



Frequently Asked Questions

Is my information confidential?

The format of the focus groups has been adjusted to follow the COVID-19 guidelines for each province and region (see *What COVID-19 measures are being taken?* below). All focus groups will include 5-6 producers and a provincial coordinator, a note taker, the facilitator and national coordinator, and potentially a researcher. The focus group setting is an inclusive forum where producers are invited to openly and respectfully share their thoughts. Group discussions and any other feedback will be captured in writing by the note taker however no individual participant names or identifying characteristics will be recorded with the discussion. Data collected from the group discussions will be compiled and used in developing the benchmark farm and future farm scenario.

The data collected will be managed on secured servers by select staff. Producers joining sessions virtually are encouraged to use a secured, personal network to access the discussion. In person sessions where provincial guidelines allow will take place in a private space where a shared, secured network will be accessible for producers to provide online feedback throughout the day. While the network is shared, access to the venue will be restricted and monitored. Options to provide feedback off-line will be available on request.

What COVID-19 measures are being taken?

Three focus group formats are available to allow the Network to follow provincial and regional guidelines for public health and safety.

For some provinces, the 8-hour focus group will take place virtually during 2 sessions held on 2 different days (4 hours each). Producers participating in these sessions will be joining remotely from their own homes, with coordinators, researchers and facilitators also participating remotely.

In provinces where meeting in small groups of less than ten people is allowed, the 5-6 producers and the provincial coordinator (and potentially a researcher) will meet in a location that allows for spacing of 6 feet between participants throughout the meeting. A maximum of 8 people will be gathered as part of the focus group, with the national coordinator and facilitator and notetakers (and potentially a researcher) joining virtually. Washroom facilities and sanitizer will be available onsite for handwashing. Material sharing will be kept to a minimum: during the day, feedback from producers will be collected orally or virtually, where producers can use their own devices.

In Alberta, half day sessions (4 hours) are planned to be conducted virtually with baseline data having been collected in advance through Alberta Agriculture's regular operations.

Questions or concerns about COVID-19 protective measures can be voiced to the provincial coordinator who can make accommodations to protect the health and safety of participants. Staff will be monitoring the health and safety protocols in each region throughout the data collection phase to ensure that all health and safety guidelines and regulations are followed.

What should I expect at a focus group?

In person focus groups are scheduled for 8 hours from 8am to 5pm; a one-hour lunch and two fifteen-minute breaks will be included in the agenda. The lunch will be catered by a professional service following all provincial health and safety guidelines. Please inform your provincial coordinator of any dietary restrictions at least one week in advance. The day will consist of developing benchmarks in the morning for both cost of production and greenhouse gas emissions. Then a future farm scenario will be developed in the afternoon.

We ask that producers come ready to share and ready to learn. The purpose of the network is to connect operations with their similarities. Note that there will be differences with the other operations as the Canadian cow-calf sector is extremely diverse.

Do I need my cost of production calculated to participate?

It is not necessary to have your current cost of production calculated. Rough numbers will be sufficient for this exercise as we develop a benchmark for a specific type of production system that all participants can identify with to a degree. However, it is helpful to have an idea of general numbers used in calculating cost of production as well as typical allocations suitable for your operation.



What information do I need to bring?

You can find a list of topics that will be discussed at the focus group [here](#).

How accurate is focus group data?

Focus groups enable in-depth understanding of topic areas that other research tools like surveys or questionnaires might miss. Focus groups allow researchers to look beyond ‘the facts’ to understand the rich context, history and meaning behind production systems in a particular area. Focus group data collection methods are typically used to cast a wide data collection net, meaning they scope in information that emerges during discussion to give us quality data.

This research uses a relatively small sample of 5-6 producers to develop a benchmark, a recommendation from earlier economic work in farm management. After sampling, the integrity of focus group data is protected by the success of the facilitator and how they achieve open and focused discussion. One risk for the facilitator to manage is group think, which occurs when all participants dwell on one idea, preventing creativity and new ideas from emerging. The accuracy of information collected is tested throughout the session as the facilitator confirms the meaning behind participants words. This supports the accuracy of the data: researchers have opportunity to review and confirm information on-site, ask questions to follow-up. Specific themes will emerge from the discussions. The consistency and prevalence in which these themes emerge naturally point researchers to answers that are reliable and valid.

How can we produce accurate data relevant nation-wide?

By investigating parameters of production systems rather than production regions and by holding focus groups in different regions throughout the country, for a better picture, nation-wide.

How does this compare to the CowProfit\$ or AgriProfit\$ approach?

Both CowProfit\$ and AgriProfit\$ used individual farm data that was then averaged for an ecoregion or province to develop a benchmark. This approach uses a much smaller sample of 5-6 producers to develop a benchmark, but will be likely to uncover a more in depth understanding about production systems

Are there any future commitments?

Data collection from farms occurs every five years. We would be looking to update these focus groups at that time and would look for permission at the end of the focus group session to contact you again.

