

Conference discusses changes in agriculture industry

By J.W. Schnarr

Dec. 6, 2017

Lethbridge Herald

A long-running two-day conference is working to bring different areas of the agriculture sector together to learn how the industry is changing.



Lewis Baarda, left, and Daniel Donkersgoed from Farming Smarter speak during the Farming Smarter conference at Exhibition Park on Tuesday. Herald photo by Tijana Martin

The Farming Smarter Lethbridge Conference is an annual event which has been held since the early 1990s.

It is an educational event for people in the agriculture industry, from farmers, to agronomists, to people who work in agri-business. It wraps up today at Exhibition Park.

“It’s an opportunity for everyone to come together, and learn about research going on, and different innovative practices taking place throughout the world,” said Jamie Puchinger, assistant manager at Farming Smarter.

Highlighted keynote speakers over the two-day event include Jonathan Gill, from Harper Adams University, U.K., who spoke about the “Hands Free Hectare.”

The project consisted of a hectare of crop planned, planted, grown and harvested using autonomous technology.

“No person stepped foot in the field for the entire

season,” said Puchinger.

Joe Schwarcz, from McGill University, spoke about farming “myths” and what can be done to combat those myths.

“It’s about some of the myths in agriculture,” she said. “And how we can improve the message to the general public about what’s happening in our industry, so there is a bit of a better connection there.”

Brian Innes, from the Canola Council of Canada, will speak on the North American Free Trade Agreement – and how that is going to change moving forward.

Puchinger said each year the event tries to focus on total farm management. This includes inviting guests involved in agronomy-based sciences, as well as those representing opportunities to improve marketing and business management and technology-based farming.

“Farmers generally have this yearning to want to learn,” said Puchinger. “They want to learn how to be more sustainable.

“Less inputs means it’s better for the environment. And they want to make sure the land is as good down the road as it is right now.”

“Events like this allow them to learn, potentially, how to do things different or better,” she added. “It gives them the idea to try different things on their farms as well.”

In addition to learning from the speakers, there are also a number of opportunities for those in the agriculture industry to network – providing opportunities to learn off each other as well.

“We encourage people not only to network with each other, but with industry folk,” said Puchinger.

The event includes live and silent auctions as part of a partnership with the Southern Region 4H. Proceeds from those events will go to fund 4H programs.

“Traditionally, it’s been considered a youth ag organization,” Puchinger said. “It gives them the ability to learn by doing.”

For more information, please visit farmingsmarter.com.