

Report of the Saskatchewan Advisory Council on Soils & Agronomy
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In December, 1977, the Saskatchewan Agricultural Services Coordinating Committee (SASCC) reorganized its constituent Advisory Councils with an aim to improving coordination among those with closely related interests. As a result the former separate Advisory Councils on Weeds, on Soils, and the Inter-Council Committee on Agronomy were combined in 1978 into the Advisory Council on Soils & Agronomy.

This Council performs most of its functions through four standing committees: 1. Soil Fertility Committee; 2. Weeds Committee; 3. Tillage Committee and 4. Special Soil Problems Committee. Each of these committees includes representation from a broad range of research, extension, producer and commercial interests. Each committee includes in its terms of reference the drafting of recommendations to the public and to the Council on Soils & Agronomy, and the monitoring and coordinating of research programs in their specific areas of interest. Each Committee determines its meeting schedules.

Membership in the Council itself is limited to a Chairman and Secretary, the Chairmen of the Standing Committees and the Regional Crop & Soil Specialists of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture. The Council meets in April and November, rotating around the six regions of the province. This serves to improve communication with farmers and agrologists in the areas where the meetings are held.

The terms of reference of the Council are as follows:

1. to oversee the formulation of crop production recommendations (soils, agronomy, weeds) to farmers and insure that these recommendations are published on an appropriate basis.
2. to assume the responsibility for the arrangement of appropriate programs to ensure that committee members and agronomists are informed of current developments in the area of soils, agronomy and weeds by such mechanisms as tours and workshops.
3. to make recommendations to SASCC and other appropriate agencies on all issues of concern to the Council

Committees of the Council publish annual recommendations on weed control in field and horticultural crops, on fertilizers and cropping practices and on soil testing guidelines. In 1979, the first map showing stubble soil moisture conditions in Saskatchewan was published.

The Council coordinates annual summer tours in July and the annual February workshop which we are now attending.

The Council receives recommendations from its Standing Committees and refers them either to SASCC or to another appropriate agency. Those submitted to SASCC in December, 1978 were as follows:

1. Soils and Crops Specialists

The council strongly recommends that the Regional Extension Services Branch of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture place top priority on creating and filling positions for Soils and Crops Specialists in both the east central and west central regions. (Note: Both these positions have been approved as of April 1, 1979).

2. Weed Control Extension at the R.M. Level

The council recommends that a program be initiated by the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture whereby Municipalities, by means of grants to cover partial expenses, be encouraged to hire personnel to further weed extension at the farm level. While these personnel would be hired on a similar basis to Weed Inspectors their responsibilities would be entirely different in that they would assist the farm public with other aspects of weed control than included under the "Noxious Weed Act". In effect, they would extend information on weed control in all crops through assistance with identification of weed flora, calibration of sprayers, choice of suitable herbicides or alternative methods of weed control to fit individual situations, and assessment of results with follow-up recommendations for improved control where necessary. In addition, they would be expected to promote and assist in organizing effective weed control programs at the farm and rural municipality levels.

3. Services of the Soil Testing Laboratory

The Council recommends that resources be provided so that the Saskatchewan Soil Testing Laboratory can more adequately provide micronutrient and tissue testing analysis services. The increasing incidence of micronutrient analysis as a technique to encourage forwarding of samples to laboratories outside Saskatchewan, make it imperative that the Provincial Laboratory be fully capable of providing these services.

There was also discussion about the need for a laboratory located in the Prairie Provinces capable of doing soil analyses for specific pesticides and SASCC was asked to explore this service with the Canadian Agricultural Services Coordinating Committee.

4. Soil Conservation

The council recommends that the publication "Save the Soil" be examined to determine if updating and revision is required and that any such revisions be carried out and the bulletin be reprinted for distribution.

Council Chairman J.L. Henry is serving as Saskatchewan representative on a National Soil Erosion Committee.

5. Tillage Research

The Council strongly urges that S.A.S.C.C. provide all possible support to research programs to provide more factual information on the zero tillage concepts.

6. Sulfur Deficiency - Particularly in Rapeseed Production

The council urges that the developing research programs, to provide firm factual basis for production recommendations on this problem, be given full support.

7. Anhydrous Ammonia Application Techniques

The council notes that there is a need for further research on anhydrous ammonia as it relates to effects on soil properties but more particularly as it relates to application techniques. This need should be communicated to the Advisory Council on Agricultural Engineering and may in the final analysis turn out to be a project most suited for P.A.M.I.

8. Soil Salinity

Soil Salinity continues to be a major soil problem in Saskatchewan and continued and increased support should be provided for research on this most serious soil problem.