

Agriculture producers soon will be Farming Smarter

Written by Stephanie Labbe

The largest southern Alberta agriculture event of the year will take place at the Medicine Hat exhibition grounds Dec. 4-5.

The Farming Smarter Conference and trade show has been going on since 1993, being held in Lethbridge one year and Medicine Hat the next.

The reason the conference takes turns at each city is to give agriculture producers the chance of attending the nearest location without having to travel far.

"I think it's good, because we have such a wide range of producers within the area. We kind of cover all of southern Alberta. So, in order to reach ... throughout the southern part of the province, it makes it easier for some guys to come to Medicine Hat one year and maybe not necessarily travel all the way to Lethbridge the following year," says Jamie Puchinger, the assistant manager and growing stewardship co-ordinator at Farming Smarter.

The two-day event is filled with speakers on different aspects of farming and a large trade show.

This year, there will be 20 different speakers ranging from agronomy topics to investments and research on both the federal and producer side of things.

"There is a trade show aspect, so some of the businesses in the industry get a chance to meet with some of the innovative and kind of top-notch farmers that are out there. It's a good opportunity for sponsors as well," adds Puchinger.

Speakers this year are from Alberta innovates, Alberta Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Wheat Commission and include Dennis Dey, Dr. Bob Blackshaw, Dr. Guy Lafond, Mike Jubinville, Dr. Richard Gray, and Dave Sauchyn.

When the conference first began in 1993 it was under the Southern Alberta Conservation Association and was more of a reduced tillage conference. Now it's focus is overall farm management.

There are usually between 200 to 300 participants at the conference each year and Puchinger is pleased with attendance numbers.

This year looks to have the highest number of booths registered.

"We think it's a pretty good size. This year looks like the biggest trade show that we've ever had. There's 34 booths," says Puchinger.

This conference has been known to be popular even after it's over. Ken Coles, the general manager of Farming Smarter. In a press release, he noted he receives compliments about the conference all the time.

"Farmers at this conference constantly comment to me that they learned something valuable to them," said Coles. People who attend the conference support the southern region 4-H through a silent auction as well. Last year, \$10,000 was raised for 4-H.

Farming Smarter has a research site in both Lethbridge and Medicine Hat so research is done in both cities.

For those interested in registering to attend the conference they can do so online at www.farmingsmarter.com, phone Jamie Puchinger at 403-308-9344 or by mail - #100, 5401 - 1st Ave S, Lethbridge Alberta T1J 4V6.

The cost of the two-day event is \$225. That price includes both days with breakfast, lunch snacks and refreshments.

People can register at the door, but it's preferred to register ahead of time.