

Alberta Seed Processors Upgrading Seed Cleaning Plants, Including Adding Technology that is Gentle on Pulses

The Alberta Seed Processors, also known as the Association of Alberta Co-op Seed Cleaning Plants, is in the process of upgrading many of its 67 plants across the province, including some improvements that specifically help pulse growers.

“We have seen a trend for the plants handling larger volumes of pulse crops to invest in equipment that is pulse friendly,” said General Manager Monica Klaas of the Alberta Seed Processors or Association of Alberta Co-op Seed Cleaning Plants. “Seed health is one of our first concerns and we recognize that many pulse crops are prone to cracking if handled incorrectly. A lot of our plants that are handling a large volume of pulse crops have invested in things like bean ladders and conveyors so that we’re looking after the integrity of the seed as well as cleaning it. Pulses are a large seed and they get put through a variety of machinery so it’s best if we have equipment that’s gentle on them. If you are a grower in a traditional pulse crop area, most of the plants will have that specialty equipment.”

Klaas said that it is very important for pulse growers to talk to their local plant managers before harvest so that the seed can be scheduled for cleaning as soon as it is harvested.

“It’s a matter of looking after the integrity of the seed,” she explained. “It isn’t only a pulse issue, but can affect pulses more than other grains. When it is really cold, lots of plants don’t like to process pulses because they can break. Many plants like to clean off the combine. One of the challenges with handling pulse crops is the scheduling.”

Members of the association also invested \$17 million over the last three years in plant upgrades like larger digital scales and colour-sorting technology. Two brand new, state of the art

facilities were recently built in Alberta and several more are planned over the next few years, Klaas said.

“The co-ops have planned for succession in upgrading and building, and that’s very exciting,” she added. “I think it shows that the growers of Alberta are committed to using the best seed possible.”

The association was formed more than 60 years ago with the goal of establishing seed cleaning plants across the province, initially as part of a weed control program. Last year, the association’s 67 member plants processed 39 million bushels, including close to

plants offer seed treating services and inoculants, while a few offer international marketing services. The *Alberta Seed Guide*, published twice a year, also contains information on member plants.

“Our core business is seed cleaning,” Klaas said. “However, some co-op boards of directors have explored business diversification models like rail car loading and exporting. For some of the co-ops, diversification has become key to their success.”

Klaas explained that if a grower is using seed that he grew on his own farm then the seed plant would clean it and the seed would go back on the grower’s truck to his own farm because that’s the legal process for common seed in Canada. If it’s a seed grower who has pedigreed seed, then either he would take it home and sell it to his customers or, in some cases, the association’s seed cleaning co-ops have storage bins on site and act as a distribution agent on behalf of the seed grower.

Klaas said that the association will be making some changes as a result of the passage of plant breeders’ rights (PBR) legislation earlier this year.

The amendments found in Bill C-18, An Act to Amend Certain Acts Relating to Agriculture and Agri-Food (Canadian Agricultural Growth Act), aligned PBR with the 1991 Convention of the International Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV). It offers opportunities for increased investment and delivery of new varieties from plant breeders operating in and outside of Canada, as well as ensuring that farmers have access to new



Taber seed cleaning plant.

500,000 bushels of pulses, which were primarily field peas. Each plant is a co-operative run by a board of directors and a manager.

“Our mandate is to provide growers with the best seed possible,” Klaas said. “Our member plants clean both common and pedigreed seed, depending on the plant. Most of our members supply services in which seed samples are submitted to seed labs on behalf of the grower.”

The association website at <http://www.seed.ab.ca/seedprocessors.html> lists which plants clean pedigreed and common seed. Some of the member

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and improved varieties developed in Canada and internationally.

"The association sought legal advice for a grower declaration stating that the seed was legally produced on the grower's farm, and the grower intends to use the seed solely on his own property or property he has control of, and the use of the seed will not contravene Plant Breeder's Rights, nor any other laws or contract," Klaas said. "The new proposed use of the declaration form is designed to ensure all parties involved understand and follow the new legislation."

She added that grower declarations aren't anything new in the ag business

with cereal producers already signing declarations to market crops, but declarations could be new for the seed industry.

"The seed processor - or the middle man - wasn't really implicated under the old rules," Klaas explained. "Under the new rules, there's specific wording saying a seed cleaner, a trucker, a retailer or anyone who helps the grower with any illegal handling of plant breeder's rights is liable. It's something we take very seriously. In the past, we've always recognized plant breeders' rights, but with new legislation, it's time to update our path forward as well."

Klaas said that the goal is to have the

declarations ready for each plant to use by the start of the crop year on August 1. However, each facility is run by an individual board of directors which ultimately has the power to adopt or reject the use of the declaration.

"The view of the UPOV rule is that it's good for Canadian agriculture, therefore it's good for the seed cleaning co-op and the members," said Klaas, who is also an agrologist. "As with any regulation change, there's always a little trepidation. Basically, contravening plant breeder's rights, is stealing intellectual property. Our association's stance is that this is federal legislation and international rules, and we are absolutely going to educate our members on how to follow the rules."

Feature Pulse Recipe: Black Bean Antojito

This delicious wrap does not require cooking making it a welcome meal on a hot summer day, whether as a supper or picnic lunch. This is one of the many new recipes featured in the new *Pulses: Cooking with beans, peas, lentils and chickpeas* cookbook available from Alberta Pulse Growers.



Servings: 8 wraps

Ingredients:

- 1 (19 oz/540 mL) can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- juice of 1 lime
- 1 tsp (5 mL) cumin
- 1 tsp (5 mL) coriander
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) salt
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) ground black pepper
- 8 (6 inch/15 cm) whole wheat flour tortillas

- 3 red peppers, roasted, skinned and sliced
- 1 avocado, pitted and sliced
- 1 cup (250 mL) shredded cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, mash beans and garlic with a fork or potato masher. Add lime juice, cumin, coriander, salt and pepper. Divide into 8 parts.

Nutrient Analysis			
Serving Size: 1 wrap			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories	260	Fibre	8g
Total Fat	7g	Sugars	4g
Saturated Fat	0.5g	Protein	11g
Cholesterol	0mg	Folate	49mg
Sodium	500mg	Potassium	450mg
Total Carb	38g		

2. Spread mashed bean mixture evenly over each tortilla. Divide roasted red peppers, avocado, and cheese evenly between each tortilla.
3. Roll the tortilla. Wrap in plastic wrap tightly and let cool in refrigerator for 10 minutes to overnight.
4. Cut each roll into 1 inch (2.5 cm) pieces. Enjoy as is or with a sour cream dip.