**Commission for Environmental Cooperation BMP Project**

**It is a well-known fact that diverse pressures exist on the grasslands and forages (native and/or tame) of the central plains of North America.** To help producers deal with these pressures, the Manitoba Forage & Grassland Association (MFGA) along with the Canadian Forage & Grassland Association, Saskatchewan Forage Council and the Chinook Applied Research Association in Alberta have entered into an 18-month agreement with the Commission of Environmental Cooperation (CEC).

“The CEC agreement seeks to implement and promote ranch-level beneficial management practises (BMPs) that improve environmental sustainably of livestock production on ranches and bring concurrent economic and biodiversity benefits,” said Wanda McFadyen, MFGA’s executive director, who led the collaborative agreement effort.”

**Pressures on the large grassland systems of the central plains challenge grassland biodiversity and have far reaching impacts in the areas of water, air and soil quality, ecosystem networks and the economies that support the ranchers and rural communities.**

**“Participating producers will be introduced to the concepts of the project and associated BMPs as well as the ecological, biodiversity and economic benefits of these BMPs,” said McFadyen. “They will also be provided technical assistance in the development and implementation of their respective plans. This will include not only a review of the current status of their grasslands, but applicable BMPs based on the land under their management, an economic review and methods to measure not only economic returns, but environmental benefits.”**

**According to McFadyen, producer plans may include BMPs such as summer and/or winter grazing plans, cross fencing and/or solar fencing systems, solar gates, off-site watering systems, winter grazing systems and a suite of other possible options. Stocking rates will be reviewed as well as economic models that are most applicable to the producer and his/her operation. A final report will be developed from the BMPs of the project.**

**“It is worth noting that the environmental and biodiversity benefits that are captured under the implementation of proposed BMPs are a direct benefit to the producer and also society as a whole as they have positive impacts on air, soil and water quality and associated ecosystems,” said McFadyen.**

**Educational forums, workshops and tours will be held by each of the collaborating organizations to help producers take full advantage of the CEC project.**

Who is the CEC?

The Commission of Environmental Cooperation or the CEC as they are more commonly referred to has been in place since 1994 and is a tri-country organization with representation from Canada, Mexico and the United States. They have collaborated in protecting North America's environment through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC).

The NAAEC came into force at the same time as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and marks a commitment that liberalization of trade and economic growth in North America would be accompanied by effective cooperation and continuous improvement in the environmental protection provided by each country.

The CEC facilitates collaboration and public participation to foster conservation, protection and enhancement of the North American environment for the benefit of present and future generations, in the context of increasing economic, trade, and social links among Canada, Mexico, and the United States.