



STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

2025 - 2030



Mission Statement: To be the leading agriculture innovation hub for crop production on the Canadian Prairies.





WHO IS FARMING SMARTER?

Farming Smarter is an agriculture innovation hub based out of Lethbridge, Alberta. Our mission is to support the people involved in advancing irrigated and dryland crop production. We work closely with famers, entrepreneurs, businesses, government, academia and more to bridge the innovation gap, drive economic growth, improve social impact and environmental sustainability.

WHAT WE DO

We built an innovation community that brings people together to bridge ideas, challenge convention, and learn new skills. We respond to agricultural challenges and opportunities with practical, applied and adaptive research that arms decision makers with defensible data. Our collective regional intelligence is operationalized to de-risk innovation and motivate practice changes that create meaningful positive outcomes, value and impact for the agriculture industry.

HOW WE OPERATE

We are a not-for-profit association incorporated under the Government of Alberta's Society Act and a registered Canadian Charity. A competency-based board, primarily composed of producers, serves as the membership and guides Farming Smarter through policy and strategic planning. The board hires an Executive Director to lead operations, manage staff and execute the strategic plan.

FARMING SMARTER PROGRAMS

AGRONOMY RESEARCH PROGRAM

We deliver impactful and innovative agricultural research for western Canadian farmers. Our trials use state-of-the-art, science-based knowledge for small plot research to drive farm-level innovation. We practice high-quality agronomy and consult specialists through our extensive industry and research network. Each year, we manage thousands of plots across southern Alberta, making us leaders in agronomic practices under rainfed and irrigated conditions. We investigate a wide range of crops, including canola, pulses, and hemp, tailored to our region. Our trials feature novel practices like fall-seeded crops, strip tillage, and precision planting to maximize yield while maintaining soil health and limiting wind erosion. We measure crop performance, greenhouse gas emissions, soil nutrients, and soil moisture to optimize nutrient and water use efficiency.

COMMERCIAL INNOVATION PROGRAM

This program delivers unbiased, trusted results through third-party research services. Farming Smarter specializes in testing products for registration, variety suitability, pest management, plant growth regulators (PGRs), biostimulants, nutrients, and agronomic practices. With over a decade of experience, the program conducts small plot and field-scale trials for companies of all sizes to meet their innovation needs and ensure relevant value to local environments and cropping systems. Farming Smarter ensures customer satisfaction by providing professional consulting, tailored processes, data collection, analysis, and reporting in a professional and confidential manner.

FIELD TESTED PROGRAM

This is where the rubber hits the fields. We often hear that Canada is failing at commercializing its investments in research. Field Tested is designed to ensure new practices and technologies are scalable and usable at the farm level. It uses adaptive on-farm research to prove value and streamline logistics needed to increase productivity and profitability of commercial farms. The program works with processors, businesses, growers' groups, and individual farms to develop opportunities within the value-added irrigated specialty crop industries, including potatoes, fresh peas, sweet corn, seed alfalfa, seed canola, and more.

KNOWLEDGE AND NETWORK PROGRAM

This program connects people with timely and relevant research-based information and provides unique gatherings that promote deep connections through shared experiences. We share information through learning events (Field School, Conference), our biannual magazine, videos, and other online content. Our team stays connected to identify and understand on-farm challenges, guiding our research programs to address issues important to growers and industry in southern Alberta. We drive adoption and adaptation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) on farms.

Goal 1

Conduct practical, unbiased, and science-based applied agriculture research to support innovation on the Canadian prairies

STRATEGIES

COLLABORATE

Work with agriculture stakeholders to develop clear and meaningful research objectives to meet the needs of agriculture producers.

STUDY

Conduct small plot and field scale research to support technology advancement and develop best management practices for value-added, dryland and irrigated crops. Investigate integrated pest management, nutrients, novel crops, equipment/technology, inputs, soil health, irrigation management, cropping systems, alternative inputs and all other relevant needs or opportunities.

COMMERCIALIZE

Perform action-oriented adaptive and applied research needed by farmers, private companies and innovators to commercialize products, practices and technologies for use in prairie crop production systems. Curate and improve emerging technologies using our regional intelligence and on-farm experimentation.

Over 850 research trials completed over the next five years attracting \$15 million in research investment

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Conduct 20 trials testing novel crop suitability, 20 to support herbicide tolerance IPM, 25 trials on irrigation management, 25 trials on specialty crops.
- Conduct 150 on-farm trials over 5 years
- Support 50 farms, grower organizations and valued-added companies to meet their specific research needs and 75 ag businesses to develop their products and technologies for commercialization
- Conduct 500 trials supporting the commercialization of new products or practices.





WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Southern Alberta is a thriving agricultural community of innovators who are adopting and seeing value from the changes they make.
- Our partners and clients are the most profitable and productive in their industries.
- Our research is valued by the scientific community, supported by funders and is published in reputable journals (15 papers submitted over 5 years).
- We are a leading applied research institution (Receive \$15M in research investment)
- We have a wide range of partners in other research institutes, industry partners, producers and agronomists (50 partners per year)
- All key performance indicators (KPIs) outlined in research agreements are accomplished
- Clients, collaborators and companies are repeat customers year after year
- Attract international investment for Ag innovation in southern Alberta. Partner companies develop value added products and get them to market (Commercialize 10 products)
- We drive new industries forward with research for new crops, specialty crops and variety testing

Goal 2

To actively build resilient farms by driving adoption of sustainable practices that are science based, regionally focused and system specific.



STRATEGIES

RELEVANT

Build a conservation knowledge base that clearly identifies issues and opportunities, barriers to adoption and knowledge gaps. Develop an effective learning campaign that includes all relevant agri-environmental, agronomic, social and farm-based knowledge

RELIABLE

Test innovative technologies and practices that improve the sustainability of crop production in real-world on-farm environments

ACHIEVABLE

Develop farm specific processes that drive adoption of environmentally sustainable practices and socio-economic on-farm profitability for all promoted practices



ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Help 50 farms achieve their sustainability goals and further develop the conservation agronomist role.
- Understand and address unique challenges and opportunities on each farm to help them achieve their farm specific conservation goals.
- Address priority concerns associated with dryland and irrigated crop production in southern Alberta.
- Support an environmentally sustainable expansion of potato production in southern Alberta through research and extension.
- Support efficient irrigation management through research and technology development.
- Develop integrated pest management (IPM) tools that reduce pesticide use and save money.
- Staff build expertise in sustainable practices, soil health, 4R practices and climate smart agriculture.
- Research biological / alternative farm inputs & practices.
- Collaborate with regional and national groups interested in developing and promoting sustainable farming practices.



WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Farms are more resilient to adverse weather, changes in policies, and market volatility.
- We are seen as a leader in agronomic conservation practices and adoption.
- Be Canada's foremost expert in irrigated crop management.
- Soil erosion events under irrigation have been minimized or eliminated.
- Farmers are confident in the validity of sustainable products and practices that they incorporate into their farming systems.

Goal 3

*Be Alberta's leading agronomy network
for knowledge and training*

STRATEGIES

CONNECTED

Offer unique opportunities that promote deep connections through shared experiences.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

Dedicated to understanding on-farm challenges to guide our research activities.
Share research findings from our program and others.

SERVICE ORIENTED

Deliver value to individual farms and companies through direct training, on-farm support, consulting, or other services.



ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Provide subscribers with opportunities for staying connected with each other.
- Organize opportunities for networking and encourage connection building locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Focus communication efforts on innovators and early adopters.
- Develop easy-to-consume resources delivered in a way audiences want.
- Active engagement and listening to guide program activities.
- Provide one-on-one on-farm support.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Subscribers see value in being part of our community and advocate on our behalf; increases 5% per year.
- 200 presentations over 5 years that provide research results and practical solutions for implementation.
- 50 practice changes based on our recommendations will be implemented in the next 5 years.
- An average of 1,000 people per year attend a Farming Smarter hosted event.
- Recognized nationally as a leading farm focused innovation hub for crop production.
- Farming Smarter is a preferred contact for media contribution.
- Subscribers obtain CEUs to ensure CCA and Pesticide Applicator License renewal criteria are met.



Goal 4

Peak performance through a People-First Culture



STRATEGIES

A PEOPLE-FIRST CULTURE

We will focus on people first in all aspects of our organization. We will attract, develop, retain and grow a strong and passionate Farming Smarter team. We will lead a community of innovators with a human-centered design.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE

We will enable the doers within and outside of our organization to achieve their goals through concise, professional, structured, efficient and accountable processes.

ADVOCACY THROUGH STORY

We will champion agriculture science & social license through Farming Smarter. We will garner support, resources and investment for agriculture innovation. We will tell our story.

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Diversify income streams by targeting high-profile grants to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- Develop and implement clear financial plans, procedures, frameworks, including reporting and accountability structures.
- Secure suitable land for long term lease or purchase.
- Advocate at all levels of government for public support of agriculture.
- Raise public awareness of agriculture sustainability and innovation.
- Annual development plans for all full-time and seasonal employees.
- Implement comprehensive health & safety and quality assurance programs

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Sustainable and diversified funding/revenue streams.
- Staff and board retention is high with respected performance and impact.
- Farming Smarter is well resourced and equipped.
- Established strategic partnerships.
- Clear governance framework with solid financial and operational reporting procedures.
- A fully integrated safety program that meets Alberta OHS requirements.
- Clear administrative processes that ensure accountability and transparency.
- 20 students gain training and job skills each year.





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