

THE VERDANT ELEMENT

Lakeland Agricultural Research Association

Securing Success: New Funding Opportunities

Spring is a time of renewal and planning for the year ahead. What better way to get the year started than with some new funding opportunities available for agricultural producers.

First up is the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership (SCAP) program to support continued innovation, growth and prosperity in Canada's agriculture sector. Programs include:

- **The Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP)** funding is offered on a per-acre payment basis for a term of 3 years. In this way, RALP can better support producers in their ability to implement projects on their land that over time can provide significant benefits for the producer, the public and future generations.
- **The Water Program** supports agricultural water management by helping primary producers adopt agriculture water better management practices and priority actions. This supports better management of risks to water quality and supplies, adaptation to climate variability and the efficient use of water resources.

Next up is the **LARA Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (WRRP)**, which will provide funding to agricultural producers within LARA's area of operation with a focus on areas with high drought and flood priority. Projects can include:

- Riparian fencing and exclusion fencing.
- Offsite watering systems to improve water quality and protect sensitive areas.
- Stream crossings to minimize impacts while increasing land utilization.
- Wetland enhancement to prevent erosion and contamination of water bodies.

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Resilient Agriculture Landscapes Program (RALP)

Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP) funding is offered on a per-acre payment basis for a term of 3 years. In this way, RALP can better support producers in their ability to implement projects on their land that over time can provide significant benefits for the producer, the public and future generations.

Intake year is February 1, 2024 - November 30, 2024.

The program will pay a per-acre fee that is calculated to cover most of the applicant's implementation cost and may also pay an opportunity cost. Additionally, applications will be evaluated based on project size, carbon sequestration improvement, number of livestock impacted, and water quality and biodiversity enhancement; which may result in an impact adjustment payment (impact adjustment payments will vary based on the minister's discretion).

The program funding maximums are:

- \$150,000 – active primary producers
- \$300,000 – Grazing Reserve Associations/operators of a Community Pasture, or an approved Indigenous applicant

The minimum payment under the program is \$2,000.

Call the LARA office for more information or visit <https://www.alberta.ca/resilient-agricultural-landscape-program>



Funding Category	Eligible BMP Activity
Pasture Management	• Activity Code 100 Riparian area management • Activity Code 101 Rotational grazing of tame pasture or native rangeland • Activity Code 102 Adding legumes to existing forage stands • Activity Code 103 Targeted grazing for invasive plants
Cropland Conversion	• Activity Code 200 Annual cropland conversion to native forages • Activity Code 201 Annual cropland conversion to tame forages • Activity Code 202 Strips/ Grass waterways/ Salinity • Activity Code 203 Intercropping
Tree Establishment	• Activity Code 300 Shelterbelts • Activity Code 301 Eco-buffers • Activity Code 302 Establishment of pollinator strips
Wetland	• Activity Code 400 Wetland restoration and Activity Code 401 Construction of new wetlands



The Water Program

The Water Program supports agricultural water management by helping primary producers adopt agriculture water better management practices and priority actions. This supports better management of risks to water quality and supplies, adaptation to climate variability and the efficient use of water resources.

An applicant may apply to one or both of the program streams:

- On-Farm Irrigation Stream
- On-Farm Water Supply Stream

For dugouts, dams and spring developments under the On-Farm Water Supply Stream, applicants must speak to an Agriculture and Irrigation Water Specialist and receive an approved Construction Sheet prior to planning and construction. This will confirm the proposed project meets legislative and program requirements. Call 310-FARM to speak to an Agriculture and Irrigation Water Specialist.

Standard Incentives for new or expanded water source developments:

- Wells
- Dugouts
- Spring Developments
- Tie-in to a Multi-User Water Supply Line
- Dams
- Water Source for Crop Irrigation
- Cisterns
- Unshared Water Pipelines
- Off-Source Watering Systems

Special Incentives

- Well Decommissioning
- Well Pit Conversions
- Wetland Assessments

Funding levels for the On-Farm Water Supply Stream projects:

- Standard incentive projects: up to 25% for eligible expenses
- Special incentives (project specific) – varied

There is an On-Farm Water Supply Stream maximum of \$35,000 per applicant for the period April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2028.

Call the LARA office for more information or visit <https://www.alberta.ca/water-program>





10 Ways to Put Mental Health First During the Busy Season

Lesley Kelly - The Do More Agriculture Foundation

Those working in agriculture face unique stressors. Even under ideal conditions, farming and ranching can be stressful. It can be difficult for farmers to leave their stress at work at the end of the day. Many things are out of a farmer's control and as the busy season of planting approaches, the rising demands and pressures of farming are likely to increase stress and impact our mental health.

Farmers and ranchers are known to be resilient. In recent years, more attention has been focused on farmers and ranchers putting their health first – both physical and mental. Farmers and ranchers are taking the most important step - learning and talking more about mental health, which helps to prepare to better manage their mental and physical health during the busy season.

While eliminating stress may not be realistic during the busy seasons, there are management strategies that can be employed to reduce and relieve it. Here are 10 strategies to help you put your mental health first during those busy seasons:

1. **Schedule self care:** Practicing some type of self-care each day can go a long way to filling up your mental health cup. This could be 15 minutes of breathing or meditation, a few minutes with a book, a cup of coffee in the quiet before the family wakes up, a walk with your dog, etc. There will always be work that needs to be done, especially during the busy seasons, but prioritizing your mental health is one of the most important things a farmer and rancher can do. Taking care of ones self may look and feel different each season, but there are small things you can do that will make a huge, positive impact on your mental health.
2. **Work on getting good sleep:** It can be difficult to sleep well during busy and stressful times, but sufficient rest is key to staying healthy. Lack of sleep can slow your reaction time and increase the likelihood of mistakes and accidents. A useful strategy is to create a bedtime routine. When you head to bed, turn off all the lights and sounds. Falling asleep with a TV on or scrolling your phone can be disruptive to your body's natural sleep cycle. Create a cool and comfortable environment to help your body relax quickly.
3. **Don't forget about the necessities:** Healthy food, drinking water, etc. Those are the necessities and when we don't get them we tend to feel pretty crappy. It might sound like a good idea to stay up late to get things done during busy season, or to go through the drive-through yet again, but both those things could end up hurting you more in the long run.
4. **Take breaks:** Take a couple of short breaks each day to think about something other than work. Talk to a friend or family member, watch funny videos online or take a short walk. Just a few minutes of mental rest can sustain you over a long workday.
5. **Focus on communication:** Whether you're talking to family or employees, make sure you're clear about what needs to be done. Sacrificing clear communication for the sake of time typically leads to errors and needing to redo work and can impact relationships.

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Environmental Farm Plans

The environment is becoming a more prominent issue. It is a large factor in marketing agriculture and food products in today's global markets. Consumers are demanding more transparency and are demanding high quality and safe products. Reputation of food safety is critical to retain and gain access to domestic and international markets.

Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) provide a tool for producers to self analyze their operation and identify environmental risks, current standards, areas for improvement and also highlight what they are doing well.

Having a completed EFP allows producers to access different funding opportunities, such as the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnerships Programs, OFCAF or the LARAWRRP program. For these programs, you do not have to have a completed EFP but must have one started at the time of application. It is mandatory to update your EFP every 10 years for it to remain current.

Environmental Farm Plans are also useful in product branding that demonstrates specific environmental standards.

If you wish to complete an EFP or have any questions regarding EFP please contact Dustin Roth at technician@laraonline.ca or (780) 812-1036





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6. Spend time with friends and family: Studies have shown that spending time with family and friends can help people cope with stress because it encourages talking about issues and challenges instead of turning to less healthy coping mechanisms. Connecting with others, even through a text or phone call can also help combat isolation.

7. Breathing: Just focusing on your breath or changing the way you breathe can make a big difference to your overall stress level. Breathing techniques can calm your body and your brain in just a few minutes. While there are many breathing exercises, a few simple ones include:

a. Breathe in through your nose and watch your belly fill with air. Count slowly to three as you inhale. Hold for one second and then slowly breathe out through your nose as you count to three again.

b. Breathe in through your nose and imagine inhaling peaceful, calm air. Imagine that air spreading through your body. As you exhale, imagine you're breathing out stress and tension.

8. Listen to music: Listening to calming music or music you enjoy can have a very relaxing and positive effect on the body.

9. Write it down: While recording what you are stressed about is one approach, another is jotting down what you would like to get accomplished and prioritize, or what you're grateful for. Your phone can be a great tool. You can also do this through voice notes and keep messages, ideas, thoughts and lists on your phone.

10. Recognize when you are overwhelmed and take action: We all know that feeling: our heartbeat quickening, our brain feeling like it is going in a million directions at once. If you are feeling overwhelmed take a breather, correct the problem before it gets out of control—leading to total burnout. Turn off your phone for a night to take a walk with your family, seek counseling services, meditate, go to bed early, etc.

If you or someone in your family or farm team are going through a hard and stressful time, reach out to a professional. For local crisis contacts and resources visit <https://www.domore.ag/crisis-contacts>.



LARA Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (WRRP)

The Lakeland Agricultural Research Association (LARA) Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (LARAWRRP) will provide funding to landowners within LARA's operational area with a focus on areas of high drought and flood priority. Levels of funding availability, and site selection will be based on several criteria, including:

- Completion of a riparian health assessment or willingness to have one completed.
- Contribution of landowner (time, labour, financial (applications to other sources of funding), or equipment)
- Level of damage or impact to improving watershed function.
- Willingness to allow for tours, or publication of site improvements to increase awareness and educate others.
- Conjunction of multiple activities in a project.

Applications open on March 1, 2024.

An Environmental Farm Plan is required for all applicants to the program.

Activity	Outcome / Goal
Completion of Riparian Health Assessment	Sites will have a baseline for monitoring changes based on implementation of BMPs
Riparian Fencing	Protect riparian areas and create a controlled management system which will prevent erosion, compaction, overgrazing during vulnerable periods and improve watershed health and water quality. Making riparian areas large enough for timely grazings and provide effective rest periods for healthy plant cover that prevents nutrients from entering water bodies with runoff.
Offsite Watering Systems	Improve water quality. Protect riparian areas / wetlands.
Stream Crossings	Minimize areas impacted by operations and allow utilization of adjacent lands.
Wetland Enhancement	Prevent flooding by allowing water to flow, but still maintain beaver populations to capture water and mitigate times of drought. Enhance natural vegetation which prevents erosion and contaminants from entering the water bodies. Improve water quality.



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Sustainable farming encompasses a wide range of practices and principles; combining environmental stewardship with profitability and ensuring that the family farm will be there for generations to come.



www.laraonline.ca

Try Before You Buy!

Did you know that LARA has two different off-site watering systems that you can try out, as well as a power grazer portable electric fence that you can use to try cross fencing! Contact the LARA office to book your session.

Feed Testing

Did you know that LARA offers two free feed tests per year to agricultural producers in LARA's operational area? These tests are for a complete forage analysis of your feed sample including crude protein, fibre, energy, macro-minerals and micro-minerals.

P.I.D. number is required at the time of sample submission.

