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FARMING
SMARTER



STRATEGIC PLAN | 2020-2024





WE CHANGE THE WAY PEOPLE FARM

WHO IS FARMING SMARTER?

Farming Smarter is a farmer-led, registered Canadian charity that focuses on projects to improve the resilience of crop production in Alberta. A team of nine dedicated staff and a gang of seasonal students perform the work of the organization.

A competency-based board with majority producers leads Farming Smarter through policy governance. It serves innovative producers, agronomists and agricultural stakeholders while partnering with like-minded organizations involved in agriculture innovation, applied research and knowledge transfer in production agriculture.

Its head office just east of Lethbridge puts it amid research by Agriculture Canada, Lethbridge College, and industry. It has satellite research sites in other southern Alberta areas.

Guiding principles

- Scientifically sound, practical, unbiased research
- Responsive to subscriber and stakeholder needs
- Open attitude toward partnerships
- Concise and easily accessible information
- Fun and interactive learning

WHAT WE DO

We inspire and empower innovation in agriculture by bridging ideas, conducting practical research and sharing knowledge & wisdom. We apply, adapt and encourage adoption of innovative crop technologies and management practices that make farming successful and sustain environmental, social and economic health.

WE STUDY **WE TEACH** **WE CHALLENGE**





**WE SHARE
WE CONNECT
WE BREAK BARRIERS**



Our Goals

- 1 BUILD A STABLE AND GROWING RESOURCE BASE**
- 2 ENHANCE THE RECOGNIZED VALUE OF FARMING SMARTER**
- 3 DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY, IMPACTFUL AND INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH TO WESTERN CANADIAN FARMERS**
- 4 FIELD TESTED ADVANCES AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES THROUGH ON-FARM RESEARCH**
- 5 BECOME THE LEADING CONTRACT RESEARCH COMPANY IN ALBERTA**
- 6 BE ALBERTA'S LEADING AGRONOMY NETWORK FOR KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING**



1

BUILD A STABLE & GROWING RESOURCE BASE

STRATEGIES

- Secure permanent land for projects
- Increase leveraging opportunities through partnerships
- Develop marketing strategies for revenue generating activities
- Build a respected and valued brand
- Actively monitor sources and types of funding
- Develop and implement major and annual fundraising campaigns
- Access employment grants to hire enthusiastic summer students

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Determine research priority needs, develop projects and apply for funding
- Conduct yearly staff training to further business objectives
- Secure \$2M to enhance research infrastructure
- Increase annual budget to \$2.5M
- Increase annual research grant revenue to \$750,000
- Increase annual industry support and contract research to \$750,000
- Increase annual revenue from subscriptions and event registrations to \$500,000
- Increase annual revenue from donations to \$20,000
- Increase annual revenue from Field Tested Program to \$200,000
- Cultivate strong relationships with municipal districts & counties
- Cultivate strong relationships with crop commissions
- Actively pursue and develop industry and academic relationships to capture contract and collaborative research opportunities
- Actively pursue local relationships for donations and in-kind contributions
- Keep local municipalities up to date on local program requests and on-going projects



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Secured a minimum half section as a permanent home for Farming Smarter
- Established, thriving partnerships with post secondary institutions, crop commissions, industry, all government levels and our community
- Thriving, fiscally secure and impactful association
- List of active donors and supporters
- We have state of the art equipment and resources supported by capital replacement fund
- Farming Smarter is an employer of choice with skilled agriculture professionals
- Double core support from provincial government

2

ENHANCE THE RECOGNIZED VALUE OF FARMING SMARTER

STRATEGIES

- Develop reciprocal relationships with clients & collaborators
- Act as a relationship broker for the agricultural community
- Build provincial voice through FarmRite collaboration
- Communicate value of practical research to governments and industry
- Promote consumer awareness that Alberta producers use environmentally sound management practices to produce safe, affordable food
- Establish a culture that ensures exceptional work ethic

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Enhance annual Smart Partner program
- Conduct annual survey to determine needs and check alignment
- Create advocacy plans for agriculture, urban, and government audiences
- Lead development of FarmRite advocacy plans
- Foster partnerships and collaborative projects
- Publish peer reviewed papers for all Farming Smarter led projects
- Continue to grow Open Farm Day event





WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- 500 paid subscribers
- Agriculture industry stakeholders seek to work with Farming Smarter
- Farming Smarter becomes recognized as an integral part of an Agriculture Innovation System
- Southern Alberta MLAs visit Farming Smarter
- Alberta MLA Rural Caucus visits annually
- Use leading-edge communication tools
- 10 peer reviewed articles published
- Farming Smarter brand becomes recognized beyond the agricultural industry
- 500 participants attend our annual Open Farm Day event



3

DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY, IMPACTFUL & INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH TO WESTERN CANADIAN FARMERS

STRATEGIES

- Conduct practical and innovative small-plot research to improve the productivity and profitability of crop production systems in western Canada with a special focus on the identified research priorities of Farming Smarter
- Conduct research to lead and enhance the growth and adaptation of novel crops and value-added crop industries in western Canada
- Develop research strategies to improve the sustainability, environmental impact, and soil health of crop production systems in western Canada
- Deliver and maintain impeccable research operations and data collection with highly trained staff
- Collaborate with Canadian scientists on agricultural research projects
- Network and collaborate with key stakeholders within the agricultural industry to identify and conduct research on regional agricultural problems and opportunities in southern Alberta



ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Annually conduct 75–80 trials, including up to 20 regionally important research projects in collaboration or led by Farming Smarter
- Ensure top-quality research through regular staff training, effective protocol development, and trial audits
- Enhance research productivity of Farming Smarter through hiring of additional staff including two scientists
- Collaborate with the Lethbridge College on federal grants and by hosting at least two graduate student (M.Sc./Ph.D.) thesis projects
- Continually assess the needs and opportunities of south Alberta farmers and adopted practices stemming from our research and extension through networking, surveying, and communicating with the industry
- Publication of interim and final project reports through Farming Smarter website
- Publication of peer-reviewed articles based on research projects in scientific journals

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Our research priorities receive support through federal and provincial grant investments
- At least two publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals annually from research projects led by Farming Smarter
- Farming Smarter employees give 10 presentations at agriculture conferences in western Canada annually
- Five scientists/research organizations from western Canada collaborate with Farming Smarter on research projects annually
- The agricultural community turns to Farming Smarter for information on crop production, pest management, and soil health
- Regional agricultural media endorse Farming Smarter as expert information sources in agriculture
- Annual surveys verify that western Canadian farmers adopt advanced practices based on Farming Smarter extension.

4

FIELD TESTED ADVANCES AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES THROUGH ON-FARM RESEARCH

STRATEGIES

- Conduct on-farm research trials to field validate compelling and promising small-plot research
- Use field research to support innovators through evaluation and development of new products/technologies
- Target large agricultural operations to customize on-farm research programs
- Develop creative ways to add value to on-farm research
- Develop a sustainable business model for Field Tested





ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Always explore a Field Tested component for Farming Smarter research projects
- Target research scientists to include a field scale component in research projects
- Develop Field Tested as an innovation incubator
- Build a Field Tested marketing plan with targets for researchers, large scale farmers, agronomists, industrial innovators & public
- Prove the value of field scale research investment

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Farming Smarter's research projects include field scale trial components
- Annually, three research scientists approach Farming Smarter to conduct field scale research projects/components
- Each year Field Tested conducts 10 field trials that ground proof technologies for market
- Three farms rely on Farming Smarter to run field trials annually that improve agronomy, profitability, etc.
- Industry recognizes Field Tested as the Go To provider of on-farm research
- Field Tested is a sustainable and autonomous arm of Farming Smarter's research program



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BECOME THE LEADING CONTRACT RESEARCH COMPANY IN ALBERTA

STRATEGIES

- Cultivate strong long-term client relationships
- Construct categories for greater focus and clear options for clients
- Provide clients unbiased, reliable, and cutting-edge research that equips them to produce high quality products for the agriculture industry
- Create a comprehensive marketing plan

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Deliver high-quality data that protects proprietary information
- Engage a business planning professional(s) to ensure the strategic goal success
- Review, refine, and prioritize our research specialties
- Annually review research plans in conjunction with other Farming Smarter business units
- Develop a program specific client management plan to ensure long lasting relationships
- Manage our website content and published material to have meaningful information for clients
- Offer competitive and fair market prices



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Contract revenue is \$500,000 per year
- Established a consistent pricing system for trials/treatments
- Clearly defined categories to market to industry
- A dynamic client list that supports our financial goals
- Website page reflects our reliability, flexibility and diverse skill set
- A library of testimonial videos showcasing our capabilities and strengths
- Companies in Alberta and Saskatchewan cold call us to work for them

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BE ALBERTA'S LEADING AGRONOMY NETWORK FOR KNOWLEDGE & TRAINING

STRATEGIES

- Provide unbiased research results from our program and collaborators
- Focus efforts on innovators and those that value our information
- Provide plain language information through modern communication tools and trends
- Develop the Smart Partner Program
- Create digital and live opportunities for conversations that highlight questions, challenges and solutions within our community of agricultural leaders
- Design our communication program to bring ideas together and drive future research
- Provide opportunities for students to get involved in Farming Smarter research
- Increase recognized value of extension

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Our e-news subscription list grows to 500 subscribers & 2500 followers
- 2,500 participants access field events annually
- 500+ attendees at each conference
- People outside of agriculture recognize the value of the industry
- More organizations turn to Farming Smarter as a source of information/collaboration
- Online content impressions increase 5% per year
- Local and agriculture media attend our events
- 75 popular press stories published per year
- Farming Smarter clients are highly skilled and armed with up-to date knowledge gained through our efforts
- Annually offer all Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) CCA, Pesticide applicator, CCSC and P. Ag requirements for subscribers

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

- Develop communication and marketing strategies to share research findings
- Tailor information & events to specific Farming Smarter subscriber needs
- Use our field events to provide hands-on learning that is engaging and relevant
- Use our conferences to provide in-depth information about Alberta crop production
- Create networking & feedback opportunities at all our events
- Advocate for agriculture to non-farming residents
- Maintain good relationships with clients, funders, Partners, collaborators, and all relevant stakeholders
- Survey Farming Smarter subscribers & audiences to gauge interests and satisfaction
- Offer practicum placements to post-secondary media students
- Build customer profiles in CRM to facilitate targeting sales and fundraising campaigns





TOGETHER, WE CAN CHANGE THE WAY PEOPLE FARM

You can be a forerunner leading all others toward the practices, crops, equipment and agronomy that will transform Alberta agriculture.

Be prepared to meet any challenge with an Agronomy Smarts subscription to Farming Smarter!





Subscribe online at
farmingsmarter.com