

[Lethbridge Sun Times](#)

A first-hand taste of farming life

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Photo submitted by Farming Smarter Participants at the 2016 Open Farm Days open house hosted by Farming Smarter learn about crops from an agriculture expert. Farming Smarter will host the 2017 open house Aug. 20 at the facility east of Lethbridge.

Most people know that much of the food they eat comes from farms, but many people might not know a lot about what goes into producing that food.

Alberta Open Farm Days are taking place across the province Aug. 19 and 20, giving Albertans a opportunity to learn about food production first-hand by visiting farms and ranches and hearing from the people involved in the industry.

Close to home, the folks at Farming Smarter will be hosting an Open Farm Days open house Sunday, Aug. 20 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at their facility three kilometres east of Lethbridge on Highway 512 (on the left side of the road).

Farming Smarter is a non-profit organization which focuses on applied research that helps southern Alberta crop producers make informed choices around inputs, technology and management practices for their operations.

This will be the second year Farming Smarter has participated in Open Farm Days, which have been held in Canada for more than 10 years. In Alberta, this year will mark the fifth annual event.

The Open Farm Days event at Farming Smarter is an opportunity for people “to come out and learn something about what’s taking place today in agriculture and have a good time doing it,” said Claudette Lacombe, communication manager with Farming Smarter.

Lacombe said about 130 people attended last year’s inaugural open house and they’re hoping for about 300 this year.

The free event will feature a mix of learning sessions and fun activities including a photo scavenger hunt, crop tour, vermiculture demonstration, wagon rides, crafts and games with prizes, and face painting. Kids love farm machinery and there will be equipment they can climb on. The learning sessions will include Living Soils, Seeds and Crops, Bug Battles, Crop Protection and Harvest Basics.

There will also be a barbecue featuring a hotdog or burger, chips and fresh Taber corn for \$5. An ice cream stand will also be operating. Also participating will be the Oldman Watershed Council, Volunteer Lethbridge and local 4-H representatives.

Farming Smarter conducts a number of events through the course of the year but most are aimed at agricultural producers. The Open Farm Days open house is a chance to “reach out to a completely different audience” — an urban audience.

Lacombe said because she grew up in Montreal, “I bring that urban perspective. One of the things I’ve learned over the decades working with the agricultural community is if you enjoy gardening, farmers are a wealth of information.”

A gardener herself, Lacombe said, “I’ve learned so much about soil management, crop rotation, pest management. . . There’s a whole ecosystem in the top 12 inches of soil. There are techniques farmers are using on the land that completely apply to gardening.”

Lacombe said there are a lot of misconceptions about the agriculture industry that make their way into the public realm. Some social media sites “throw out tiny pieces of information that are not 100 per cent accurate. They give a misleading picture of what’s taking place in agriculture today.”

“It’s a very science-based industry,” Lacombe said of agriculture.

“Farmers in southern Alberta are smart, innovative, they’re tech savvy and highly knowledgeable. They’re learning all the time.”

For more about Farming Smarter or the Open Farm Days open house Aug. 20, visit

<https://www.farmingsmarter.com>.

For details about other Open Farm Days events across the province, visit AlbertaOpenFarmDays.com.