

# *Reducing Greenhouse Gases in the Canadian Hog Sector*

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*Reduced greenhouse gas emissions are the result of improved production efficiencies and can put more dollars in a hog producer's pocket*

The issue of greenhouse gas emissions is receiving increased attention in the Canadian agricultural industry. Internationally, many scientists agree that global climate change is occurring. It is believed that global warming is being caused by increasing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. To reduce the impact of climate change, the government of Canada has launched a number of national programs, some of which apply specifically to the agriculture industry.

The agriculture sector has been called upon to provide voluntary reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. On April 22, 2002, the Honorable Lyle Vanclief, Federal Minister of Agriculture, announced the Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Program for Canadian Agriculture funded under the Climate Change Action Fund 2000. This program is aimed at promoting the adoption of beneficial management practices, through communication and on-farm demonstration activities, which have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining or improving the economic viability of the farm.

The administrative

responsibilities for the program are being shared by four national agricultural industry groups: Soil Conservation Council of Canada, Dairy Farmers of Canada, Canadian Cattlemen's Association and the Canadian Pork Council. The inclusion of the four industry partners will allow the program to be tailored specifically to individual commodity producers, as well as provide an opportunity for the entire sector to work together to find solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Program Coordinator has been hired by the Canadian Pork Council to represent the pork industry in the program and implement this three-year program for the hog sector.

A planning workshop, held in December 2002, provided the CPC with stakeholder feedback and guidelines for undertaking communications with producers about ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on their farms. There has been considerable concern within the producer community that mitigation strategies will be costly and that emissions targets for the industry are not economically feasible. This is not necessarily the case, as most management practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions are the result of improved production efficiency, which generally result in increased profitability.

Some of the management practices that the program will highlight include: hog ration manipulation to maximize growth efficiency and reduce manure nutrient excretion, matching hog manure application rates and timing to crop nutrient uptake, and the use of manure storage covers to decrease methane produced during storage.

The program is aimed solely at demonstrating and communicating

beneficial management practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, through the development of infrastructure on demonstration sites, the program will provide opportunities for western Canadian universities and research institutions to conduct practical on-farm research, and collect valuable economic data. This will better enable producers to determine whether the demonstrated practices can be worked into their individual operations.

Among the first projects to be funded through the Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Program is the development of a "Guidebook for Environmental Management in the Hog Industry". It will serve as a benchmark for environmental management information for the Canadian hog industry, and inform producers of the latest research findings. One factor that sets this guidebook apart from those developed previously is the inclusion of economic analysis for all the management practices discussed, allowing producers to evaluate the viability of the practices on their own farms.

Regular updates on the Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Program will be featured in each edition of the Western Hog Journal over the next year and will include details on the management practices being demonstrated across Canada, as well as local events that producers may wish to attend. For more information about the program, please contact Cedric MacLeod, Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Program Coordinator for the Canadian Pork Council

