

Farming Smarter receives grants for biobed

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By Heather Cameron

Farming Smarter recently received Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) funding from the environmental stewardship and climate change program for a Biobed Project.

“Pesticides are an integral piece in agriculture and although best management practices exist to reduce environmental impact, they are often still detected in natural water like wetlands, rivers, lakes and groundwater,” says Jamie Puchinger, Assistant Manager at Farming Smarter. “Biobeds provide a safe and effective means of managing pesticide waste disposal.

Puchinger explains a biobed is typically an open tank filled with biomixture like straw, compost and topsoil. A system is set up to slowly trickle or spray pesticide rinsate over the biobeds.

The rinsate provides the soil bacteria and fungi that break down and remove pesticides.

“A biobed is a relatively cheap way for treating pesticide rinsate which can negatively affect our environment,” Puchinger says. “We anticipate there will be many that implement this best management practice.”

According to Puchinger, this project aims to design a large-scale biobed specifically adapted to prairie growers. A mobile unit will be built to promote the adoption of on-farm pesticide rinsate biobeds and demonstrate their potential in helping food producers reduce water contamination by pesticides.

“On-farm pesticide rinsate biobeds have the potential to remove up to 98% of pesticide active ingredients applied to them from pesticide rinsates, washings, spills and disposals, thereby protecting waters from contamination,” Puchinger says. “We want to provide this information on these systems, the components (parts list) to encourage adoption and construction on private farms across Alberta.”

Puchinger says Farming Smarter will be building a full sized system at their site, as well as a mobile unit on a trailer to be showcased at various locations. The mobile unit will be lent out for field days, tours, workshops and to farmers who would like to use it as a model to build their own system.

“We hope to encourage construction of these biobed systems across Alberta,” Puchinger says.