

# Agricultural Service Board Position Statement

January 2025 DRAFT

## FARM-MADE SEED ([link to feedback form](#))

### Overview: Farmers' Rights to Save Seed

The practice of saving seed is fundamental to the economic viability and sustainability of Alberta's agriculture. This practice empowers farmers to maintain autonomy over their operations and fosters the growth of crops uniquely adapted to Alberta's unique climatic and soil conditions. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) Seed Regulatory Modernization (SRM) initiative, which proposes royalties on farm-made seed, is complex and presents challenges that require careful navigation to balance the interests of all stakeholders. While the ASB acknowledges the importance of funding robust plant breeding programs, it emphasizes safeguarding farmers' economic interests while minimizing administrative concerns.

### Benefits of Farm-Made Seed

- **Adaptability:** Supports locally tailored crop varieties suited to Alberta's unique agricultural landscape.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Offers an affordable option for producers, especially for small and medium-sized farms.
- **Resilience:** Reduces dependency on external markets and supports regional food security.

### Key Issues

#### 1. Farmers' Rights and Local Adaptation

- Farm-made seed enables Alberta farmers to adapt crop varieties to local conditions.
- Introducing royalties could potentially increase costs and discourage the use of locally adapted seed, potentially reducing genetic diversity and increasing dependency on higher-cost commercial seed varieties.

#### 2. Economic Impact and Public Breeding Programs

- Royalties on farm-made seed would disproportionately affect small and medium-sized producers, including increasing costs and threatening their financial stability.
- Public breeding programs, which provide affordable and region-specific crops (e.g., canola) face declining resources and reduced funding as private industry gains influence. The result is higher seed costs and less choice.

### **3. Global Alignment and Market Access**

- While aligning Canada's seed regulations with international standards under UPOV-91 could improve market access and trade opportunities, local farmers may face increased costs and reduced flexibility.

### **4. Equity and Transparency in Funding**

- Farmers already contribute to breeding programs through checkoffs and levies. Greater transparency in the allocation of these funds is essential to ensure investments benefit public breeding initiatives and align with farmer priorities.

## **What is the ASB's Position on Farm-Saved Seed?**

The ASB stands firmly in support of Alberta farmers' rights to save, store, and replant seed.

Farm-saved seed is an essential practice for Canadian farmers, and maintaining its viability is closely tied to the health of public breeding programs and the wider agricultural economy. The ASB supports a balanced, level-headed approach that protects farmers' rights while addressing the need for innovation.

Public breeding programs have historically provided affordable, high-performing seed varieties. These programs, funded through a mix of government investment and contributions from the ag industry, face increasing pressures from reduced funding and the growing influence of private breeding companies.

A royalty system on farm-saved seed could offer a potential solution, but only if it is designed to maintain farmers' autonomy, limit the financial burden, and support the public breeding sector. Without this support, the public breeding system risks collapse, paving the way for private industry to dominate. That will result in increased dependence on private seed companies, reduced access to locally adapted seed, and higher costs for farmers.

This is not a choice between tradition and progress but between protecting long-term sustainability and over-reliance on external players. Farmers must play a central role in shaping these policies, working collaboratively with government, breeders, and other stakeholders to ensure the long-term resilience of Canadian agriculture.

## **What the ASB believes is required to achieve a balanced outcome:**

### **1. Inclusive Governance and Local Representation**

The ASB should have a prominent role in policy development and implementation to ensure regional considerations, particularly those unique to Alberta, are addressed.

### **2. Access to Clear, Localized Information**

Farmers need straightforward resources to understand the implications of royalties, the benefits of seed adaptability, and compliance requirements.

**3. Continuous Farmer Engagement**

Establish robust communication channels, including regular consultations and feedback mechanisms, to ensure farmers' voices guide policy decisions.

**4. Support for Public Breeding Programs**

Allocate funds transparently to ensure public breeding initiatives continue to deliver region-specific, cost-effective seed options.

## **Summary Questions**

- 1. How important is it to the ASB to protect farm saved seed?**
- 2. How important are the benefits to farm saved seed? Any other benefits that should be added?**
- 3. How important are the key issues discussed in the Position Statement, are there others that should be included? Any other feedback?**
- 4. Do you have any feedback on the ASB's Position on Farm saved seed?**
- 5. How important are the actions suggested in the Position Statement? Any more that should be added? Any other comments?**
- 6. What previous initiatives can we draw on to help defend farm saved seed?**

**2025 ASB Position - Farm Saved  
Seed Feedback**



**Link to feedback Form:** <https://forms.office.com/r/BaPw6vGCNv>