



Agri-News

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When finalizing crop plans, don't forget pulses

Growers who are finalizing plans for this upcoming crop season should consider including pulse crops as part of their rotation. Pulse crops have numerous economic, environmental and human health benefits to society.

Pulse crops are a group of annual grain legumes that includes field pea, lentil, chickpea, faba bean, dry bean and lupin. These crops form a unique, beneficial relationship with certain bacteria isolated from the soil known as rhizobia. These rhizobia are found on root nodules and, as a result, these plants produce their own nitrogen from the air.

"The most obvious economic positive of pulse crops in the rotation is that they fix nitrogen for themselves from the air," says Mark Olson, provincial pulse industry development specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Nitrogen is by far the most important nutrient for crop growth, and the nutrient required in the largest quantity by all crops. Crops that are not legumes, such as wheat, barley and canola, must have high rates of manufactured nitrogen, as well as other nutrients, applied which is a cash output for growers and affects profitability."

For example, a 40 bushel per acre field pea crop (the average Alberta yield) would require an equivalent of 120 lbs per acre of nitrogen for growth, but since field pea is a legume crop, 90 per cent (0.9) or 108 lbs per acre is made by the crop itself under optimum conditions in Year 1. The general rule is that for every bushel of field pea harvested the 'nitrogen equivalent' of approximately 1.0 lb of nitrogen per bushel is available.

"This same 40 bushel per acre field pea crop would provide an additional nitrogen equivalent benefit of 40 lbs per acre for the crop following," says Olson. "Combing the savings of Year 1 (108 lbs) with the nitrogen equivalent benefit in Year 2 (40 lbs) would equate to approximately 150 lbs per acre of actual

nitrogen savings over course of two years. At a nitrogen price of 0.60 (60¢/lb actual N) this is \$90 or \$45 per acre per year."

Another economic advantage is the yield increase for crops following a pulse crop in the rotation. A review of the research literature examining yields following a pulse crop is abundant and clear. In Western Canada, researchers have conclusively seen higher yields of canola (15 to 96 per cent increase), wheat (20 to 47 per cent increase) and barley (41 to 52 per cent

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increase) in the year following grain legume crops compared to growing the crop on its own stubble kind. Unfortunately, this economic gain is more often not attributed to the pulse crop. Additionally, there is an increase in protein of the crop that is placed on pulse crop stubble and, in the case of wheat where protein premiums are paid, this results in increased profits to the grower.

“The environmental benefits stem from the reduction in nitrogen fertilizer use in the year of growing the pulse and in the year following the pulse crop,” says Olson. “Overall, the need for manufactured nutrients is substantially lower reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with the manufacturing of fertilizer, transportation of fertilizer, and application of fertilizer by tractors that burn fossil fuels thus minimizing the crop’s energy footprint.

“Moreover, 80 per cent of the grain legume crops in Alberta are grown in a reduced tillage system, meaning fewer tillage passes in the field, again further reducing the impact of agricultural practices on the environment.”

Increased use of pulse crops will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cropping systems, including reduced CO₂ emissions, as well as, N₂O, CH₄, NO and NO₂ emissions at the different steps of manufacturing, transportation and application of products.

A last point to be made for pulse crops and the resultant food products are the indirect benefits to human health. Pulses have a low glycemic index which is particularly beneficial for people with diabetes. In addition, researchers have attributed anti-carcinogenic effects to various components contained within pulse crops including dietary fibre and folate. Regular consumption of pulses may contribute to reduced serum cholesterol and triglycerides which are the two major risk factors in cardiovascular disease. Eating grain legumes regularly may also reduce the risk of heart disease via favourable effects on blood pressure, blood glucose and insulin moderation and the likelihood of obesity.

“In conclusion, growers should consider including pulses in the crop rotation as there are multiple benefits to themselves as well as greater society,” says Olson. “It will not only make their farms more profitable, but also help save the environment and contribute to better human health.”

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Ropin’ the Web adds RSS feeds

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development is making it easier for Albertans to stay in touch with the latest news and reports by featuring a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) news feed on Ropin’ the Web, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development’s

website. RSS feeds contain frequently updated content published by a website and are usually used for news.

Subscribing to the this RRS news feed is easy. Simply visit the website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca and when you click on the *Information Tab* at the top of any of the webpages on the site, you’ll see an orange RSS graphic – Agri-News RSS Feed. Click on this button, and you’ll be able to subscribe to Agri-News and Call of the Land RSS feeds.

Each news item contains the time and date of publishing, the title, a brief summary and a link to the full news article on this web site. RSS feeds can be automatically read within the latest versions of the most common web browsers: Microsoft’s Internet Explorer (version 7), Apple’s Safari Browser or Mozilla Firefox.

Alternatively, you may click on the orange RSS graphic for the feed you want, copy the URL from the address bar of your browser and then paste it in the appropriate field of your RSS Reader.

Contents, including news publications on the website can also now be organized by audience. This feature also applies to the RSS feeds including Agri-News, Call of the Land, Market Reviews and additional news publications created daily by Alberta Agriculture.

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Over 100 4-H scholarships available

This year the Alberta 4-H Scholarship program will award over 100 scholarships with a total value of more than \$80,000. The Alberta 4-H Scholarship program awards past or present Alberta 4-H members for their outstanding 4-H achievement, community involvement, leadership and communication skills. Each scholarship has a set of criteria that is determined by the scholarship sponsor, a recipient is then awarded to best suit that criteria based on the information that the applicant provides. A selection committee determines Alberta 4-H scholarship recipients in early fall.

To be eligible for an Alberta 4-H scholarship, the applicant:

- must be a past or present member of an Alberta 4-H Club(s)
- may apply for 4-H scholarships every year that they are a full time post-secondary student at an officially recognized institution
- must fill out the Alberta 4-H application form completely and accurately
- must submit the 2008 application form by the application deadline (postmarked May 5, 2008)

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- must be enrolled in and attend a post secondary institution as a full-time student

It's easy to apply. Download the application form from the 4-H website at www.4h.ab.ca. Tips, hints and instructions on how to fill out the application are also listed on the website.

Deadline to apply is postmarked **May 5, 2008**. Submit application to 4-H Foundation of Alberta, RR 1, Westeros, AB T0C 2V0.

The decision of the committee is final. Recipients are notified after the selection date. Scholarship funds will be released between November 1 and December 31, 2008.

A number of regional scholarships are also available in addition to provincial ones. Visit the 4-H website for more information on regional and non 4-H scholarships.

For more information or assistance in downloading, contact the 4-H Foundation of Alberta at 780-682-2153, toll-free at 1-877-682-2153 or e-mail foundation@4hab.com.

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Farm Fresh – what do you want to find and where do you want to go?

There's a new mapping tool available on Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website, Ropin' the Web, that helps connect consumers with local producers. The Farm Fresh Producers' map uses Google mapping technology and data from the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association to visually display the locations of farmers selling their products directly to consumers.

"More and more people are expressing an interest in buying local food products," says Lisa Guenther, web editor with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton.

"Providing information to help connect those consumers to local producers is becoming more important. Consumers looking to buy vegetables, fruit, meat, or specialty products directly from Alberta farmers can now use the new Farm Fresh Producer's mapping tool to connect with local producers in specific areas of the province."

Using the convenient drop down menus, the map lets the user search for producers by region and product. Products are organized into four main categories on the drop down menus – fruit, vegetables, protein or specialties. From there, choose produce from apples to wild black cherries in the fruit category; from asparagus to zucchini in the vegetable category;

from beef to turkey in the protein category; and, from alpacas or bedding plants to shrubs or trees in the specialties category. Producers matching the search criteria are displayed as red markers on the map.

"As well as location information, the map includes contact and product information, along with driving directions," says Joan Gregorwich, who, along with Don Gregorwich, administers the Farm Fresh Producers Association website. "The map also states whether the producer attends farmers' markets or runs a u-pick operation. This information makes it easier for consumers to purchase products."

To access the Farm Fresh Producer's map, go to Alberta Agriculture's website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca, click on the *Map* tab and then on *Alberta Farm Fresh Producers*. Once you have the mapping tool on screen, you can narrow your search by picking a region of the province or see what's available throughout the province. The direct web address for the map is at: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app21/rtw/ff/farm_fresh_map.jsp#30.

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New directory a beneficial tool for students and Alberta producers

The Green Certificate Employment Directory is a new online tool designed specifically for agricultural employers seeking employees who already have high-demand skills and students seeking jobs and training opportunities. This free directory brings together the information needed by Alberta producers who are hiring agricultural workers, as well as information for students looking for jobs that will enhance their training and experience in agriculture. It also contains general information about the Green Certificate training process.

"This new employment directory will help link knowledgeable trainers with trainees who are enrolled in the Green Certificate program," says Nicole Hornett, Green Certificate program assistant, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The Alberta Green Certificate is designed as an apprenticeship-style training program. It will now be easier for students to find trainers and work experience to build relevant skills in their specialty of choice."

Now that the directory is up and running, the Green Certificate team is reaching out to help raise awareness of the directory in communities around the province. They are attending trade shows, putting up posters and sending out postcards all in an effort to encourage the use of this new and innovative tool.

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Posting a listing in the directory is fast, easy and free. A navigation bar on the left hand side of the screen brings up options for:

- posting job opportunities that can range from seasonal farm hands to helpers for farmers' markets to irrigation specialists listings
- browsing current jobs
- viewing workers who are available and looking for work experience and training
- viewing the training farms available

"Job seekers can post a profile for prospective employers to read, allowing them to highlight education, training and experience in agriculture," says Hornett.

The *Getting Started Guide* on the webpage makes it easy to learn how to use the directory and start a search for the right employee or employer. To view the directory and to post and explore opportunities in agriculture, visit www.agriculture.alberta.ca/GCED.

Employers without access to the internet, can fax or mail job postings to the Green Certificate team by calling 780-427-4183, toll-free in Alberta by dialling 310-0000 first.

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Agri-News Briefs

Pruning workshops

Arboriculture Canada is delivering two different one-day training modules in Edmonton and Calgary. The courses will help people understand trees and to introduce modern pruning techniques and terminology. Each of these courses includes eight hours of instruction and there are eight CEU credits available for ISA Certified Arborists and Board Certified Master Arborists.

- **Chainsaw Safety & Cutting Techniques** – chainsaws are one of the most useful as well as dangerous tools that a worker can use. This course is designed to educate personnel who use a chainsaw about safety, maintenance, use and handling. Participants will gain an understanding about what contributes to accidents and how to avoid them. Hands-on and practical work planning strategies will be coached and practiced in this course. There is a strong focus on personal safety, risk assessment and accident prevention. Training workers and developing skills that reduce variables and mitigate risks associated with chainsaws and cutting techniques is the general theme of this course. This course is being held in Edmonton on April 1, 2008, and in Calgary on April 4, 2008.
- **Tree Pruning** – this course is designed to help attendees understand trees. During the day-long course, modern pruning techniques and terminology as well as tree biology, physiology, structure, dynamics will be introduced. Natural target pruning will be taught, demonstrated and practiced. Pruning tools and equipment will also be discussed. This course is being held in Edmonton on April 2, 2008, and in Calgary on April 3, 2008.

Registration cost for each of these one-day courses is \$325.00 (plus 5% GST). For more information or to register for these programs, contact Arboriculture Canada toll-free at 1-877-268-8733f or e-mail nancy@arborcanada.com and request a registration form and curriculum. Registration forms and a full course schedule are also available online at www.arborcanada.com.

The Power of the Land

The farmers and ranchers of the Peace Country are an integral part of the community. Last fall, the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market hosted a **Power of the Land** fund raiser event at the Grande Prairie Regional College. The event was so well received that the Peace River Organic Producers Association (PROPA) is offering a similar but expanded **Power of the Land** program in the Kiwanis Performing Arts Centre, Dawson Creek on March 30, 2008. The show is a combination of live, original music, poetry, and visual images focusing on the power of the land...how it feeds our bodies and our spirits with its bounty and its beauty. After the Grande Prairie portion of the programme, PROPA invites attendees to enjoy refreshments and browse the displays of artistic creativity and a variety of foods produced locally in the Peace Country. In addition, the event will feature a compilation of local area poets and musicians, who will be performing against a backdrop of Don Pettit's stunningly beautiful images of the Peace Country. Admission by donation. Doors open at 1:30 p.m., and the event begins 2:00 p.m. For further information contact Patricia McIsaac at (780) 351-2432 or fax: (780) 351-2070.