

RESOLUTION PC1-24
Financial Sustainability for Field Crop Development Centre (FCDC)

WHEREAS funding for FCDC was transferred in January 2021 to Olds College from being a Government of Alberta plant breeding and agronomy research facility.

WHEREAS this funding transfer enabled the continuation and revitalization of research and regional trials of cereal crops under Alberta conditions to demonstrate proven traits for the benefit of seed, crop, and livestock producers.

WHEREAS the loss of funding for FCDC research capacity and infrastructure in December 2023 will have long term, negative implications on the viability and sustainability of Alberta and Canada's seed, crop and livestock sectors.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED
THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST

That Alberta Agriculture & Irrigation (AGI) facilitate the establishment of a stable funding framework for FCDC that includes the retention of existing infrastructure, sites, and human capital for the continued enhancement of programs for seed breeding and agronomic research.

SPONSORED BY: ASB Provincial Committee

MOVED BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: _____

DEFEATED: _____

STATUS: Provincial

DEPARTMENT: AGI

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Overview history

In 2023, FCDC celebrated 50 years of providing credible seed breeding and agronomic research for Alberta Farmers and Ranchers. The institution is a key player in advancing agricultural innovation and technology.

In email correspondence sent to industry stakeholders on December 22, 2023, Olds College announced, that without securing long term funding from RDAR/AGI they could not take on the risk of managing FCDC. Hence, Olds College will cease to operate FCDC at the end of March 2024. In the same email, a statement indicated that the Ministry has confirmed a Task Force has been struck to find a new home for FCDC. No updates to

stakeholders have been made as of January 19, 2024.

For over 5 decades, FCDC has provided field crop research & seed breeding innovation suitable for highly variable Alberta growing conditions. This provides producers the ability to confidently apply these proven innovations in their operations.

FCDC currently has a contiguous collection of infrastructure, field sites and human capital that delivers value to Alberta, western Canadian and national stakeholders.

FCDC researchers are highly regarded throughout Canada and beyond for their ability to effectively manage ground breaking breeding programs and research trials across multiple sites and transfer this knowledge to relevant stakeholders throughout the agriculture industry. Through their active collaboration on extension events with other institutions, industry & producer associations, FCDC successfully transfers valuable knowledge to industry.

In August 2023 during Ag Smart, in collaboration with AB Seed Guide, FCDC showcased their demonstration plots, to leverage attendance at a successful panel discussion that is now being replicated at Crossroads in January 2024.

FCDC long term breeding programs, regional variety trials and proof of concept projects are integral for innovation and commercialization. Currently, 11 of the top 40 feed barley varieties in western Canada have been developed by FCDC. Continuing these co-op seed variety and regional variety trial programs is an essential component in maintaining Alberta's agricultural research capacity

From both an Alberta and Canadian perspective, industry stakeholders such as the Alberta Seed Processors Association (ASPA), Alberta/B.C. Seed Growers (ABCSSG), Seeds Canada and Alberta Grains members rely on the continuation of a strong working relationship with FCDC to provide foundational information from their research to drive innovation. Feed and forage research trials are also essential for members of livestock and feeder associations and commissions.

ASB's and agricultural staff in rural municipalities have experienced an increase in demands to address research and extension gaps that could further erode if a stable funding framework is not put in place to support the continuation of FCDC in its current form. The continued viability of agricultural producers in every rural municipality depends on having these strong, established, collaborative research networks maintained.

During the 2024 ASPA conference, members spoke up to request their association add their voice and support for FCDC.