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Delegates learn in Lethbridge about Farming Smarter

Written by Stephanie Labbe



Rob

Bacon from AFSC (left) and Mike Prociw from Economic Development Lethbridge chat at neighbours booths during the Dec. 3-4 Farming Smarter event at the Lethbridge Lodge.

Since the mid 1990s, the Farming Smarter event has been taking place in Alberta. The event alternates its location every year from Lethbridge to Medicine Hat. This year it was held at the Lethbridge Lodge Dec. 3-4.

When the conference first began it was a 'reduced tillage' conference, put on by Southern Alberta Conservation Association (SACA). Two years ago they partnered with the Southern Applied Research Association (SARA) for the Farming Smarter conference.

"We're in the business of helping farmers and it's a good opportunity to present all of the good information that's out there, so that farmers can be successful and profitable," says Ken Coles, the general manager for Farming Smarter. Coles believes it's a great benefit to attend this conference for producers.

"I think that for the producers themselves, they learn both agronomic farm management, environmental information that will literally help them make more money per acre," says Coles.

"It also helps with networking, they can get to know other people there and, in the industry working on similar things

or have similar interests.”

Coles says this conference is also good for the agronomers who brush up on the current research, so they're recommending the best practices based on the most current knowledge.

This year, they had close to 300 people registered for the conference, but due to the large snowstorm just prior to the event, some people didn't end up making it. However, Coles estimates there were around 200 or so people in attendance.

“I think that if everyone had come, we would have been up there in one of the biggest, most well attended,” says Coles.

For the past three years, the event has included a 4-H session where three 4-H students that are the best of the best in the region, do a speech for those in attendance.

Ginny Smith, the southern 4-H regional specialist says it's been such a benefit to the conference by including the 4-H session.

“It gives the members an opportunity to speak and to ... and see that communications fits into a real application and then we also started the auction, which has been fantastic, because it came at a really great time when we were needing a little bit of sponsorship for some of the events in the south, so it's been very successful,” says Smith.

The auction was started in Lethbridge in 2011 and in 2012 they did the same with more speakers.

All of these 4-H speakers have gone through their club competition, then the district competition and then the regional competition. These are the top students from the regional competition.

Smith says it's important for those in the agriculture industry to see that there are youth out there that have a strong passion for the industry and therefore they can know there will be younger generations around to keep the agriculture industry going.

Next year's conference will be held in Medicine Hat. For more information on Farming Smarter, visit the website at <http://www.farmingsmarter.com/>.