KEYSTONE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

October 1, 2026

Agricultural Crown Lands Leases and Permits

Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) is Manitoba's general farm policy organization, providing a unified voice for farmers on issues that affect agriculture. KAP represents and promotes the interests of all Manitoba farmers and 18 commodity associations.

The Agricultural Crown Lands Leasing program is an integral tool for producers, particularly cattle producers, in ensuring the growth and stability of Manitoba agriculture. Affordability, efficiency, fairness, and effectiveness should represent key parts of any ACL policy. KAP is pleased to provide comments to the Department of Agriculture regarding proposed changes to the Agricultural Crown Lands Leases and Permits Regulation.

Lease Allocation System

Lease allocation plays a fundamental role in access to agricultural Crown land, and how government structures it matters. No system is perfect. The auction-based system awards leases to the highest bidders while creating barriers for young farmers with limited capital access. Producers have criticized the previous points-based system as opaque, bureaucratic, and complicated. Given these challenges, What is the best way to move forward with a future allocation system? Any future points-based system must recognize and address the challenges that existed under the previous points-based system. Not doing so risks encountering the same challenges that existed in 2018. No easy solution exists, and KAP recommends that the department focus on transparency and education when introducing the new lease allocation system.

Lease Term

Amendments in 2019 reduced lease terms from 50 to 15 years. The change created a disincentive for producers to bid on leases or for producers to make infrastructure investments. The recent five-year extension has provided some relief, but producers require longer periods. Comparable programs in Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan provide long-term leases. KAP supports the proposed amendment allowing consecutive 15-year renewals under section 6.2(2).

Rental Rate

Rising input costs remain a concern for livestock producers. And farmland values continue to rise in Manitoba. Farm Credit Canada reports average farmland values have increased by 12 percent in Manitoba. Young farmers have reported that one of the largest barriers in expanding their operation is access to land. Under the context of rising input costs, freezing the lease rental rates at $3.66 per animal unit months makes sense. But the proposed amendments do not change the annual rental formula. Producers require consistency and predictability, and changing the annual rental formula would help while minimizing any future price shocks if the rental freeze were lifted.

Enforcement and Monitoring

An effective Agricultural Crown Lands Leasing program partly depends on monitoring and enforcement. Crown land leases must be used for their intended purpose—e.g., forage leases for forages and cropping leases for annual crops. Unfortunately, program misuse occurs that negatively affects those who value and use the program. And public misuse also occurs (e.g., unlocked livestock gates, illegal camping and hunting, littering, and damage to forage). Adequate resources should be allocated toward key activities (e.g., monitoring, enforcement, and public education) that will ensure ACL parcels remain an attractive option for livestock producers for many years.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed amendments to the Agricultural Crown Lands Leases and Permits Regulation. We look forward to hearing about future improvements to the program that will benefit both government and Manitoba producers. If you have any questions about this submission, please contact KAP Policy Manager, Neil Van Overloop, at neil.vanoverloop@kap.ca.