

Careful Research, Innovation and Improving the Bottom Line

DECEMBER BURGESS

Farming Smarter

Information you can use right away to improve your bottom line comes from careful research that pays attention to what southern Alberta farmers need to know.

Our industry constantly evolves with technology and agronomy improving our management methods and sustainability each passing day.

A stumbling block in innovation can be a disconnect between those who create and those who use. Jamie Puchinger, assistant general manager for Farming Smarter said that it's a challenge for scientists to effectively communicate the 'how does this affect me today's question on many producers' minds.

That's where Farming Smarter comes in.

"When we take things out of the lab and put it to the test in the field, any limitations in the pure science findings become evident," she said, "It makes it a lot simpler for guys to pick up the technology and put it in place on their land."

Language is a large barrier in this process. Often, there must be an understanding of a topic before you try to implement it.

Our researchers must explain complicated problems and solutions in a way that's general enough that people can understand it, yet know

put through the wringer from an outside source," said Puchinger. "They review it for its scientific rigor and validity and whether they see value in what we want to study or pursue."

Farming Smarter is the midst of starting a few new projects this year. One of which focuses on deep banding immobile nutrients, others talk about cover crops or fusarium.

We also have one in the works that looks at crop rotation.

This is something that even researchers at Farming Smarter struggle with. Our team has access to 60 acres of dryland leased from Lethbridge College, and 150 irrigated acres rented from a local land owner.

In addition, we work with Cypress County and rent three to five acres from a farmer there for small plot trials.

"At this point right now, we're struggling because as farmers we want to keep our rotations – we need a minimum three-year rotation on our plots," she said.

"We don't want to put the plots in the same piece of land more than one every three years and our current size limits how many projects and trials we can do because we only have so much land at this point."

Farming Smarter is looking to purchase land to accommodate its increased size and demand.



Photo courtesy Farming Smarter

Farming Smarter Field School participants get in for a close look at Dr. C. Geddes plots showing weed pressure and crop competition varied by time of seeding in June 2018.

our team understands what we're discussing to the fullest degree. "We want to be the center-piece – putting all the pieces together – we want to have the information easily accessible for farmers and agronomists," she said. "This stands true for industry professionals as well. Puchinger said Farming Smarter strives to connect with all facets of agriculture, wanting a variety of perspectives so, as a community, we can work together to make farming better."

Farming Smarter receives most of our project ideas from the people that attend our events and take an active role within the community. The ideas tumble around between our researchers and participants before ultimately being brought back to the office to be fine-tuned. Once the staff determines the practicality on field, we create a proposal and send it in to various organizations for grants. "We have to get grants to fund our research and once it gets submitted, the idea gets

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