



Agri-News

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Report Shows Value of No-Till

A new report compiled by Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL), with funding from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Alberta Environment, and Climate Change Action Fund, chronicles the value that Albertans derive from the move to no-till seeding systems. The report, co-authored by Dr. Mirza Baig of Consulting Options, Edmonton, and Peter Gamache, former Team Leader of RTL, is based on peer-reviewed research, and is one of the legacies left behind by RTL, which ceased operations in August 2009.

“The primary objective of this report was to summarize all the economic, agronomic and environmental benefits of no-till in Western Canada with special emphasis on Alberta, explains Baig. “A secondary objective was to identify gaps in our current knowledge about no-till in Alberta, and apply information from elsewhere in North America to fill these gaps.”

The adoption of conservation tillage technology since the 1980s has been one of the most remarkable changes in the production of crops on the Canadian Prairies. Between 1991 and 2006, no-till farming acreages in Alberta rose from 0.6 million to 9.0 million acres, an increase of 1,358 per cent (Stats Canada, 2006). No-till farming systems are popular in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Peace River block of British Columbia because they improve the physical, chemical and biological properties of the soil, and provide substantial savings on fuel, farm machinery-life and labour costs.

Key findings include:

- increased grain yield of 3.5 per cent in wheat, 6.2 per cent in barley, 7.95 per cent in flax, 4.6 per cent in peas and 13 per cent in lentils
- a significant reduction in labour cost (up to 80 per cent), fuel consumption (up to 80 per cent), and machinery use
- soil conservation with reduced tillage has reduced the risk of soil erosion to a small proportion of agricultural land

- no-till increases water infiltration into the soil, reduces sediment and pesticide losses that would otherwise enter the watershed, and may reduce phosphorus and nitrogen loss
- land converted to no-till sequesters atmospheric CO₂ into the soil to reduce greenhouse gas and enhances the carbon sink of soils

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- studies have shown that no-till farming practices have a greater abundance and diversity of wildlife, including songbirds, ducks, small mammals and soil arthropods
- no-till enhances the physical, chemical and biological properties in the soil, resulting in greater agricultural sustainability

An Executive Summary and complete report can be found at www.reducedtillage.ca

The Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL) program was developed as a sustainable production initiative. The unique partnership had broad-based farmer, industry, educational, wildlife and government support. The partners pooled their expertise and resources to provide an extension program focused on improving the environmental and economic sustainability of farming in Alberta. RTL operated with five extension agronomists located throughout Alberta.

The Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) is a provincial association of non-profit producer groups dedicated to enhancing the sustainability and profitability of agriculture in Alberta.

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Local Marketing – Is it for you?

Alberta local marketers or those considering starting or expanding their business and looking for direction may be interested in training sessions being offered by The Business Link. These sessions are part of the small business brown bag presentations which The Business Link offers across the province. The sessions are offered free on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. at The Business Link in Edmonton and Calgary and various locations around Alberta via video conferencing.

These brown bag sessions are a great way to extend business development training to Alberta's rural communities. The 2009-10 fall line up has eight streams areas ranging from general business, human resources and succession planning. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development is sponsoring the agriculture info stream which includes the following topics on the last Thursday of the month:

- **Getting Started In Farm Direct Marketing** – September 24, 2009 – a farm direct marketing enterprise may be just the thing for those planning to add value to an existing agriculture operation or those who are new to the industry. Selling direct to consumers takes a special person and provides unique benefits including a long-term trust relationship with your customers, unmatched return rate and immediate feedback on new items. This session will uncover the latest trends and drivers in the local market, discuss what it means to be market focused and investigate the step-by-step development of a farm direct marketing business.
- **How To Sell To Restaurants And Institutions** – October 29, 2009 – selling to restaurants or institutions is a natural step for many farm direct marketers. Learn how to access the foodservice market, find out what chefs are looking for, determine the service chefs need and explore practical strategies for adding a foodservice profit centre. Hear what works and what others have learned from their experience.
- **Ag Tourism Clusters: Marketing Collaboratively For Success** – November 26, 2009 – discover the success of collaborative relationships through the cluster development process. Farmers and ranchers who partner with operators in their local area can stretch marketing dollars and increase business profile and profits. Working together can have a bigger impact and attract more tourists to rural sites through driving route events, discovery maps, operator familiarization tours, and regional cuisine dinners. Create experiences for people by reconnecting them with their country roots and helping them learn where their food comes from and get a sense of stewardship with the land.
- **Discovering Alberta Local Markets** – December 17, 2009 – food that is grown, processed, and prepared in Alberta is good for consumers and enhances profit at the farm gate. In this session, learn what is happening in the Alberta local market, who's involved, how to access local food experiences and understand the scope of the local market opportunity. Go outside your box and eat, shop and experience local food.

To learn more or to attend one of these brown bag sessions, visit The Business Link's website at www.canadabusiness.ab.ca/brownbag.cfm

The 2009-10 line-up and all the location options are also posted on the website. Call the regional site prior to the session to check availability and to reserve seating. For additional information on developing your business, contact one of Alberta Agriculture's New Venture Specialist by calling toll free 310-FARM (3276).

*Contact: Ag-Information Centre
310-FARM (3276)*

Capturing Feed Grain and Forage Opportunities 2009

New Market Realities in the Livestock Industry is the theme of this year's Capturing Feed Grain and Forage Opportunities conference. This 4th biennial conference is being held in Red Deer on December 9 and 10, 2009.

"All livestock and feed producers, as well as industry agronomists and businesses involved in the production forage crops, livestock marketing, health or feeding are welcome to attend the conference," says Stephanie Kosinski, with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD). "The industry and individual businesses have been faced with increasing challenges over the past few years. In many instances, this has meant tighter margins forcing producers to find new ways to reduce production costs and maximize their return on animals, forage and other marketed products.

"This conference has been designed to help producers address these challenges by including topics such as current and future market trends, business arrangements and marketing, managing risk, animal nutrition, carbon credits, and agencies and programs available to increase the viability of your operation. The conference will provide decision-making tools, which will help attendees with their bottom line."

The agenda for the conference features high calibre speakers. On the livestock market side, Anne Dunford, Gateway Livestock Exchange, will be discussing the current and future situations in the Canadian beef industry. Brent McEwan, with ARD, will cover the current status of livestock traceability in Alberta and will also discuss where it's going. Diane McCann-Hiltz, ARD, will examine what meat cuts and products consumers are putting their dollars down on in the grocery store. Christoph Weder, Prairie Heritage Beef, and Keith Robertson, Northwest Consolidated Beef Producers Ltd., will discuss different cattle marketing options available to producers in the province. Sean McGrath, Creo Episteme Ltd., and Dr. John Basarab, ARD, will look at ways to add value to your calves through breeding, feeding, and managing.

Brenda Schoepp, Beeflink, will provide insights into how to sustain production and be profitable in the current market situation. Other speakers will highlight current and future funding opportunities in Alberta. Kerrienne Koehler-Munro, ARD, will look at the carbon offset market, while Marcia Hewitt-Fisher, ARD, will touch on the numerous Growing Forward programs available to producers and the industry at large. Finally, Morris Seiferling, Land Use Secretariat, will give an overview of the newly implemented Land-use Framework and the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*.

For more information on the conference, contact the Ag-Info Centre toll-free at 310-FARM (3276), the Chinook Applied Research Association at 403-664-3777 or by checking out the Coming Events on ARD's website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca

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Grazing Training in Alberta

The Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program (SGMP) assists producers in improving their forage operations through training. Experienced grazing mentors work directly with producers for either eight or 16 hours, to develop a grazing plan tailored to the needs of the producer.

A grazing mentor is a respected producer peer with extensive grazing management experience and knowledge. As a mentor, they may suggest grazing management options to help a producer improve their profits, forage productivity, and land and water resources. The producer pays \$100 and the program will pay the balance for the grazing mentor's mentoring and travel expenses. Approximately 16 hours of mentorship will be provided. Or the producer pays \$50 and the program pays the grazing mentor's mentoring and travel expenses for eight hours of mentorship.

The third option is for four to six producers to meet for a six-hour group session with a grazing mentor. The cost is then \$30 per person and the program pays the balance for the grazing mentor's mentoring and travel expenses.

Funding for the SGMP is provided by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development through the Growing Forward Initiative. To find out more about the program, contact the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) office at 780-416-6046 or visit the Website at www.areca.ab.ca

ARECA is a not-for-profit organization working with producers to enhance and improve their operations through access to field research and new technology. It includes 17 member associations focused on applied research, demonstrations and extension in the areas of forages, annual crop and livestock production, and acts as a strong united voice for producers by speaking on their behalf to industry leaders and government representatives. Each member association delivers programs and develops projects that address the concerns and priorities of producers in their specific region. For further information on ARECA, visit the Council's website at www.areca.ab.ca

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Economic Impact of Hunting and Fishing Activities in Alberta

Hunting and fishing represent one of the great attractions of rural Alberta with hunters and anglers supporting rural development through expenditures at small town cafes, motels, gas stations, and on other supplies and services. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development provided a grant of \$25,000 to the Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation to undertake a study to quantify this economic impact.

In 2008, over \$800 million was spent by hunter and anglers and related conservation organizations in Alberta. This included approximately \$300 million on recurring direct hunting and fishing expenditures, and \$501 million on capital equipment expenditures.

That same year there were 105,057 licensed hunters in the province, and 211,666 licensed anglers. With the addition of unlicensed senior and youth anglers, the total number is estimated at 287,511 anglers.

This table highlights the approximate economic impact of these activities including value added impact (increase in the Gross Provincial Product), wages and salaries, employment, and taxes.

	Direct Expenditures	Capital Expenditures
Value Added Impact	\$307 million	\$457 million
Wages and Salaries	\$178 million	\$276 million
Employment	4,126 FTEs	8,368 FTEs
Taxes	\$135 million	\$172 million

Project partners also included the Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Fish and Game Association, Alberta Professional Outfitters Society, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (Fish and Wildlife Division), and Alberta Tourism, Parks, and Recreation.

Copies of the full reports are available on the Hunting for Tomorrow website www.huntingfortomorrow.com

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Greenhouse Gases and Animal Agriculture Conference

The conference includes three days of invited and offered presentations by international delegates from the global scientific community and from leaders in policy and animal agriculture industries. There will also be one day of workshops and one day reserved for touring the region. The conference is being held in Banff on October 3 to 8, 2009. For further information, registration and the conference itinerary visit the conference website at www.GGAA2010.org or contact Dr. Sean M. McGinn at 403-317-2225, e-mail Info@ggas2010.org