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Water Stewardship and Incentives: Report of Programs and Project Options

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Description / Abstract

The goal of this project was to provide an overview of water stewardship and incentives, in a way that is accommodating and relevant for each grower, contributes to the economic and social priorities of a rural community, and ultimately improves overall watershed health. In the initial conversations between Agrium and WaterSMART the project scope followed a path to ultimately create a water program in a similar form to the successful 4R program and the Alberta NERP. Following further research and insights from this report, three project options are proposed, all of which can all contribute to the objective through different communication, technological, and collaborative methods. The options are: A. Develop 4R as a building block B. Build a knowledge hub through existing global work e.g. “best of the best in water and agriculture” C. Enabling growers through integrated technologies (recommended with incorporation of option B as the tool for water stewardship. This option is a cycle that builds in the incentives from the beginning with ecosystem services valuation, effective monitoring, and credits management within the same online system. Option C provides the most advantages and opportunities; however it is also the most costly in terms of time and finance. It is estimated, to reach the end goal of a water credits program through piloting and policy evolution, will take anything from five (optimistic) years to ten (more realistic), based on similar watershed policy and regulation work. Perhaps the biggest takeaway from scoping this project is that no brand new technology is required; the knowledge exists, the instrumentation exists, the communication methods are reliable, and the organizations willing to be involved are apparent. Rather, the project can create a global leadership opportunity through inter-linking the most valuable information and approaches from around the world, in the best interests of both growers and watershed managers, and use technology to leap frog programs already in place.

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