



HAIL TO THE CHIEF: Farming Smarter's hail simulator beats a pea crop, so researchers can study how crops recover and what products might aid/speed the recovery.

Farming Smarter grows ideas

By Stan Ashbee
Sunny South News

Farming Smarter, growing new ideas. The Farming Smarter Association is a not-for-profit registered Canadian charity. Farming Smarter's primary focus is applied research that helps southern Alberta crop producers make informed choices around inputs, technology and management practices for their operations. Their goal is to sustain southern Alberta's land, water, soil and farmers for the benefit of everyone. Farming Smarter is located near the Lethbridge Research and Development Centre on Jail Road, near Lethbridge.

Farming Smarter's secondary focus is making sure southern Alberta crop producers know about the options open to them through every means possible.

Their website, public events, printed and digital media products all contribute to the association's extension efforts, according to information posted on the Farming Smarter website.

"We're actually getting rolling on Year Two and Three of a lot of our own projects we've been working on. Our hail project, this is the second year we've been running that

study. We did some demos with the pulse commission a couple of years ago and now we've got funding from the Alberta Wheat Commission and the Alberta Pulse Growers. We've got a couple of different sets going on," explained Mike Gretzinger, research co-ordinator.

Gretzinger noted the association has beans, peas, wheat and canola hail trials going on, which are going on into Year Two of three.

"What we're doing is, in the pulses specifically, there's been a lot of anecdotal evidence about some of the fungicides increasing yield. They're giving a yield boost after a hail storm or just helping aid the recovery and there's a lot of products within the region marketed at hail recovery. We're artificially damaging the crops using our machine we built and it gives an artificial hail damage. It locks chains down on the crop and then makes it look like there's hail damage. Then we're spraying recovery products to see if there's any effect. We're also just looking at the timing and the damage level of the hail itself. Then we've got crop adjusters coming out and verifying the hail damage levels and then we're looking at the yield effect at different times. There's a

lot of different factors that are interplaying with that project," he added.

According to Gretzinger, Farming Smarter is now on Year Two of three of its precision canola project.

"We're looking at the agronomy of growing canola with a precision planner, basically in the wide-row set up. And looking at different row spacings, seeding rates that would correspond best with that and then looking at some of the implications for safe seeds. It's a pretty neat project," he said.

Hopefully, he said, there are people interested in using that equipment because they might have it already for growing soy beans or corn.

"So they want to know if they can grow canola with it and hopefully that will give us some insight as to what the best set ups are in this region specifically," he said.

The following are Farming Smarter Learning Adventures for 2017 at the Lethbridge site. Lethbridge Plot Hop June 8. Field School June 27-29. Wheat Walk July 20. Open Farm Days Aug. 20. Farming Smarter Conference Dec. 5-6 at the Coast Hotel in Lethbridge.

For details visit online at farmingsmarter.com.