



# SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2023

## ABOUT EGG FARMERS OF ALBERTA

Egg Farmers of Alberta (EFA) manages the provincial egg industry and represents Alberta's more than 160 egg farming families, who are proud to provide a stable supply of fresh, locally produced eggs. Visit [eggs.ab.ca](http://eggs.ab.ca) for more information.

**Vision:** Healthy Food, Healthy Farms, Healthy Families

**Mission:** Cultivating a sustainable egg industry together with farmers, consumers, and other stakeholders.



## About This Report

This is the second published sustainability report related to our revised Sustainability Strategy, detailing our performance in 2023. EFA will provide a balanced view of our key successes and challenges in pursuit of the goals for the organization, the farmers we represent, and the broader provincial egg industry, that were identified as EFA's sustainability pledges.

## Statement From EFA Leadership

EFA and the province's egg farmers are enthusiastic about our stated mission to cultivate a sustainable egg industry in Alberta. Farmers are proud to provide a stable supply of fresh, high-quality, affordable, locally produced food for their fellow Albertans, while caring for their laying hens and farming in a more environmentally responsible manner than ever before. The foresight offered by our sustainability strategy serves the industry by helping to ensure Alberta egg farms are sustainable today and will continue to be for generations to come.

## Defining Our Priorities

EFA's revamped sustainability strategy identified and prioritized sustainability issues that impact egg farmers and stakeholders, with an emphasis on guiding the Alberta egg industry through the next three to five years. EFA wanted a provincial strategy that would compliment the national sustainability strategy developed by Egg Farmers of Canada, and be more closely aligned with established global standards for sustainability reporting.

## Our Sustainability Framework

EFA's approach to sustainability is built around our four pillars:

- **Healthy Birds** is about egg farmers' dedication to caring for their layer hens, with the national Animal Care Program as the cornerstone.
- **Healthy Eggs** is about the industry's commitment to providing safe, fresh, local eggs, with the national food safety program, Start Clean – Stay Clean®, as the cornerstone.
- **Healthy Farms** is about egg farmers being responsible stewards of the land they farm, with the provincial environmental program, Producer Environmental Egg Program, as the cornerstone.
- **Healthy Communities** is about giving back, engaging the public, and collaborating with value-chain partners.

We have integrated the priority issues identified through our materiality assessment into EFA's revamped sustainability strategy.

**EFA has made eight sustainability pledges that will guide the provincial egg industry along a more sustainable path.**



# EFA'S PERFORMANCE



## Healthy Birds



Alberta egg farmers raise healthy birds. They are dedicated to the well-being and care of their laying hens.

**Pledge #1: EFA will apply the highest standards of animal welfare throughout the hen housing transition taking place in our industry.**

**Highlight:** EFA provided funding in 2019 to Dr. Clover Bench at the University of Alberta toward the project, *“Use of 3D Kinematic, QCT, Infrared, and Genomic to Evaluate Perching in Commercial Strains of Enriched-Housed Laying Hens.”* The goal of the research, which was completed in 2023, was to use motion capture technology to explore the connection between optimal perching types and stronger bones, better

keel and foot health, and potential genetic markers. By looking at varying perch shapes, commercial layer strains, and pullet rearing environments, the study hopes to guide hen housing design based on biomechanics, identify genetic factors affecting hen welfare, provide tools for poultry genetic companies to enhance welfare, and inform best management practices based on the Code of Practice.

EFA's Research Committee received a final report from Dr. Bench in December 2023, learning that the use of mushroom perches can reduce keel bone damage relative to round perches and that, although brown birds have stronger and denser bones, they experience more keel bone damage. This suggests that although increased bone strength may reduce keel bone damage severity, there are additional contributing factors such as perching position and use.





## Healthy Eggs

Alberta egg farmers produce healthy eggs. They are committed to providing local eggs that are safe, fresh, and nutritious.

**Pledge #2: EFA will strengthen the connection between consumers and the Alberta egg farmers who provide safe, fresh, nutritious, local eggs.**

**Highlight:** The EFA Board of Directors decided to put a short-term emphasis on promoting a couple of existing consumer-facing programs to help strengthen the connection between egg farmers and Albertans. EFA will increase promotion of the Egg Quality Assurance™ (EQA®) program, which is becoming more widely seen on egg cartons and in more restaurants, to foster understanding of the strict food safety and animal welfare standards that EQA® symbolizes. EFA is also going to promote the Made in Alberta program that the Government of Alberta launched in early 2023, to Alberta egg farmers, egg value chain partners, and consumers. Made in Alberta is a new labeling program that is intended to help consumers instantly identify food and beverage products made in our province.





## Healthy Farms

Alberta egg farmers operate healthy farms. They are responsible stewards who work to minimize their environmental impacts while operating economically viable farms, to ensure successful livelihoods. They are also devoted to fostering safe work environments.

### **Pledge #3: EFA will increase our understanding of climate change impacts and mitigations to future-proof Alberta egg farms.**

**Highlight:** EFA conducted a climate risk assessment for the Alberta pullet/egg industry in collaboration with All One Sky in 2022, which identified key areas of climate change impacts that could affect Alberta pullet and egg producers. In 2023, EFA focused on developing resources and extending information to guide producers on ways to minimize climate change impacts on their farms. A Risk Management Flock Talk was hosted by the Poultry Innovation Partnership (PIP), providing producers with a chance to discuss drought management (water supply and feed), wildfire management, and heat stress. Information from these discussions, as well as additional literature, programs, and research was used to develop a comprehensive Climate Adaptation resource, including a brochure on heat stress insurance and information on mitigating the risk of poor air quality from wildfire smoke during poultry transport. EFA is also exploring options to address research gaps on the impact of wildfire smoke on poultry, with a long-term goal of improving best practices information available to producers.



### **Pledge #4: EFA will support alignment of farm safety programs to add value for Alberta egg farmers.**

**Highlight:** EFA continued to work closely with AgSafe Alberta toward the goal of increased awareness and uptake of AgSafe certification and training. A four-year plan has been developed to align the Farm Safety Assessment delivered by EFA with AgSafe Certification, with a gradual introduction of new content and elements in each year of the plan. Year One content was introduced to Alberta egg farmers at a series of workshops throughout the province this past summer. The training from the workshops was also made available online, to help producers achieve the necessary credit toward their Year One assessments.

### **Pledge #5: EFA will support the increased application of 'circular-economy' practices on Alberta egg farms to capture value and minimize environmental impacts.**

**Highlight:** EFA supported novel strategies for creating higher value uses of egg industry byproducts. Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation's "Animal Biomass to Plant Nutrient Solution" project was completed and EFA's Research Committee worked to extend the findings, which demonstrated the value-added potential of fermenting carcass hydrolysate to produce a plant nutrient solution. EFA also engaged with multiple potential project partners to scope a work plan and budget for investigating the adoption of thermal dehydration technology for improved mortality management and end of lay disposal. EFA continues to work to secure the necessary resources to conduct this applied research and extend the technology to farmers.







## Healthy Communities

Alberta egg farmers contribute to healthy communities. They give back to their communities and play an important role in supporting local food systems and effective supply management.

**Pledge #6: EFA will increase demand for Alberta eggs by improving consumer awareness of sustainable egg production.**

**Highlight:** EFA continued sharing stories about Alberta egg farmers who have taken steps to enhance the sustainability of their operation, as well as additional content more generally related to EFA's overall sustainability strategy, via blog posts and social media platforms. A unique and impressive highlight came from a visit to Green Acres Colony to do a photo/video shoot for their egg farmer profile, where they shared their story about a substantial solar farm that has been powering their entire colony since 2015. This is exactly the sort of initiative that EFA seeks to share with Albertans, which demonstrates the industry's commitment to sustainability simply as a matter of good business.

**Pledge #7: EFA and the province's egg farming families will positively contribute to the sustainability of communities across Alberta.**

**Highlight:** EFA was proud to continue supporting Food Banks Alberta and Breakfast Club of Canada through a combination of egg donations, monetary donations, and volunteerism. EFA also began implementing its producer engagement strategy to help quantify the type and amount of contribution made collectively by Alberta farmers in their own communities, by conducting a social responsibility survey of producers. A communication strategy will be developed once sufficient contribution data has been gathered.

## Cross-Cutting

**Pledge #8: EFA will enhance on-farm data so Alberta egg farmers can monitor and improve farm sustainability performance, while preparing for expanded commercial requirements related to sustainability.**

**Highlight:** EFA launched the revised Producer Environmental Egg Program (PEEP) in January 2023. A total of 111 assessments were completed on 106 farms, providing valuable insights into sustainability practices on Alberta egg farms. The data suggests that while there is consistent reporting in several areas, energy consumption data will be a focus for improvement in the 2024 assessment. Overall, the PEEP assessment offers a glimpse into the ongoing practices and areas of enhancement in Alberta's egg industry.

EFA continues to work with producers and Egg Farmers of Canada to use PEEP data to assist in populating the National Environmental Sustainability and Technology Tool (NESTT), contributing to regional and national benchmarking that will track the sustainability of the industry over time.

