

Points of View

A forum for sharing perspectives from across the Canadian Sheep Industry



CANADIAN SHEEP FEDERATION

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MYTH: I don't get a say in what the CSF does on my behalf.

Yes, you do! And now is your opportunity to have your say in the CSF's next five-year business plan (2010-2015). One of the first steps in developing the plan is completing an environmental scan – part of that is taking the pulse of producers to ensure the organization continues to meet your needs. To help us in this mission, we asked several producers the following questions:

- What past or present CSF activities have made a difference to your farm?
- What future CSF activities would make a difference to your farm?
- What issues do you want the CSF to deal with? Why? How?
- What is the CSF doing now that you'd like to see changed? Why? How?

We didn't receive any responses to include in this Points of View, but there is still time.

Send an email to pointsofview@cansheep.ca, or contact me directly at 1-888-684-7739 or jennifer@cansheep.ca.

When complete, the plan will guide the CSF Board and staff efforts for the next five years in the direction of the industry's long-term sustainability and growth. Please speak up so that we can represent you the way you want to be represented.

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P.S. Please turn to pages 2-3 to read an interview with Ralph Kikkert of Strive! to discover the benefits of an engaged and involved membership.

Your feedback is essential!

This forum will only be successful if everyone weighs in with their own perspectives from their place in the industry. Tell us:

- If you had a strong reaction – either good or bad – to the feature editorial
- If you want to contribute to an upcoming issue
- If you have a topic you'd like to see addressed
- If you have a story that would make a good case study for others to learn from

What's in it for you? Most people don't often get a chance to have their opinion heard. This is yours. Use it to help make an impact on the future of our business. [Send your comments, suggestions and questions to pointsofview@cansheep.ca](mailto:pointsofview@cansheep.ca) or call CSF at 519-824-6018 or 1-888-684-7739.

Healthy Organizations

Interview with Ralph Kikkert, Consulting Partner, Strive!

An involved and engaged membership is one of the qualities of an effective organization according to Ralph Kikkert, co-founder of Strive!, a governance consulting company based in Guelph, Ontario. He has worked with countless organizations to help maximize their effectiveness through governance and leadership development. The agriculture industry is certainly an area of expertise for Kikkert – both in the boardroom and the barn. Approximately half of Strive!'s work is with agri-business and commodity organizations; Kikkert also operates a poultry farm with his family.

Each CSF board member has a copy of Strive!'s book – “The Imperfect Board Member” – which details the seven keys to great board governance and effectiveness. The CSF spoke with Kikkert about the important role members can play in a national organization.

Q: What is an effective way for an organization to involve/engage its members (specifically in shaping the direction and/or priorities of the organization)?

A: There are many ways to involve and engage members. Here are a few examples:

- On major issues, consider asking members to respond through electronic surveys (e.g. SurveyMonkey) where members can answer questions and provide feedback to the board and senior staff. The responses can be automatically compiled by computer and available to the board and senior staff for their review.
- Annual meetings are a great place to obtain feedback from committed and concerned members. Member issues and organizational direction can be discussed with members providing suggestions.

- Ask each director to call three members on an issue and ask for their thoughts, potentially asking pros and cons on a specific direction.
- District or regional meetings can also be a forum to gather membership ideas and feedback.

Q: What are the benefits of an involved/engaged membership?

A: When members are engaged in an organization, the result is a more informed and committed membership. The organization will benefit from the generation of ideas as well as more clarity and enhanced commitment on the direction of the organization.

CASE STUDY

Q: What types of roles can members (i.e. grassroots producers) play in national organizations?

A: Members can function like an advisory council or advisors to the board, providing feedback on board ideas. They can also be communicators and ambassadors to their fellow members.

Q: What happens when members do or do not play an active role in an organization?

A: When members play an active role, they become ambassadors and promoters of the organization. When they don't play an active role, the organization loses out on the resources and ideas that the membership can bring to an organization. In addition, if members' perspectives are not considered, they may become resentful and lack trust or confidence in the board and senior staff.

Q: Are there any pitfalls to avoid when members get involved in an organization?

A: Yes, a concern is that members delve into governance or management issues and dictate their views, trying to do the work of the board or staff. Membership needs to remember that their input is in the form of suggestions only and that the board and staff set the direction with member input. Secondly, motions to set direction and decisions by membership are not helpful as they cause confusion and false expectations for the membership and the board.

Q: What are the key differences between a healthy organization and an unhealthy one?

A: There are four keys to healthy organizations:

- Healthy organizations understand and clarify the responsibilities and the roles of staff, board and members.
- Healthy organizations have a clear direction and clarity on who they serve, what they do and how they serve.
- Healthy organizations over-communicate.
- Healthy organizations build relationships between board, staff and members.

Q: Any other thoughts on this topic?

A: I would encourage boards to be transparent with their membership, communicating and gathering member input when feasible as the board's role is to serve the membership as a whole.

In the next issue...

Myth: An increase in production will mean a decrease in price.

The next issue of Points of View kicks off a four-part series on increasing production in the Canadian sheep flock. We seem to have struck a nerve with our latest ad titled "Give your business more legs," which asks producers to focus on ways to increase their production to realize a benefit for their business as well as the industry.

Here are the facts; we've lost more than 100,000 breeding ewes in the last six years, which has contributed to a five percent drop in the number of lambs processed in Canada. This happened at the same time that demand for lamb grew another four percent. In 2008, we imported more than 20 million kilograms of lamb to fill the gap between Canadian supply and demand at a cost of \$113 million. Wouldn't it have been nice to have a piece of that?

I've heard from some producers who are convinced that increasing production will lead to a drop in price. I think this is a common misconception and I'd like to explore it with you in the next Points of View.

What are your thoughts on the correlation between production and price? Does the severe imbalance between our domestic supply and demand lead you to believe that there is significant room for production to expand and capitalize on this favourable market before we have a negative impact on price?

At what level of production do you think price will be affected? We can only meet 41 percent of the domestic demand now. What do you think will happen to prices if we increase that number to 50 percent, 60 percent or 70 percent, etc?

Is a fear of lower prices the only thing holding you back from increasing production?

Send your comments to pointsofview@cansheep.ca, or contact Jennifer MacTavish directly at 1-888-684-7739 or by email at jennifer@cansheep.ca.