



Prairie Oat Growers Association (POGA) Celebrates 25 Years

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In 1998, a small group of oat producers from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba recognized that oat growers needed a stronger, unified voice and an advocate for continuing work with oat researchers and breeders for the betterment of the oat industry.

Jack Shymko, a producer from Ituna, Saskatchewan was one of the leaders and later became the first President of POGA. Shymko recalls, “We knew that oat producers needed a strong Prairie-wide advocacy group which would require stable on-going funding.”

POGA was officially formed, but more needed to be done and the key organizers soon began efforts to establish provincial entities. Town hall meetings were arranged and many phone calls were made by the core group of oat producers who were motivated by their vision of a Prairie-wide organization. Shymko said, “They worked tirelessly with producers in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to draft bylaws, prepare the necessary paperwork, and spread the word to rally oat growers to establish an association in each of the three provinces.”

At the beginning many expenses were paid out of pocket because producers believed so strongly in the cause. Later, the Prairie-wide commodity organization was funded first by voluntary membership, and later pooled check-off revenue of 50 cents per tonne of provincially marketed oats.

The dedication, commitment and efforts were successful with the establishment of the Saskatchewan Oat Growers Commission in 2006 (now referred to as SaskOats), the Manitoba Oat Growers Association (MOGA) in 2008, and the Alberta Oat Growers Commission (AOGC) in 2012.

Reflecting on the past 25 years, Jack Shymko, who still farms, states, “It has been very gratifying to watch our vision of a producer led association become a reality. POGA is a farmer-led organization with one voice that has remained true to its roots of advancing the interests of Western Canadian oat growers. I’m very proud that POGA has not lost sight of the original objectives.”

Current POGA president, Jenneth Johanson from Manitoba comments, “POGA is grounded in the strong principles of our founding leaders and is an advocate for Western Canadian oat producers. Through the three provincial associations, Prairie oat growers have supported over 55 projects and turned \$3.9 million levy dollars into \$28.1 million, which means growers in Western Canada have contributed less than 15 cents of every dollar spent on research and marketing.”

“This is a remarkable return on investment for producers,” concluded Johanson.

Randy Strychar, president of Oatinformation and an oat industry trader and commodity researcher for over 40 years, said, “Efforts by Canadian oat growers since 1998 have contributed significantly to Canada becoming a major leader in global oat markets.”

“The Canadian oat market has seen phenomenal growth since POGA was formed in 1998. As of 2022, value added Canadian oat processing has increased over 130%, and Canadian raw oat exports have also shown outstanding growth of 58%, resulting in Canada becoming the largest global exporter.”

Strychar also stated that, “Oat product exports have increased dramatically, again resulting in Canada ranking as the largest global oat product exporter. Canada in the same period has become the second largest global producer of oats.”

POGA will hold its 25th Annual General Meeting in Saskatoon on December 1. Oat producers and agriculture industry members are encouraged to attend. For registration details and to learn more about POGA, go to poga.ca

Original POGA Board of Directors:

Alberta

Willy Groeneveld, Mannville
 Stephen Hodgetts, Camrose
 Michael Kirylchuk, Lac La Biche
 Bernie Mackay, Star
 Leo Meyer, Woking
 Ken Perrault, Castor

Saskatchewan

Barry Cooper, Westbend
 Robert Elmy, Saltcoats
 Tom Hewson, Langbank
 Jack Shymko, Ituna
 Michael Spilchuk, Ituna
 Kees van Haastert, Tisdale

Manitoba

Bob Anderson, Dugald
 Greg Downie, Wawanesa
 Curtis Evenson, Morris
 Brian Nadeau, Fannystelle
 Harold Penner, Arnaud
 Alan Ryrie, Elm Creek

ABOUT OATS:

- *Canada is the largest exporter of raw oats and oat products.*
- *Canada is the second largest global oat producer.*
- *Canada is the second largest oat miller.*
- *Saskatchewan is the largest oat producing region in the world.*
- *Canada’s oat sector has grown to an approximately \$8 billion per year industry.*
- *POGA represents roughly 90% of the oats grown in Canada, and about 10,000 growers in the Prairies.*

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For more information on POGA visit poga.ca or contact:

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