

POSITIONS

CANOLA COUNCIL FILLING TOP JOBS

The Canola Council of Canada has begun a search for a new president and vice-president for crop production. The council is advertising with a Feb. 14 deadline for applications for the job of president, replacing JoAnne Buth, who was named to the Senate last month. The council is also seeking a replacement for its vice-president for crop production, Denise Maurice, who died suddenly Nov. 23. The council has named Scott Wolfe Management, an agribusiness planning firm at Headingley, Man., to conduct the searches.



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CROPS

Know what your customer wants when growing oats

BEST CROP ▶ Processors need specific varieties for milling purposes

BY ALEXIS KIENLEN
AF STAFF | EDMONTON

Farmers should know the requirements of processors in order to grow the best possible oat crop, says Dennis Galbraith, milling oat specialist with Viterra.

Speaking to a recent Prairie Oat Growers Association meeting here, Galbraith said kernel quality is extremely important. Oats have a hull that is more loosely attached than a barley hull. The biggest difference between oats and barley is the trichome hairs around the side and the top of an oat.

"It's important for us to get all of these off, because people don't want that in their food," said Galbraith.

For profitability, the amount of raw material used to make an oat product is important. "We don't make anything on the value of the grain moving forward. We make our money by how efficiently we process," he said.

Profitability is defined by milling yield. In general, 100 pounds of raw oats will result in about 60 pounds of finished groats. "That means that about 40 per cent of what's in a farmer's truck or a farmer's bin is actually byproduct to us," Galbraith said. "We separate it out, sell it back for feed or put it out the back door."

The 40 per cent contains about 31 pounds of hulls and about seven pounds of screenings, which include weed seeds, broken kernels and oats too thin for processing.

"Different varieties have different thicknesses of hull and the environ-

mental conditions each year will determine how thick the hull is, even on the same variety," he said. Oats lose about two per cent of their moisture during processing.

Galbraith said processors must consider what their customers want — consistency, good nutritional quality, timely delivery, safety, good price and sustainability.

"Customers want to know that the grain is grown in a sustainable manner, that it's processed in a sustainable manner and that we're shipping it to them in a sustainable manner. They haven't come up with defining what the parameters are. We're all in measurement stage trying to figure out what the benchmark is for what we do. As growers, you have to get used to the idea that sustainability is going to come up increasingly more often in conversations with your customers," said Galbraith.

In order to fit heart health claims, oat products must have a minimum of 10 per cent dietary fibre, four per cent beta glucan (a soluble part of dietary fibre) and a maximum of three grams of fat per serving.

Yield of the crop and balance in the mill are also considerations for Galbraith when he is selecting varieties.

"When we're running our mill, we don't make just oat flakes," he said. "The process ends up with broken pieces everywhere so when we're making oat flakes, we're also making oat flour and oat bran. You always have a whole series of products being produced at the same time. The problem is the marketplace wants different percentages of different products. If the mill doesn't meet that balance, you



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DENNIS GALBRAITH

have to buy more grain to meet the area you're deficient in."

Grower acceptability is also important.

"It needs to be a variety that works for growers because if it doesn't work there's no point in putting it out in the marketplace," he said. Viterra is involved with the Prairie Oat Breeding Consortium and Galbraith sits on the board.

"We try to find the best material coming out of that program and put it forward for registration," he said. These varieties must meet requirements for both consumers and growers.

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Three oat varieties tops with Alberta producers

BY ALEXIS KIENLEN
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Viterra milling oat specialist Dennis Galbraith says Alberta growers have a better variety selection than their cousins in the eastern Prairies, where the crop is more prone to rust. But not all varieties are desirable for milling.

Galbraith doesn't want to see AC Mustang in the human food system. It has a large hull that doesn't work well in mills. "It's fine for feeding to cattle and gives you lots of roughage in the feed. It's a great feed oat, but it's not a milling oat and please don't mix it in with milling oats," he said.

AC Juniper is also undesirable because the hull is too difficult to remove.

Based on Alberta crop insurance data for 2010, the top three varieties were AC Morgan, AC Mustang and Derby. Morgan averaged about 38 per cent of the acres grown in both years, Mustang averaged about 12 per cent and Derby was about 24 per cent.

Galbraith thinks Derby will eventually disappear, since it doesn't yield as well.

He said Leggett is an option to consider in Alberta. "There are some guys growing it in Saskatchewan and it does reasonably well. I don't think it would yield as high as Morgan in Alberta but there might be some other attribute to it that you'd like," he said.

Two varieties that might soon be available include CDC Minstrel and CDC Morrison, both developed at the Crop Development Centre in Saskatoon.

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