

February 2, 2012

**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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Canola Representative Sought

Canola growers in Williams County are being urged to participate in the election of a county representative for the North Dakota Oilseed Council. All canola growers who have a definite interest in the membership of the Council are encouraged to participate in the election at 10:00 AM on Thursday, February 16 in the Conference Room of the Williams County Courthouse.

Each person, landlord or tenant, husband and/or wife, who has planted canola (in 2011), or intends to plant canola (in 2012) and is a participating producer who resides in Williams County, if present in person, is entitled to vote. The county representative in this district which includes all counties west of Renville, Ward, McLean, Morton and Sioux will meet on Wednesday, March 28 in Minot to elect the districts (1) representative to the Oilseed Council.

The Oilseed Council was created by legislative enactment to facilitate the production, development, marketing and promotion of sunflower, safflower, rapeseed or canola, flax and crambe. Alan Klain, Turtle Lake, will be completing his third term consisting of three years as a McLean County Canola Representative and District I Representative. A producer is eligible to serve four consecutive three-year terms.

With today's agriculture economics and labor shortage, it is difficult for producers to find time to help with the promotion and research development of the commodities they are producing. However, it is imperative for growers to give leadership that will assure continued consumer acceptance. Serving on the various commodity boards often provides first-hand information about the industry. Thus, I am encouraging a canola grower in Williams County to step forward.

Fewer Certified Seed Growers

Over time there are changes which occur that we really do not recognize until maybe it is too late. I think one such change for crop producers is a lack of certified seed growers. This may not be a problem on a statewide basis but for northwest North Dakota, I find myself frequently referring growers to seed sources far beyond our region.

For some, producing certified seed is a good way to add volume to crops but it does require additional planning, labor, equipment, care, weed control and seed conditioning. After all, the objectives of the seed certification program are to maintain varietal purity under strict standards. Certified seed also must meet germination standards, pass a field inspection, be free of noxious weeds, conditioned by an approved seed conditioning plant and pass laboratory testing.

My observations tell me marketing is the biggest challenge to certified seed growers. For most, this is not a full time business, thus, it is difficult to meet the varied needs of customers. Not all commercial crop growers want their seed at the same time. Often the certified seed grower must take time away from a planned event to service the needs of a customer.

Like many other business ventures, I see certified seed growers becoming specialized, offering seed of more crops and varieties and building facilities which incorporate efficiency in handling, storage and sales. Some work with other growers to expand product offering.

As I page through the North Dakota Field Inspected Seed Handbook for 2012, I see a total of 12 producers from Divide, McKenzie and Williams Counties who will have durum seed available to commercial growers. Hopefully, they will meet our needs.