



# Unified Efforts

How transportation, research, and market development work together towards big-picture goals

by **Carl Potts**

Transportation system performance is top of mind for almost everyone in the industry these days as growers, processors, exporters, and others try to find ways to move a record-sized Canadian crop to customers around the world.

In light of these huge challenges we sometimes hear comments that it makes no sense to develop new demand for crops or invest in research that improves yield if we cannot move what we currently produce. However, the reality is that we need all of these – a well-functioning transportation system, productivity-enhancing research, and market development – for continued profitability and sustainable growth for the pulse industry. With your levy dollars, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers (SPG) is making solid investments in each of these areas that are yielding results today and will continue to generate results in the future.

## **Transportation**

In partnership with pulse grower organizations across the country and with processors and exporters of pulses and special crops, SPG recognized the need for improved transportation system performance in 2006 by making significant investments in transportation work at Pulse Canada (see article on Pg. 31 for more detail on the

work that is being done). Today, the pulse industry is viewed as a national leader in this area and has been successful in getting shippers of other products such as forestry, automotive, and mining working together to deal with transportation issues our industry cannot tackle alone. More recently, SPG has called on the Canadian government to introduce amendments to the Fair





Rail Freight Service Act that would add more “teeth” to the legislation. Through our national association, we will continue to ensure the pulse industry leads on this important issue.

### **Research**

Productivity gains through research have been one of the key factors that have driven the growth in pulse production in Saskatchewan over the last 25 years. Growers, through the levy that they contribute to SPG, have been major funders of this work. Federal and provincial governments, as well as private sector, have been key partners in this work. Continued gains in on-farm yield of pulses is critical to keeping pulses competitive on a return per acre basis for Saskatchewan growers relative to other crops such as wheat, canola, and soybeans. Continued productivity gains are also needed to keep Saskatchewan pulses competitive relative to other global suppliers. SPG’s continued

long-term partnership with the Crop Development Centre to generate new varieties is just one of the ways your levy dollars are being invested to generate results today and in the future. Another example is through exciting new research that could generate alternative modes of action to deal with weed issues in pulse crops.

### **New markets**

India used to sit alone atop the Canadian pulse export list, with other countries far behind. That situation is changing. While India continues to be our largest market overall, growth in demand in other countries is helping to diversify markets for pulses. China’s imports of Canadian yellow peas have increased over the last 10 years from 150,000 tonnes in 2003 to 914,000 tonnes in 2013, matching the imports of India. This massive growth has been driven primarily by ingredient use (starch, protein, fibre) in China (for more information on

demand from China flip to Pg. 8). We think that continued expansion of the utilization of pulses in ingredient applications is an important part of the market growth and diversification strategy moving forward. Even with the growth of China as a market for yellow peas, Canada’s top three markets for yellow peas represent 91% of total Canadian exports. For red lentils, the top three markets take 72% of Canadian red lentil exports. Continued diversification is needed.

Feedback from growers during SPG’s winter meetings in North Battleford, Rosetown, Swift Current, and Regina in February acknowledged that investments in production research and developing new markets need to continue to be made, as well as in policy areas such as transportation and market access. In general, the feedback from growers is that even more needs to be done to develop new markets and to ensure that our system can move the products that growers produce to customers around the world.