

Building a Collaborative for Sustainability in the Aspen Parkland



Sustainable agriculture practices are some of the most powerful Natural Climate Solutions for mitigating climate change in Canada. These practices also provide a wide range of benefits, including improved agricultural land productivity, increased profitability, enhancement of local livelihoods, support for biodiversity, and the continuation of a strong, resilient, and competitive agricultural sector. But how can we unlock these benefits for people and nature?

The Aspen Parkland Agricultural Initiative (APAI) both highlights these benefits and aims to drive the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices across the Aspen Parkland ecoregion. This initiative engages producers, industry, governments, and Indigenous representatives within the region to identify the barriers to sustainable agricultural practice adoption, create and invest in the enabling conditions needed for on-farm support, in value chains, and across policy, while designing pragmatic solutions that work within agricultural markets that can be scaled across Canada. In order to accomplish this, the establishment of a Collaborative of stakeholders is key.

What is the APAI Collaborative?

Current approaches to sustainability do not meet the needs of enough producers, preventing the scaling of sustainable practices. Additionally, they are typically highly isolated, lack regional applicability, and designed top-down, often not accounting for real world barriers to adoption. Many people are recognizing the need for new ways of working to move beyond the natural ceiling of what they can impact on their own.

The APAI takes a landscape-scale approach to deliver systems change; The Collaborative will deliver a fundamental component of the approach by building the multi-stakeholder group in the Aspen Parkland that provides guidance to the initiative, while centering our understanding on the knowledge and experiences of local partners. Together the Collaborative will develop goals, implement action plans, and monitor progress towards improving the ecological, social, and economic resilience of agricultural communities in the Aspen Parkland.

WHY THE ASPEN PARKLAND?

The Aspen Parkland ecoregion has the potential to have significant agricultural impact for people and nature. This area of high agricultural productivity spans 17.3M hectares across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta and includes high value crops such as canola, wheat, oats, and pulses. In addition to high productivity, these soils are also able to store vast amounts of carbon with significant implications for climate change mitigation. This region also contains a large amount of remnant, fragmented natural habitat, offering opportunities to rebuild biodiversity.





What are the benefits or participants?

Participating in the APAI Collaborative offers a unique opportunity to be at the forefront of sustainable agriculture innovation in Canada. Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Co-create strategies that address critical agronomic, economic, and social barriers to sustainable agriculture adoption, define sustainability objectives and advance measuring, monitoring, and reporting of progress on sustainable agriculture in the region.
- Create impactful solutions that work for producers, increase coordination and efficiency in scaling sustainable practices, share investment, and contribute to multiple environmental and socioeconomic outcomes.
- For value chain partners, make credible sustainability claims towards landscape-level contributions and impacts.
- Access relevant and timely information and knowledge regarding the strategic scaling of sustainable agriculture in Canada.

Who do we need on board?

Current participants in the APAI Collaborative include local producers, organizations that provide direct support to producers, corporate stakeholders, and Indigenous representatives who have been hand-selected by Nature United for their alignment with the mission and vision of the APAI Collaborative. To achieve broad-scale sustainable agriculture adoption, this group will continue to grow over time and build a broader base of participants, including crown and Indigenous governments.

A LANDSCAPE APPROACH IS KEY TO SUCCESS

In order to scale the adoption of sustainable agriculture, we must all drive support and investment across the entire agricultural system. Leaders must be challenged to act in a coordinated way that moves beyond a farm-by-farm approach, working across multiple supply chains, and mobilizing system levers such as training and policy. To achieve this the APAI has adopted a Landscape Approach, defined as “a management approach focused on multi-stakeholder collaboration to advance shared sustainability goals and build resilience at landscape scale.” This approach provides a framework through which cross-sectoral actors can engage to develop collective goals, invest in collaborative solutions, monitor and evaluate the impact of broad adoption of sustainable agriculture practices across multiple environmental outcomes, and create a mechanism for making claims about their contribution to collective action.

Help drive strategic action towards the adoption of sustainable agriculture in the Aspen Parkland and across Canada.

For more information on participating in the Collaborative contact:

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