

Soil scientist joins Farming Smarter team

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Farming Smarter

Soil Scientist Gurbir Dhillon Ph.D. will work directly for southern Alberta's farmers through Farming Smarter by leading research projects for the organization.

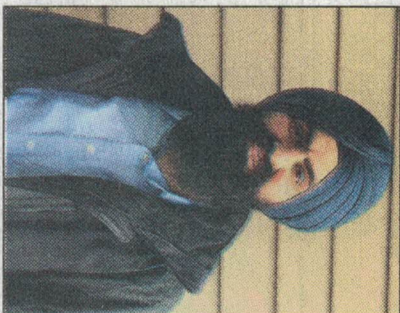
Dr. Dhillon brings a wealth of experience in soil research including how various agronomic practices impact CO2 emissions and how organic matter promotes soil health. Farming Smarter is excited to leverage Dr. Dhillon's soil science expertise on select projects.

In addition, Dr. Dhillon will dedicate his research skills to designing and implementing a wide variety of innovative research programs to improve the sustainability and productivity of crop production in Southern Alberta.

"I really like Farming Smarter's producer-oriented research vision," agrees Dr. Dhillon. "Being in touch with producers - talking directly to them about what problems they are facing and then communicating answers that could help them - appeals to me a lot. Working on producers' behalf adds immediacy and urgency to the work."

April 1st, Farming Smarter welcomes Dhillon to its team. The addition is an important move forward for farmer-focused applied research, says Farming Smarter's general manager, Ken Coles.

"Dr. Dhillon comes from a practical, relevant program, and I appreciate that he's a pragmatist - he's excited to work on projects of direct benefit to producers," says



Coles. "We recognize that in order to provide unbiased, useful agricultural research to producers, we have to first meet funders' requirements. We've had funders pushing back saying 'what we do isn't 'real science' because we focus on applied research and extension."

"I strongly disagree, but I'm also willing to do what's necessary to secure funding."

Coles says that some funders declined Farming Smarter's project applications citing a need for more proof of the projects' scientific rigor.

"Boasting a scientist in a permanent position will help us further build our name and reputation," says Coles. "If we can capture more funding, we can ultimately do more work for farmers."

Many (if not most) of Farming Smarter's projects are scientifically rigorous enough to publish in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Until now, Farming Smarter hasn't prioritized publication.

However, Coles says having Dr. Dhillon summarize and publish some of the organization's project reports will ultimately produce added benefits for farmers.

"As our organization grows, there's value in publishing our work in journals even if that's not our main priority."

"Publication adds a level of quality control to the projects; it offers opportunities to establish partnerships with the scientific community; and it helps us prove our research rigor to funders: all of which are important to increase the value we can offer farmers."

To Mask Or Not To Mask

Confusion on masking policy reigns in U.S.



Photo by Travis Heine via Wichita Eagle via AP

A hay bale along the edge of a cattle pasture near Florence, N.C., is adorned with a face and surgical mask, Sunday, April 5, 2020, amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to release a new guidance that many people in the United States should start wearing face coverings when out in public, raising concerns that it could cause a sudden run on masks.

U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, on the other hand, wrote on Twitter at the end of February that people should "STOP BUYING MASKS" and said they were not effective in protecting the general public.