

Open Farm Days Introduce City Residents to Agriculture

Greg Bobinec

City folk had the opportunity to get some dirt under their nails and bugs on their skin Saturday to learn about the world of agriculture and innovation at the third annual Open Farm Day.

Focusing on teaching about dirt-to-table food production, Farming Smarter invited people out to learn from experts in the farm fields about the types of production done in the area and the new technologies being used in the industry.

"We are keeping it kind of basic so people can learn about the different crops and how they are grown and what they are used for," says Ken Coles, general manager of Farming Smarter. "They are able to talk with people who are in the agricultural business about sustainable farming practices and we have some trade shows of various technologies that are being used to improve agriculture."

The event allowed people to get out of the city and take a wagon ride through the crop fields to learn about the different kinds, climb the big equipment to see how they operate, eat some barbecue and have hands-on learning with plants, insects and technology.

Open Farm Days is a nation-wide initiative to bring agriculture professionals and urban neighbourhoods together to streamline communication and to offer industry truths to an audience that might not always receive the right information.

"The general fact is less and less people live on the farm now than there used to be and there is more of a disconnect," says Coles.

"People are concerned about that on its own and this is an opportunity to invite them back. Even taking the wagon tour you were able to see that there is still a connection to agriculture with everyone here within a generation or two and that is great."

Some of the industry professionals who were at the event to talk to people included crop producers, bee and honey farmers, equipment specialists, insect identifiers, drone mapping experts, and a local company called Xarvio which has recently developed an app that allows people to identify a weed growing in a field or garden and how to handle it.

Educating the public on where their food really comes from and what processes it undergoes before being placed on the dinner table is the goal of the Open Farm Days initiative. Across the province people took part in the activity filled day to open their eyes to the real world of agriculture.

Alberta Open Farm Days has been an annual event for six years and continues to grow throughout the province as the curiosity for how our food is made and where it comes from grows.

For more information, you can visit farmingsmarter.com.