

THE SASKATCHEWAN ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SOILS

REPORT TO THE 1975 WORKSHOP MEETING

D.A. Rennie

During the 1974 Workshop Meetings, I outlined in some detail the revised structure of the Council; while Council continued to retain full responsibility for formulating and revising guidelines pertaining to fertilizers and agronomic practices in the province, and for the maintenance of high quality in the extensive soil resources of the province, considerable authority has been delegated to specific standing committees. These committees, which include

- 1) Fertilizer (J.W. Hamm, Chairman)
- 2) Agronomic Practices (H.M. Austenson, Chairman)
- 3) Soil Resources (E.A. Paul, Chairman)
- 4) Forage Crops (M.R. Kilcher, Chairman)

have worked hard during the past year, and have significantly reduced the number of formal council meetings. A brief summary of activities and actions follows.

1. Council Membership

- Research Branch, Agriculture Canada
M.R. Kilcher, R.N. McIver, W.F. Nuttall,
D.W.L. Read, H. Ukrainetz
- Western Canada Fertilizer Association
J.G. Braidek, G. Wilson, F. Bond
- The Saskatchewan Soil Testing Laboratory
J.W. Hamm
- Plant Industry Branch, S.D.A.
W.E. Johnson
- Plant Products Division, Agriculture Canada
T.S. Phoenix
- Regional Extension Services Branch, S.D.A.
R.K. Foster
- Farmer
L. Weixel

-The Saskatchewan Institute of Pedology
- Soil Survey - D.F. Acton
- Soil Science - E.A. Paul, D.A. Rennie

-The Department of Crop Science
H.M. Austenson

-The Agricultural Engineering Council
R. Melvin

2. The Soil Fertility Data Bank

Present files in this bank include - a soil fertility file, a plant nutrient response file, a crop production file, a soil pedological data file, a preliminary land assessment file, and a preliminary salinity file. The SASCC meeting, January 9, 1975, noted the Soil Council's continuing concern about the need for outside funding to supplement the data bank, and also the preliminary steps presently being taken to develop soil data banks by certain federal and provincial groups; they suggested that Council prepare a proposal on the level of outside funding required. Council responded by 1) preparing a proposal for the formal establishment of a Saskatchewan Soil Data Bank with a framework as reflected in Figure 1, 2) organized a preliminary meeting which was held in Regina on February 5, and attended by representatives from the Planning and Research, Production and Marketing, Crop Insurance, Land Bank, Lands Branch, Conservation and Development Branches of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, the Municipal Assessment Branch, Department of Municipal Affairs, and the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources. Arising out of this meeting was a decision to form a Saskatchewan Data Bank Committee with representation from twelve government and university departments. This committee with specific terms of reference pertaining to the establishment of the Provincial Soil Data Bank will hold its first meeting in Regina on March 6, and 3) prepared a request for funding

to the Deputy Minister of Agriculture for a grant for interim financing of the Soil Fertility Data Bank.

3. The Western Canada Soil Coordinating Committee

This committee presently is placing high priority on coordinating soil testing activities, environmentally oriented research related to soils, soil productivity evaluation, and the integration of provincial soil data banks with the CanSIS system. The next meeting of the committee is scheduled to be held in Vancouver on February 25.

4. The July Soils Tour

Approximately 40 agrologists participated in the July 16-17 tour of fertility and soil management experiments. The Melfort Experimental Station hosted the tour of the 17th when the group joined with the farmers in northeastern Saskatchewan and took part in the annual Station field day. The 1975 tour will be organized by the staff of the Swift Current Research Station.

5. The Soil Testing Laboratory

The Fertilizer Committee continued to update and upgrade the format for recommendations. Lack of funding has, in part, been responsible for the inability of the committee to bring the soil productivity file (Data Bank) up to date.

Council approval was given to the fertilizer committee's recommendation that the procedures and interpretive criteria outlined in the Nutrient Requirement Guidelines for Saskatchewan are to be used by Saskatchewan Soil Testing Laboratory and other laboratories operating in or servicing Saskatchewan farmers.

Council approved the increase in service charges

associated with samples processed by the Saskatchewan Soil Testing Laboratory; the revised schedule of costs became effective July 1, 1974.

6. The Committee on Soil Resources

This committee continued to study and review the progress of a number of land use and environmentally oriented research programs presently in various stages of development; programs falling under the scrutiny of this committee included:

- a) the S.D.A.-funded salinity project
- b) the University of Saskatchewan's Man and the Biosphere project, and programs associated with urban and animal based recycling in agricultural soils. The committee recommended to Council that consideration be given to sponsoring a symposium on land use during the 1975 annual soils workshop, the symposium to center on the present conflicts between agriculturalists and environmentalists would provide a public forum where differences of opinion and conflicts in policy, whether real or imaginative, could be brought to the forefront and discussed. While it was not possible to program this symposium in February of this year, Council will continue to keep this matter under consideration.

A report on recycling barnyard manure in agricultural soil has been prepared and a portion of the report is reflected in the 1975 issue of the Guide to Farm Practice.

7. The Council, through the Fertilizer Committee, continued to closely scrutinize a wide range of soil amendments. Anyone wishing further background material on these and other similar products can obtain this from either Wally Hamm or Earl Johnson.

8. Recommendations brought to the December meeting of SASCC.

Documented briefs supporting the following recommendations were brought before the December SASCC meeting for consideration:

- 1) That strong support be given to the development of a 5 to 10 day weather forecasting service (Agronomy Committee).
- 2) The urgent need for a comprehensive research program to provide guidelines for the economic handling of manure, maximum rates of application, timing, soil incorporation, practices and, in addition, a reasonable assessment of environmental hazards (Agronomy Committee).
- 3) A report emphasizing the very serious aspects of burning stubble, and the high priority which must be given to supporting research on stubble management (Agronomy Committee).
- 4) A report which noted the significant progress that had been made during the past year on an inventory of salt-affected soils in selected areas of the province, together with limited documentation on changes in salinity over time. Council urged that this program continue to receive sufficient funding to ensure that the inventory can be completed. Such an inventory is a first prerequisite to the conduct of remedial research.

In addition to the above items, Council reported to SASCC its evaluation of the role of Man and the Biosphere project proposal (Land Resource Committee).

9. Council continued to maintain a close scrutiny of industry advertisements, and where it was felt these were not in accord with present information, news releases were prepared to advise the public accordingly, or the company sponsoring the advertisement was contacted directly.

10. Publications

The following publications were prepared for distribution to the public:

- 1) The Soils and Fertilizer Section, 1975 issue of the Guide to Farm Practice (W.J. Hamm, Chairman)
- 2) Cropping Practices - 1975 Guide to Farm Practice (H.M. Austenson, Chairman)
- 3) Good Agronomy for Maximum Production in 1974. Proceedings of the Soil Fertility Workshop, p. 165.
- 4) Guidelines for Land Use and Crop Rotations in Saskatchewan. Prepared by the Agronomy Committee.
- 5) General Fertilizer and Cropping Practices Bulletin, 1975. A publication jointly prepared by the Fertilizer and Agronomy Committees.

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