SSCA Leaves Port on New Voyage

By Doug McKell, SSCA Executive Manager

I now know what it must feel like for a captain to take over command of a new vessel and sail out into relatively uncharted waters. Fortunately the good ship SSCA has been left to me by her former captain in good shape. Her hull is strong in the form of our board of directors. Her navigation equipment accurate in the form of our board executive; and her holds full having been well stocked by our members and our financial backers. The crew is experienced, respectably their peers and willing to accept new challenges.

We have new backing from Monsanto Canada Inc., TransAlta Utilities and our Green Plan partners, new quarters at the experimental farm, Indian Head; a few new crew members. The results from each seeder a month after a crop was seeded. Dr. Guy Lakind from the Indian Head Experimental Farm, gave a guided tour of the May seeded plots to around 150 interested farmers. Many other farmers viewed these plots at their own leisure. Anyone interested in looking at those plots, the field site is 19 miles north of Regina along highway #6.

The residue management concerns were also well attended. Farmers were very interested in how the residue management equipment would work in field conditions. Organizers unrolled bales of unthreshed wheat to simulate harvest conditions. Each combine made several passes on the wheat.

Field Day A Success In Spite Of The Rain

By Blair McIntosh

SSCA Assistant Manager

Rain? That was what the SSCA field day organizers and participants found on the morning of June 21. By the time, the rain stopped nearly 0.25 inches had fallen. While the rain slowed us down, it did not stop the field day. The demonstrations were able to start at noon. In spite of the rain delay, over 1000 farmers attended the field day. They all came to see the latest in soil conservation and direct seeding equipment.

This year there were two separate direct seeding demonstration areas on site. In the main seeding area, the 12 seeders which seeded plots of canola, pea and wheat in early May, were on hand to demonstrate their ability to direct seed into standing stubble. In the second seeding area there were demonstrations of the entries in the farmer modified contest and commercial modified seeding equipment. The two seeding areas, with a total of 21 different seeders, were the most popular demonstrations as people crowded around equipment jockeying for a better view.

A unique feature of the SSCA field day were the May seeded plots of canola, pea and wheat. Twelve commercially available seeders seeded these plots to provide a comparison of crop establishment for the field day. These plots gave producers the opportunity to not only see the seeders working on that day but also see the results from each seeder a month after a crop was seeded. Dr. Guy Lakind from the Indian Head Experimental Farm, gave a guided tour of the May seeded plots to around 150 interested farmers. Many other farmers viewed these plots at their own leisure. Anyone interested in looking at those plots, the field site is 19 miles north of Regina along highway #6.

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Fast Facts On Soil Conservation

Source: Statistics Canada and various agricultural factsheets

- Saskatchewan has 40% of total Canadian cropland. It also has 72% of the national summerfallow acreage.
- Bare soil can begin to blow with as little wind as 30 kph.
- As of 1987, an estimated 5 million acres were affected by salinity on the prairies (MB, SK, AB).
- The effects of salinity are estimated to be increasing at a rate of up to 10% per year.
- Plastic mulches can provide effective weed control for up to five years in newly established shelterbelts.
- At least five tonnes of topsoil per acre are lost when you can see soil blowing.
- It took prairie soils some 10000 years to form and build a reserve of organic matter, yet in less than 100 years of farming nearly half of the original organic matter content has been lost.
- According to a PFRA study, it is more important to weed the area closest to the shelterbelt trees than to cultivate alongside the tree rows.

A Systems Approach

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association (PFRA)

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SDAF)

Monsanto

A TransAlta Utilities Corporation

With Support From

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association (PFRA)
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SDAF)
By Blair McClintock

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In the parkland region of Saskatchewan, one would hardly think it was necessary or even desirable to plant shelterbelts. The nearby forest fringe and mature aspen bluffs convince one that there are plenty of trees to shelter the yards and fields of our area. Not like the southern prairies where the wind freely blows.

However, some of us think differently. It is hard to deny the fact that the wind was unusually strong this spring, and even in the parkland area there has been a significant amount of topsoil in the air at times. Of course, this may have been an unusual spring, but some of the cultivated fields in this region are unusually bare of other forms of protection during many spring seasons. If there are no shelterbelts to protect our wind erosion prone fields, is there stable timber to stabilize the soil? If so, great. If not, let’s think about trees again.

It seems that one either loves or hates shelterbelts. Some people diligently plant miles of them in order to protect their fields. Others plant them for wildlife benefits or aesthetic reasons. Still others have planted multi-row belts for the potential future cash value they may bring. Others limit their tree planting to yard shelterbelts so they can enjoy the quiet amidst the summer and winter breezes.

**Top Students Win SSCA Memberships**

By Garth Patterson

SSCA Soil Conservationist

Congratulations to Terri Gagnon of Shaunavon and Trevor Waite of Cabri for being three year members of the Soil Stewardship Canada (SSCA). Terri’s paper discussed soil organic matter and methods of maintaining it. “Organic matter binds tiny soil particles together in larger aggregates that are more resistant than single grain particles. A soil with good aggregate structure allows better seedling emergence and root growth. Organic matter is a major source and storehouse for microorganisms that provide nutrients for organisms in the soil.”

The breaking of prairie soil resulted in a flush of oxygen entering the soil and the decomposition of organic matter was fanned into a virtual flame. Keys to maintaining organic matter:

1. return large amounts of plant residue
2. cultivate and harrow as little as possible
3. balance the residues with extra nitrogen
4. prevent erosion

“Has become a goal of my husband and myself to pass on land which is in better shape than what has been handed to us, so that our children can continue and prosper on the farm.”

Trevor described his experiences with wind erosion and revegetation methods of reducing it. “Wind erosion has occurred for all time, it is occurring now and will continue in the future. Everyone does something with the soil in a very delicate way. Good farming has shown that civilizations have risen and fallen based on their ability to produce food, but stratifying our land is often mantled with short term economics and an unwillingness to change old habits.”

“Of all the methods that help control erosion, minimum tillage fields the most promise. With this minimum disturbance residue is left standing to slow down the wind and secure the soil.”

“Two possible government approaches, legislation and payouts, are not the solution, in my opinion. The only way erosion can be addressed effectively is by education. People have to fully understand the problem and its long term effects before they can ever address it effectively.”

Welcome to the SSCA, Terri and Trevor!

**Direct Seeding Manual**

Call Paulette at 1-800-567-7264

Monsanto

Contains 160 full color pages in a 3 ring binder designed to provide you with all the information you need to increase your Profits using either minimum or zero till systems.

Get detailed information on:

- Crop Rotations
- Seeding Equipment
- Seeding Principles
- Weather Management
- Economics
- Soil Quality
- Farmer Modifications

**Indigenous People Zero Till Field Day**

By Blair McClinton

SSCA Assistant Manager

Over 300 farmers attended the Indian Head zero tillage field days over July 26 and 27. The field days featured research, demonstration and presentations from researchers from Ag Canada and the University of Saskatchewan, prominent zero till farmers in the Indian Head area, and the Indian Head Agricultural Research Foundation (IHARF). Organizers divided the field day into two sections, research and on-farm demonstrations.

The research focus of the Indian Head Experimental Farm is zero tillage systems. Guy Lafond focused on crop water, soil temperature and yield development in different tillage systems. Dr. Lafond has found that zero till increases crop yields because of heavier soil moisture levels. The main differences in soil moisture were found in the top 24 inches of the soil where the majority of plant roots are found.

Doug Derksen focused on the impact of different management practices on weed populations. Dr. Derksen pointed out the importance of diverse crop rotations and varying seeding dates as weed control methods. He has also found that certain weeds like wild oats and prickly lettuce are associated with zero tillage while green foxtail and stiff weed are associated with conventional tillage.

Jim Hunter is evaluating different control methods for volunteer “Roundup-Ready” canola in zero till systems. The volunteers of this crop could cause some complications with the proceeding wheat control. He has found that he needed to tank-mix 10 oz. of 2-4-D amine with Roundup to achieve adequate control of this volunteer crop at the two leaf stage. Dr. Hunter is also working on Perennial darnel control in canola. Karen Bailey and Bruce Goosen gave presentations on disease management in conservation tillage systems.

The other half of the field day was on farm demonstrations in the Indian Head farm area. Jeff Schoenau from the U. of S. has been doing research on the changes in soil quality on land on and around Jim Lafond’s farm. He concluded that soil quality does improve over time with zero till. Even the visual differences between the soils from adjacent 6 year and eight year zero till fields were dramatic. Dr. Schoenau also gave a presentation on using ion exchange resin strips to assess available nutrient levels.

Charles Marziale from the U. of S. demonstrated a rainfall simulator that he uses to measure water application and runoff. His research has found that there is higher water application and less runoff on zero till fields than on conventionally tilled fields.

At one stop, Rick Holm presented information on the effect of water quality on herbicide performance. The tour also stopped at the Indian Head Agricultural Research Foundation’s (IHARF) “Deep Lake” site where there were core rotations of crops in each treatment and trials comparing side- seeded and banded urea. The feedback on the field day that the organizers received was very positive. Everyone seemed to be able to get something out of it. According to Judy McKell, extension agronomist in Indian Head, “the farmers who attended were very interested in the information presented at the field day.” She concluded that “these days provided a good opportunity for farmers to discuss their on-farm experiences and to see first hand current zero till research.”

**Prairie Steward**

Former executive manager, John Kiss and new assistant manager, Blair McClinton watch helplessly as a stray-bale bums on the field day site. Due to their diligent efforts, they were able to prevent the fire from spreading across the field.

Garth Patterson Photo

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Designing Your Crop Rotations For Direct Seeding

By Garth Patterson and Gary Meier

The objective of a crop rotation should be to provide stable economic returns while ensuring the long-term health of the soil. In this article we will review crop rotation models for designing sustainable crop rotations and discuss some of the problems associated with increased surface residue levels in modern systems.

PRINCIPLES OF CROP ROTATIONS

1. Diversity - The most important principle in any crop rotation is diversity. This includes using different types of crops grown, the dates of planting and harvest, and increasing the weed control program. Growing a crop in the over rows should also be as diverse as possible. Direct seed rotations should include annuals and perennials, broadleaf and cereal crops to improve yields and income stability.

Crop rotations reduce disease and pest cycles, provide an opportunity to benefit from the “rotation effect”. Research has shown that a crop grown on the stubble from a different crop performs better than a crop grown on its own stubble. Agriculture Canada at the Scott Experimental Farm found that under minimum tillage wheat yields on canola stubble averaged 33 bu/ac while wheat on wheat stubble averaged 25 bu/ac. Although it is tempting to push rotations and increase the acreage of profitable crops to farm the markets, you might be more successful farming the soil.

Alternating a broadleaf crop one year and the cereal the next provides an opportunity to control grassy weeds (and volunteers) in the broadleaf crop, and broadleaf weeds (and volunteers) in the cereal crop. For example, good seedbed control in a wheat crop may negate the need for additional control striated in next year’s cereal crop. Fusarium head blight disease only affects flax, making it a useful replacement for either a cereal or a broadleaf in a rotation.

Legumes have the unique ability to incorporate nitrogen from the air into the plant tissue. With the help of the Rhizobia bacteria. This not only reduces the dependence on fertilizers the year the legume is grown, but also provides nitrogen to next year’s crop. Peas and lentils provide about 5 lb/ac of nitrogen for every 100 lbs of seed harvested. Well managed fields with a history of legumes have increased yields of 5-7 bu/ac of nitrogen.

2. Crop Residue and Moisture Management - Standing stubble traps snow, which usually translates into better soil moisture conditions at seeding. Excessive straw (lentil, canola, radish) may cause seeding problems and slow soil temperature rise. The first step in managing straw and chaff is to get rid of as much as you can get rid of. Selecting varieties that produce less residue may also help. It may not be possible to remove all straw and stubble fields without first removing some straw (fall rye and flax). Residual herbicide problems with fall may soon be reduced by new semi-dwarf varieties.

Fields with residue (flax, canola, lentil) will warm up quicker and dry out fast in the spring. Seeds these fields first with a crop that will benefit from early seeding, such as lentil or oilseed rape. Residual herbicides will cause soil lumping and retard seed placement.

Mechanical surface disturbance may be required to prevent weed problems when low early seeding is not an option. Rotating barley and spring canola appears to accomplish this without flattening much of the residue. Fall seeded rye can be seeded later, with less risk of losing soil moisture.

3. Crop Water Use - Including both short and long season crops in your LDS rotation will improve your moisture management and weed control options. Crops extract water from the soil to their effective rooting depth. The greater the rooting depth the more soil the crop can extract. Perennial forages extract the most water, followed by winter annuals, spring cereals and broadleaf. Any crop that is using soil moisture into September may affect next year’s crop, and should be considered a long season crop. Diversification of crops like lentils and flax can prevent them from sapping valuable moisture from next year’s crop.

Alternate long and short season crops to best utilize soil moisture. If, for example, a Polish variety of canola seeded early, followed by fall rye or winter wheat the same crop will take advantage of any available soil moisture and also compete very well with weeds. Deep rooted crops such as alfalfa and clover can access water and nutrients that have moved below the more shallow roots of most crops.

4. Weed Control - There are many non-chemical methods of weed control which can be complemented or replace herbicides. Sanitizing field sites like mowing, silage or chemical burnoff will help prevent weeds from moving into a field. Broom grass and softstem chamomile are examples of weeds controlled by mowing. The on-row seeding sheltered by LDDS creates a microclimate for the emerging crop resulting in a competitive advantage over weeds in the understudied soil between the seed rows. This undisturbed soil between the seed rows will also have less weeds emerging from it. Fall seeded crops (winter wheat and fall rye) and perennial crops are very good competitors and offer less opportunity for annual weeds. For a complete discussion on cultural weed control refer to The 1994 Guide to Weed Control by Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture and Food. Using the same herbicide or group of herbicides year after year encourages an increase in weeds that are resistant to that herbicide group. A sound rotation rotation includes rotating herbicide groups. Post emergent products are best targeted to early seeded crops where a pre-emergent burnoff may be less effective. A pre emergent burnoff may be the only soil seeded control required for late seeded crops under a LDS system. More information on this subject can also be found in the Guide to Weed Control.

CROP ROTATIONS NOT RECOMMEND FOR DIRECT SEEDING

Dandy Dandelions

By Joannie Pollegi

SSCA Soil Conservationist

If you’re in the Parkland, and you have dandelions, don’t throw away your crop! There are ways to use them to your advantage. They are a major challenge for many in the Parkland. For instance, this spring he applied 0.5 L/ac Roundup either preseeding or after seeding and achieved excellent dandelion control. But he reports that he’s not always successful. He says he does get good in crop (seeded) control by mixing Lontrel and 4.4 L/ac of MPCA. Controlling dandelion is a challenge in many direct seeding systems in the Parkland. The dandelions’ ability to thrive under low disturbance and their inconsistent response to herbicide makes control difficult. Roy Button suggests that “Until cost effective chemical control can be achieved, tillage may be the only alternative for tilling fields of dandelions”.

For more information on dandelion control, please contact your soil conservation district office or Roy Button (877-2603).

Chemical

Barvel

2.4-D Esther (600) 120 mL 0.4 L

Barvel & 2.4-D Ester 120 mL & 0.4 L

Lontrel & MPCA

0.15 L & 0.45 L

Estacrop

0.7 L

2.4-D Amine

0.45 L

Roundup*

1.0 L

Retina Extra & 2.4-D Ester 8 g & 0.4 L

Mecacrop

2.2 L

Rustler

1.0 L

Harvest

1.0 L

Roundup + 2.4-D Amine 0.5 L + 0.45 L

* Roundup 0.5 L/ac in Spring

Conservation Farmers Helping Farmers

Does conservation farming look difficult? Why not talk to a farmer who has tackled the same situation that you are facing? The Conservation Farmers Helping Farmers Directory houses the names of SSCA members who are willing to accept phone calls about their conservation farming practices and equipment.

Interested in the kind of equipment direct seeders are using in your soil zone? Concerned about quackgrass in your minimum tillage operation? Considering shelterbelts as part of your conservation plan? Get the facts from experienced farmers.

How does it work? Simply call the SSCA Indian Head office at 695-4233 and ask to use the Conservation Farmers Helping Farmers service and you will be able to specify the conservation techniques, equipment and practices you have questions about. The SSCA will then search the directory and provide the names and phone numbers of any members who have experience with the conservation methods or equipment in question.

Some examples of conservation information and experience included in the directory are:

- direct seeding
- conservation equipment
- weed control
- residue management
- cover crops
- shelterbelts
- forage establishment
- soil salinity management
- barrier strips
- crop rotation
- and other conservation farming experiences.

This is an ideal opportunity for farmers to take advantage of a large and diverse source of practical knowledge—other farmers!
Scentsless Chamomile

By Janis Polege
SSCA Soil Conservationist

In the reference text "Budd's Flora of the Canadian Prairie", scentsless chamomile is described as "an introduced plant found occasionally, in waste places and roadsides, across the Prairie provinces and becoming more common in the Parklands. For those of us living in the Parklands, what’s an understatement? And no longer is scentsless chamomile conning itself to dunes and waste places under direct seeding systems, scentsless chamomile is expected to thrive.

These are a few reasons for this plant’s success. The first is its ability to produce seed. In a 1988 Sask. Agriculture press release, Dr. Garry Stevens announced the availability of 1 L/acre of the PARI DSS Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Regina, the Parkland Agriculture & Food Canada, Research Branch, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

On July 12, at AIC ’94 in Regina, the Parkland Agriculture Research Initiative (PARI) of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada announced the availability of an electronic information service, called Gopher, residing on Internet. Interest is a worldwide computer which is available to everyone who has a microcomputer and a modem. Gopher is software, developed at the University of Minnesota, and is used extensively throughout the world for providing a fast simple method for distributing information.

The PARI is a federally sponsored component of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Green Plan and is managed by the Research Branch. The initiative focuses on developing and encouraging the adoption of sound soil conservation practices, that have the potential to decrease tillage operations and identify alternatives to conventional, in the Parkland region of the prairies.

By Murray Bentham
Project Manager, PARI DSS Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Research Branch, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

One common misconception is that these weeds can be adequately controlled with a "roundup" of Roundup. For those of us who have been following Roundup’s role in the control of scentsless chamomile, by the time the Roundup treatment is used these weeds will have completed their life cycle and set seed. This also means that these weeds will have used up a significant amount of soil moisture.

In addition, advanced stages of some weeds like narrow-leaved hawk’s beard can tolerate fairly high rates of Roundup. This weed can be controlled with fall or spring treatments of 2,4-D or MCPA.

Winter Annual Weed Control

By Blair McClinton
SSCA Assistant Manager

One of the most common problems that I have seen in direct seeded fields over the past couple of years is poor weed control. One common misconception is that these weeds can be adequately controlled with a "roundup" of Roundup. For those of us who have been following Roundup’s role in the control of scentsless chamomile, by the time the Roundup treatment is used these weeds will have completed their life cycle and set seed. This also means that these weeds will have used up a significant amount of soil moisture.

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In addition, advanced stages of some weeds like narrow-leaved hawk’s beard can tolerate fairly high rates of Roundup. This weed can be controlled with fall or spring treatments of 2,4-D or MCPA.
Jerry and David Zinkiew of Durban, Manitoba won first place in SSCA’s First Annual Farmer Modified Direct Seeding Contest with their modified JD 610 cultivator.

By Garth Patterson
SSCA Soil Conservationist

They came from as far away as Kindersley and Durban, Man., to compete in SSCA’s First Annual Farmer Modified Direct Seeding Contest at the Direct Seeding Field Day near Southey on June 21st. The entrants had put an amazing amount of time and energy into modifying their equipment for low disturbance direct seeding, and answered many questions from other farmers during the day.

The judges, Norm Flaten, Gordon Hultgreen and Roger Olson had a difficult decision, but in the end awarded first place and $3000 to Jerry and David Zinkiew of Durban, Manitoba. Their unit was a JD 610 cultivator with shank mounted Valley packers and home made openers for side banding liquid fertilizer. Second place and $2000 was awarded to Donald Toews of Sedley. Donald had modified a MF 128 DT cultivator by adding caster wheels and a floating hitch, and changing the frame from a three row twelve inch spacing to a five row eight inch spacing. His unit single shoots using Dutch Eagle Baler knives and Dutch tool bar mounted packers.

Robert and Sharon Rakamanski of Kindersley had modified a Morris L-240 cultivator with caster wheels and a floating hitch, and from a three row to a four row unit. Rear transport wheels and gang packers salvaged from an IH 7200 drill were also part of the modifications. Their unit single shoots using narrow knives or eight inch shovels.

Merv Schmidt of Lipton has converted his JD 665 air seeder from single shoot to double shoot using Dutch Vern knives for side banding anhydrous ammonia. His Dutch packers are rear mounted and the frame has been converted to a floating hitch. Steelying and Ken Hall of Earl Grey had modified a Farmcill 880 with Swedish double shoot openers.

Thank you to all of the competitors for making the competition a success, and to Young’s Equipment in Regina for supplying tractors for some of the units. We hope to see even more modifications for next year’s contest!

By Juanita Polezi
SSCA Soil Conservationist

The use of herbicides to control weeds and other undesirable plants is a fact of life in a direct seeding system. The sprayer, however, is too often neglected. No matter how well or how poorly it does the job of applying the herbicide, the sprayer’s performance is often overlooked while thousands of dollars are spent on herbicides and modifying old or buying new seeding equipment.

To hammer home the idea that the spraying operation is an important component of the direct seeding system. SCCA featured sprays at their June Field Day. The seven manufacturers participating in the demonstration included Bourgault, Brandt, Flexicoil, Farmless, Air Ride, Computorspray and Rogers Innovative. During the Demonstration, each manufacturer was given a few minutes to discuss the merits of its sprayer. Then all but one of the sprayers began operating using Regen’s drinking water (which is considered by some to be less of a health hazard than a herbicide) to demonstrate spray patterns, drift reduction, and ease of operation.

As in real life, the sprayers did not attract as much attention as the seeding equipment. However, these producers who did attend the demonstration were able to see first hand the advances in sprayer technology and discuss the finer points of each sprayer in more detail with the company reps.

Field Day A Success

In Spite of Rain...Continued From Page One

DICP

The Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association would like to thank our sponsors (Monsanto Canada Inc., TransAlta Utilities, Agriculture Canada and Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food) for assisting us in conducting a very successful direct seeding field day on June 21/94. We also thank all the equipment manufacturers and farmer modified entrants for their participation. The following organizations and individuals graciously donated items or services which were also utilized at the field day site. Thank you to all for helping make the day a success and we look forward to working with you next year.

McLeans Agra Center, Balcarres - John Deere Gator
Flamans, Southey - Bale processor
Ag Mar Industries - Uniblade
Youngs Equipment, Regina - Case IH tractors
County BBQ, Sands Hotel - Food for field day staff
Dave Struthers, Custom Crop Care, Yorkton - Herbicide application at last minute
Ag Canada Staff, Dr. G. Lafond - Plot tours and site inspection
PPRA and SDAF staff - Assist at seeding and during day
Michael Nethercut, Metropol Security - Help secure tent during wind storm
Goed Hultgreen, Norm Flaten & Roger Olson - Judges for Farmer Modified event
UGG Proven Seeds - Seed for plots
Cominco Fertilizers c/o Bell Agro, Indian Head - Fertilizer for plots

Thanks To Our Field Day Sponsors

Farmers check to see how accurate seed placement was during a seeding demonstration at the Field Day.