 per cent
- 55 years and over- 34.9 per cent

Unemployment rates by education for 2002 (Canada):

- Grade 8 or less 8.5 per cent
- Some high school 11 per cent
- High school grad 4.8 per cent
- Some post secondary 6.3 per cent
- Post-secondary cert/dip 7.9 per cent
- University degree 3.3 per cent

Unemployment rate Canada and the provinces (November 2003):

Alberta	5 per cent
British Columbia	7.6 per cent
Saskatchewan	5.7 per cent
Manitoba	5.4 per cent
Ontario	6.8 per cent
Quebec	9.1 per cent
New Brunswick	10.2 per cent
Prince Edward Is.	11.1 per cent
Newfoundland	17.4 per cent
Canada	7.5 per cent

Farm operations by gross farm receipts (Canada) 2001:

Less than \$10,000	24.4 per cent
\$10,000 to \$49,999	29.1 per cent
\$50,000 to \$99,999	14.9 per cent
\$100,000 to \$249,000	20.0 per cent
\$250,000 to \$499,999	0.8 per cent
\$500,000 and over	0.4 per cent

Farm operators by education (Canada) 2001:

	Male	Female
Less than grade 9	18.2 per cent	8.7 per cent
Grades 9 to 13	47.3 per cent	47.7 per cent
Post secondary (cert/dip)	24.9 per cent	30.2 per cent
University degree	9.6 per cent	13.4 per cent

Statistics Summary

In 2001, the majority of Canadian farm operators were between the ages of 34 and 54. In Alberta 53.1 per cent were in this age group, and in British Columbia 54 per cent. On a national basis 34.9 per cent of farm operators were 55 or over.

With regard to education, 47.3 per cent of male and 47.7 per cent of female farm operators in Canada have some high school education; 24.9 per cent of males and 30.2 per cent of females have a post secondary certificate or diploma; and 9.6 per cent of males and 13.4 per cent of females have a university degree.

Of the approximate 247,000 farms in Canada, in 2001, 29.1 per cent had gross farm receipts of between \$10,000 and \$49,999; 24.4 per cent has receipts of less than \$10,000; and 20.0 per cent has receipts of \$100,000 to \$249,000.

*All data is sourced from Statistics Canada.