

## Farming Smarter brings innovation together

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By Tim Kalinowski.



Farming Smarter participants examine some stalks of experimental dryland varieties of corn at the Cypress County Field Day.--News Photo Tim Kalinowski

Farming Smarter held its annual Field Day in Cypress County on Thursday. The full-day event featured exclusive tours of Farming Smarter's field testing site a few miles east of Veinerville, access to cutting edge dryland varieties, as well as expert knowledge and insight.

"We changed it this year to a full day from a half-day event," explained Farming Smarter general manager Ken Coles. "I think (our research focus) here is all about regional adaptability. We're trying to come up with crops, cropping practices, cropping systems that are going to help farmers be competitive on a global market and be sustainable at the farm level. And so we can continue to adapt and be the best farmers in the world."

Coles kicked off the presentations with a lesson in corn agronomy in a dryland setting, specifically focusing on new varieties being adapted to thrive under southeast Alberta growing conditions.

Coles was followed by Howard Love of Mustard 21, who spoke of Cypress County's great dryland mustard potential, including the growth of a variety called brassica carinata, which has the potential to revolutionize the biofuel and jetliner industry. This was followed later by Mike Gretzinger's presentation on cutting-edge canola research.

"Near Medicine Hat it is a hotter environment so it gets a lot of heat units — the most in the region — but with dryland conditions, less moisture impacts how much advantage you can get out of those heat units," explained Coles during a break between presentations. "The companies that are developing these crops find that Medicine Hat is a good area to test those kinds of products out, because that is the intended growing region where that market will be."

Other presentations on the day were on the Alberta Pulse Growers' "Plot to Field" program, cover forage, crop diseases and hail damage management.

Cypress County co-sponsored the Field Day and provided lunch for participants. The county's agricultural supervisor Jason Storch said the research done near Veinerville is important for the future of agriculture in the area.

"It's fine and dandy for producers from Cypress County to go to Lethbridge, but those are very different growing conditions, as a lot of what they do is under irrigation. In this municipality it is mostly dryland farming. Having an opportunity to do this dryland research has been valuable," he said.