

What We Heard Report

Consultation on Proposed Reintroduction of Membership Classes and By-law Changes

August 2024

Introduction

This report summarizes the feedback received during the [CSGA's public consultation](#) on reintroducing two membership classes and enabling By-law amendments. The public consultation was open from June 12 to August 12, 2024. Members, prospective members, and stakeholders were invited to provide comments.

Background

As part of CSGA's ongoing efforts to develop an inclusive next-generation seed certification system, the CSGA Board of Directors launched a public consultation on reintroducing two membership classes: affiliate and associate. The intention behind reintroducing these membership types is to increase stakeholder engagement, fulfil our CSGA 2.0 business plans, and align with our vision as part of the Seed Regulatory Modernization (SRM) process currently underway.

CSGA currently has a single type of membership class, categorized as a Regular member, recognized in its By-laws and articles of incorporation.

As per [CSGA By-law 3.01](#), Regular members of the Association shall be:

- a. any person, partnership or organization producing or undertaking to produce Pedigreed seed; an applicant for such membership may be required, as a condition of acceptance of the application, to become a member of a duly constituted Branch in the region where the Pedigreed seed is to be produced;
- b. any person elected or appointed a Director, Officer, or, pursuant to By-law 6:03 b), an Advisor of the Association; and
- c. any person elected as a Robertson Associate pursuant to By-law 4:01.

However, prior to a 2013 CSGA By-law amendment, CSGA's By-laws had multiple classes of members, including Affiliate and Associate members. The 2013 By-law amendment was made due to implications of the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act (CNCA) coming into force, which proposed significant changes to member voting privileges.

Under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, corporations can have multiple types of membership; however, only one class of members must be given full voting rights. Although not given full voting rights, the other classes of members would be able to vote on important matters such as:

- certain amendments to membership classes, rights, and conditions
- decisions to amalgamate or dissolve the corporation; and
- "a sale, lease, or exchange of all or substantially all of the property of a corporation other than in the ordinary course of its activities."

During the 2013 By-law review process, staff cited low uptake of the Affiliate and Associate members as another reason to remove these classes going forward.

A CSGA Regular member is defined as ‘any person, partnership, organization producing or undertaking to produce pedigreed seed,’ many seed companies, including the large multinational life science companies, are already CSGA Regular members and have been for some time (over 20 years at least). Due to the production of hybrid crops (corn and canola), these seed companies have an active CSGA account number, pay a CSGA membership fee, and designate an individual to vote on CSGA matters.

Consultation Overview

CSGA launched a public consultation process on reintroducing membership classes and the enabling By-laws on June 12, 2024. The public consultation lasted eight (8) weeks and closed on August 12, 2024. The consultation package was based on in-depth discussions held with our regional Branches at the 2023 InterProvincial meeting in Saskatoon, SK and at regional Branch annual meetings throughout the winter of 2023-2024.

Members, prospective members, and stakeholders were informed of the consultation at the CSGA’s virtual Annual General Meeting, through stand-alone communication, or featured in Seed Scoop. CSGA’s Seed Scoop mailing list has over 5,450 subscribers (4,350 English, 1,100 French).

Through the consultation, members, prospective members, and stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback on CSGA’s proposal to reintroduce affiliate and associate membership classes at CSGA and the enabling By-laws.

Affiliate Membership

Open to any person, partnership, or organization supporting pedigreed seed production.

Potential Candidates	Potential Rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeds growers wishing to maintain membership but who are not actively producing seed • Seed analysts, crop inspectors, operators of RSEs • Seed companies not producing Breeder seed or hybrid crops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend member-to-member sessions and submit member proposals • Attend and vote at AGMs on relevant topics • Not eligible for voting on membership fees, acreage fees or Board of Directors nominated by Regular Members through the Provincial Branches BUT eligible to vote on Affiliate Board seats • Attend and vote as a membership class at CSGA special meeting • Branches could follow suit

Associate Membership

Open to any industry association that is involved or has an interest in pedigreed seed production.

Potential Candidates	Potential Rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seed Sector Associations Reciprocal Memberships National and Producer Associations International Organization Governmental Organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend member-to-member sessions and submit member proposals Attend and vote at AGMs on relevant topics Not eligible for voting on membership, acreage fees or Board of Directors. Attend and vote as a membership class at CSGA special meeting Branches could follow suit

Who We Heard From

CSGA's survey was completed by 98 individuals, 83 of whom self-identified as current CSGA regular members. The survey was completed by fifteen stakeholders, who identified themselves as:

- Government Partners
- Seed Distributors/Processors/Retailers
- Provincial Branch Executive Directors or Provincial Government Officials
- Farm Organizations and Association Partners.

Members or stakeholders from all provinces except Nova Scotia completed the survey. The majority of responses were received from Manitoba (29% of total responses), Alberta (23% of total responses), and Ontario (21% of total responses).

What We Heard

Affiliate Membership Class

- 85% of respondents were in favour of reintroducing the Affiliate membership class
- Respondents cited the following supporting reasons:
 - Broader Sector Engagement: 73%
 - Align with CSGA's SRM Vision: 68%
 - Talent/Skill Set: 54%
 - Diversity of Perspectives: 51%
 - Growth/Retention: 46%
 - Transparency: 45%
 - Public Trust: 32%
 - Government Trust: 28%
 - More Welcoming: 27%
- Those respondents not in favour cited the following supporting reasons:
 - No need for change
 - Could be accomplished by working closer with Seeds Canada
- 85% of the respondents were in favour of the proposed Affiliate rights and privileges (the same percentage as overall support).

Associate Membership Class

- 83% of respondents were in favour of reintroducing the Associate Membership Class.
- Respondents cited the following supporting reasons:
 - Broader Sector Engagement: 82%

- Align with CSGA's SRM Vision: 68%
- Diversity of Perspectives: 57%
- Transparency: 50%
- Talent/Skill Set: 48%
- More Welcoming: 32%
- Those respondents not in favour cited the following supporting reasons:
 - No need for change
 - CSGA should only be for seed growers
 - Fears about a diminished seed grower voice
- 84% of the respondents were in favour of the proposed Associate rights and privileges

Proposed By-laws

- 86% of respondents were in favour of the proposed general By-law amendments presented.
- Those respondents not in favour cited the following supporting reasons:
 - No need to have multiple classes of membership
 - Gives voting rights to 'people or organizations that do not have a direct interest in pedigreed seed production' and 'voting rights could be used improperly for selfish/nefarious reasons.'

Opportunities for Provincial Branches

- Although this proposal impacts CSGA and CSGA Regular members only, the Provincial Branches requested that CSGA add a question regarding whether a similar initiative should be taken at a provincial level.
- Only 59% of respondents were in favour of provincial branches pursuing a membership class review.
- Respondents cited the following supporting reasons:
 - Alignment with National
 - Increased participation/diversity at the branch level
- Those respondents not in favour cited the following supporting reasons:
 - No need for change
 - CSGA should only be for seed growers
 - Already done in certain branches

General Comments Shared

- Survey participants were invited to share general comments on the proposed membership classes and By-law amendments.
- Some of the emerging themes were:
 - Need for cost considerations – in terms of what these memberships would cost and the overall cost to the sector.
 - Membership should be limited to seed growers.
 - Membership should be open and not limited.

Next Steps

Feedback from the consultation will be reviewed by the CSGA's Governance Committee, which will make a recommendation on how to proceed to the CSGA Board of Directors. As this proposal changes the By-laws, a Special Member Meeting will be required for CSGA Regular Members to vote on the proposed changes. As per the existing CSGA By-laws and the *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*, CSGA would be required to give Regular Members 90 days' notice prior to calling the Special Member Meeting.