

Leaders speak out

Set to deliver straight goods on current challenges, future trends, leaders pull no punches

By Heather Hudson

Forget everything you've heard about waste management, how the fertilizer industry is addressing environmental concerns, what the bustling seed industry has in store and pesticide bans sweeping the country.

On February 11, you'll get the straight goods directly from industry leaders' mouths. They're not holding back on how retailers can contribute to our thriving business and what you can expect in the years to come.

Here's a preview.

Sustainability in fertilizer with Hugh Loomans, CFI chairman of the board and president of Sylvite Sales

Retailers can expect some honest insights from someone who's on the front lines of an industry bristling with controversy. Loomans plans to speak frankly about three timely topics that have the fertilizer industry hopping.

How to be sustainable

If Loomans had his way, the industry-standard approach to sustainability would centre on the four rights: right rate, right time, right place and right product.

"This is a big thrust that has been adopted around the world and we're trying to push that not only from the dealer level but right down the farm as well."

He plans to discuss to what degree proper product usage can have on efficiency and environmental impact.

Managing nitrogen

When ammonia and phosphates were listed as toxic chemicals in Ontario, it was the beginning of a new era for the fertilizer sector. Loomans will discuss the ammonia and the ammonium nitrate codes and try to address a nitrogen framework at the retail level.

"I think we're going to be faced with some legislation down the road... there will be significant pressure on us to manage our nitrogen products. We want to be aware and ensure the codes of practice are followed right down the farm level."

He will outline the additional responsibilities that could be expected of the retailer and farmers, acknowledging that nitrous oxide emissions are more than 300 times more potent than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas. Loomans says there will have to be some shifts in the industry to accommodate this keener environmental awareness.

Mending fences

Citing the rift between industry leaders and the farming public after allegations of jacked-up pricing last spring, Loomans wants to discuss plans to rebuild relationships with farmers.

"Strategically, our industry has damaged our relationship with farmers, especially in the east. We had high-priced inventory which we have to bring in before the seaways shut down and that impacted what was sold in the spring.

"We really need to redevelop a trust back with the farmer and we plan to do that."

Find out how when Loomans speaks at 1:30 p.m.

Urban myths: Are they heading toward the farm? with Peter MacLeod, vice-president of chemistry at CropLife Canada

Agriculture is one industry that doesn't have to be reminded that a fickle public can turn a sector upside down.

It would seem that the urban myth is at play in an age of increased environmental sensitivity. In his address, MacLeod will contend that activist groups are not only shaping public opinion but are causing politicians to abandon science-based

regulations in deference to an all-out fear about the use of pesticides.

Beginning with an update of the current status of urban pesticide issues across Canada, MacLeod will explain how activist organizations' tactics and urban pesticide bans are not only eroding public confidence in the regulatory system, but pesticide use in agriculture.

He plans to assure retailers that CropLife is working toward dousing the flames of rhetoric with scientific fact and good old-fashioned plain speak.

"We're preparing a new communication plan to address these issues and help ensure that plant science technologies, including pesticides, continue to assist farmers in their critical sustainable, both economically and environmentally, food production."

Get to the bottom of the pervasive urban myth and its effects at 3 p.m.

CleanFARMS comes into its own with Barry Friesen, general manager at CropLife

Here's your chance to learn about how the newly established CleanFARMS will affect your business.

Taking over CropLife's container management system and obsolete stock program, CleanFARMS' sole mandate is to be a stewardship organization devoted to waste resource management. For the time being, there will be no obvious changes, though Friesen says retailers can expect better service in the short-term.

"To the ag-retailers it will essentially be business as usual. The added bonus is that we expect to have added focus on increasing the number of containers coming back and getting them in cleaner condition. We'll be working on farmer education around the efficiencies associated with cleaner materials, which should make things even easier for the retailer."

As time goes on, other agricultural waste, including animal health products, may have a stewardship program of their own. "CleanFARMS is an entity that can look after that. That's what we're here for," said Friesen.

He'll also provide an update on CropLife Canada's other stewardship initiatives from the past year. And you

can expect to learn a little about the anhydrous ammonia audit process, a new program that is just beginning this year.

Don't miss it at 3:30 p.m.

It starts with the seed – seed driven innovation: staying ahead of the curve with Ron Brand of Canterra Seeds and the Canadian Seed Trade Association's representative to CAAR

According to Agriculture Canada, an estimated nine out of every 10 bites in the world start with seed. This staggering number is surely the foundation of the seed industry's vibrant innovation and competitiveness today.

It's also one of the reasons the industry plans to pour more than \$106 million into seed research and development by 2012. Brand will discuss the value and costs of developing this seed-driven innovation and the responsibility the seed industry and retailers must share to maintain and increase investment.

Considering more than 95 percent of investment is going to be in corn, canola and soybeans, this is a good place to start. "The private sector will only invest in what they have a chance to generate funds for reinvestment. These are the crops that promise that," said Brand.



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Convention Speakers

“One of the primary ways the private sector generates funds is by protecting intellectual property. We believe developers should have a partnership with retailers. We want retailers to help farmers understand they’re investing in their future when they buy certified seed and adhere to intellectual property. They’re actually creating funds for reinvestment in innovation.”

The intellectual property of the three hot crops is better protected by tools like hybridization in soybeans and identity preserved systems, but the importance of stewardship at the farm level is paramount to ensuring a prosperous future for farmers and retailers.

Brand will outline some interesting things coming down the pipeline for corn, canola and soybeans, but also in wheat, including the new midge-resistant varieties.

You’ll get the full story on what you can do to contribute to Canada’s world-class seed industry at 4 p.m.

This jam-packed afternoon session promises to be educational and insightful. ♦

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