

CRSB provided three questions to a group of students at Olds College be answered:

1. How do producers define sustainability?
2. Where do producers go to receive information on sustainability?
3. What practices do producers implement in their operation that they consider to be sustainable?

The intention of this project was to get a baseline of producer awareness of the CRSB website before the sustainability projects inventory was posted. This will provide a benchmark on producer awareness of the crsb.ca website and allow us to revisit the questionnaire at some point in the future.

WHAT THEY DID:

The literature review found that sustainable beef is defined by three pillars of environment, economic and social. The people who have the most impact on the success of sustainable beef are the stakeholders; those who produce, process and purchase the beef. The student's found misunderstandings about sustainable practices by producers. Producers were visualizing many of the practices as complex, where the research suggested that the practices were quite simple and as a result of proper management.

Between January and April 2019, a producer survey was open over three weeks receiving 196 responses, followed by a focus group with seven producers and individual interviews with six producers.

WHAT THEY FOUND:

The majority of survey respondents were under the age of 50; in contrast to the Census of Agriculture demographics 43.4% of respondents were between 19-25 years old. This skewed samples provides insight into a group of young producers rarely heard from in the industry.

- 73% were from Alberta, 13% from Saskatchewan, with responses from BC, Manitoba and Ontario
- 92% were cow-calf, 35% stocker, and 19% feedlot
- 8% were CRSB members and 51% were not familiar with CRSB
- 86% found information through the internet, 78% through seminars and social media, **38% used the CRSB website**

Adoption of practices outlined in the **Certified Sustainable Beef Framework** were asked including environmental practices such as winter grazing, manure management, wildlife habitat provision, water management, soil management, carbon sequestration, dust and odor controls. Social practices were asked such as injury prevention measures, safety for employees, employee treatment, education and community involvement.

In summary:

1. Producers defined sustainability as being "future oriented, financially viable and minimal resource removal"
2. Producers went to the "internet and communication with people" to get information about sustainability.
3. Practices that were considered sustainable included "grazing, manure management and animal welfare"

Quotes from Focus Group and Interviews:

“Being good stewards of the land and how we can increase profit margins. How we can use resources to maximize profits and yields which will eventually work itself down the supply chain and back into the industry.”

“How our industry is going to maintain and grow into the future.”

“In regards to the three pillars of sustainability. I think that they all need to work together and if they work together it’s gonna benefit the whole supply chain. Everyone needs to be on the same page on creating a sustainability platform. When I think of sustainability I think of everyone benefiting from all aspects.”

POTENTIAL FUTURE RESEARCH TOPICS:

1. Why producers implement sustainable practices into their operation.
2. How do producers choose which sustainable practices to implement?
3. The actual economic benefit from implementing sustainable practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. More conferences and seminars should be placed in rural towns.
 - a. 78% of survey respondents found information through Seminars.
2. More social media awareness on beef sustainability especially on different platforms
 - a. 78% of survey respondents found information through Social Media.
 - b. Use Social Media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter to encourage the conversation between producers
3. Educating producers via blogs or vlogs on sustainable practices and their benefits.
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 - b. More social media awareness on beef sustainability especially on different platforms
 - c. Educating producers via blogs or vlogs on sustainable practices and their benefits.

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