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Two Alta. research groups merge

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Two southern Alberta research groups have joined forces following unanimous agreement Oct. 26 by their boards of directors.

The Southern Applied Research Association and the Southern Alberta Conservation Association will soon merge to become Farming Smarter.

Ken Coles, the agronomist who has been managing both organizations, will manage the new group. All that remains to make it official is approval from the provincial government, which is expected to be little more than a rubber stamp.

“The two groups will essentially no longer exist,” said Coles. “There will be one board of directors instead of two and it will have one joint budget.”

Coles said there was some overlap between the two groups. At one point they shared the services of a technician for their farm research projects and also made joint application for provincial funding.

He was directed to explore amalgamation details last March at a joint meeting of the two groups.

Farming Smarter, like its predecessors, is expected to derive 30 percent of its funding from government programs and the rest from private research contracts with companies and the federal government. It also raises money from various events it organizes such as the annual field school for producers, Coles said.

Association objectives

- Partner with agricultural organizations and producers to develop innovative ideas to advance production agriculture.
- Create an environment that promotes an efficient, interactive exchange of ideas and unbiased, scientifically sound information between industry stakeholders.
- Identify and encourage capitalization of agri-environmental stewardship opportunities into production agriculture.