

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - September 12, 2006

### **SSCA announces staff layoffs**

The Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association's (SSCA) Board of Directors is once again announcing that it is in a position where it must relieve its Field Staff of their duties effective September 30, 2006. Five highly qualified professional agrologists are affected by the announcement. The SSCA made a similar announcement in February but was granted a slight reprieve by receiving a short-term contract from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to provide a summer extension program for the province's farmers. Previous program funding was provided by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) and the national Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Program. Neither level of government has come forward with new programming funds.

Edgar Hammermeister, President of the SSCA, is frustrated by the provincial and federal governments' lack of interest in the farm community. "The erosion of knowledge infrastructure threatens the farmers' ability to adopt agronomic practices in these times of tight farm margins", he said. "The SSCA studies specific agronomic components of new management systems providing a much needed short-cut to adopting beneficial management practices (BMPs)". He further indicated that the field staff members are attuned to local concerns and issues as their offices are located around the province including Swift Current, Borden, North Battleford, Tisdale and Yorkton.

While farmers have long regarded the SSCA staff as the people with the expertise on how to adopt zero-till and soil conservation practices, Blair McClinton, SSCA's Executive Manager indicated that the staff are involved in many other areas of agronomy. "Improving pasture management, crop seeding rates, testing fertilizer types and application techniques are just a few of the many areas in which the staff conduct applied research trials in an effort to improve the farmer's bottom line", he said.

Hammermeister is concerned about the impact the loss of the SSCA Staff will have on the agriculture industry. "This erosion of the farmer's toolbox of resources is extremely disappointing", he said. "The wide spread adoption by the province's farmers of practices that enhance the quality of the province's soil water and air can be traced directly to the influence of the SSCA and its knowledgeable staff".

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