

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Farming Smarter is a not-for-profit & registered Canadian Charity based in Lethbridge, Alberta.

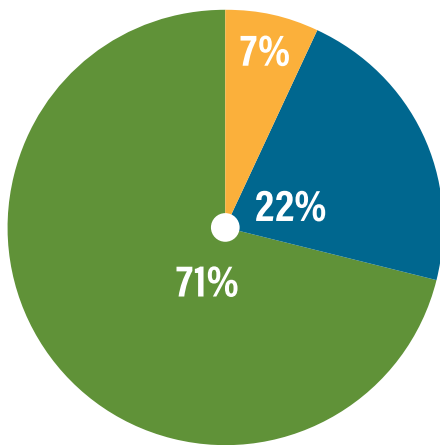
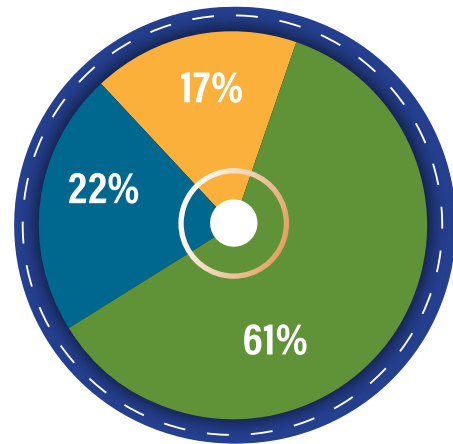
A competency-based board, primarily composed of producers, serve as the membership and guides Farming Smarter through policy and strategic planning. The board hires an Executive Director to lead operations, manage staff and execute the strategic plan. Find our 2025 directors listed on page 6 & 7.

Farming Smarter’s mission is to support the people involved in advancing irrigated and dryland crop production. We work closely with farmers, entrepreneurs, businesses, donors, charitable foundations, government, academia, and more to bridge the innovation gap, drive economic growth, improve social impact and environmental sustainability.

## Financials

### 2025 Operating Revenue

Research & Innovation	\$2,293,857
Extension/Knowledge	\$634,511
Other	\$809,436
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	\$3,737,804



### 2025 Expenditures

Program Expenses	\$2,571,265
Operating Expenses	\$260,160
Capital Purchases	\$778,606
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	\$3,610,031

## By the numbers

**30** companies hired us to conduct research for them

**35** crops researched

**172** trials with **7,726** plots

**10** full time employees & **15** summer students

## Staff highlights

Farming Smarter staff set personal goals each year to keep our people and our organization learning all the time. The goal setting season at Farming Smarter often prompts innovation at the personal, team and organization levels. The conversations are fantastic!



### Jamie Puchinger

Looking back on Farming Smarter's 2025 Field School, I feel proud to have been part of something that brought so many people together—133 participants learning side by side in the field. Over two days, we dug into practical

challenges like salinity management and cereal disease identification, while exploring cutting-edge trials in hemp retting, lupin production, and soil-saving cover crop practices. The conversations around soil health and potato agronomy reminded me how interconnected every decision is in building resilient cropping systems. The highlight wasn't just the knowledge shared—it was the sense of community, capped off by Minister Sigurdson's capital announcement, which underscored the importance of investing in agriculture's future. It was more than a field school; it was a reminder of why I care so deeply about building knowledge and community in farming.



### Mike Gretzinger

To have three students return this year was incredibly rewarding and a huge asset to the Agronomy program. We kept momentum on several major projects, including Saving Soils, Hemp Retting and Emergence, and the Canola banded fertilizer in strip till

trial. We also initiated fall crops for updated fertilizer response curves and Double Cropping. We continued to grow strong partnerships with Dr. Linda Gorim, FMC, SeedNet, SaskFlax, and many others, and added a wide range of demos for plot tours.

I'm proud of the turnout at our events - Field School, Agronomy Battles, and all the opportunities we had to connect with farmers. I'm equally proud of the progress we made on my wish lists, from yard cleanup and landscaping to painting the life-sized LEGO figures and Mr. Potato Head who helped us take 1st place in the parade.

I'm also really pleased with the improvements in quality control for data collection and the more structured training schedules we developed for summer students. It all added up to a productive, energizing season.



### Thierry Fonville

For me personally and professionally, a major achievement in 2025 was getting my first Farming Smarter research paper published in the Canadian Journal of Plant Science. It quickly had several hundred views. Our paper on strip tillage and precision

planting with canola generated a lot of interest from agronomists and growers in our region, across Canada and even internationally.

One of my main contributions as a researcher is ensuring

that our projects pass critical scientific scrutiny and are relevant for advancing canola production systems. Publishing scientific papers is a validation of the high standard of work we do at Farming Smarter. Look for a research paper in 2026 on rainfed grain corn agronomy.

More recently, I really appreciated everyone that came out to our Agronomy Battles events toward the end of the year. They were great networking sessions where farmers and agronomists could share experiences on strip tillage, cover cropping and herbicide resistant weeds. It also ensured that our research projects remain relevant and helped us identify future research directions. Agriculture is important and its economic resilience and sustainability will have long lasting and far-reaching impacts.



### Lewis Baarda

The advancements we made in potato research this year truly were a standout highlight. We made significant strides in our capacity to conduct highquality potato research. We added specialized irrigation units,

established onsite storage, and completed major upgrades to our potato planter. With another year of experience behind us, our expertise deepened and we continue to draw increasing interest from industry stakeholders.

Another major highlight was the growth and development of both returning and new students. The crew came into the season ready to build on what they learned in 2024. By the end of the 2025 field season, they made unmistakable progress. They not only improved their technical ability to carry out research activities but also strengthened their understanding of the research itself and how each task fits into the broader picture. Their leadership, initiative, and growing skill sets made a meaningful difference in our ability to complete our work to a high standard of excellence.



### Trevor Deering

Overall, 2025 was a very strong year for us. Weather conditions were close to average, with slightly cooler temperatures during the peak summer months compared to recent seasons—something that made a noticeable difference. Although fall

moisture was low, we were able to offset it through emergency irrigation efforts. The combination of favourable weather and strong irrigation capacity allowed us to grow excellent crops, contributing to a 98% trial success rate.

We held 21 client debrief meetings, with overwhelmingly positive feedback that helped us plan effectively for the future. Maintaining strong, trustbased relationships and delivering consistent results—especially in a year marked by global uncertainty—was a major success for both our team and our clients.

And on a lighter note, I had an absolute blast participating in the Whoop Up Days Parade. Juggling, handing out potatoes, and driving the new Fendt tractor while connecting with colleagues and the crowd was a highlight of the season.



### Carlo Van Herk

2025 was one of my favourite years at Farming Smarter. It marked my fifth anniversary as fulltime staff and the growth I've witnessed over that time has been nothing short of exponential. Last year was especially important for capacity building, with roughly \$800,000 invested in capital purchases—including the Fendt tractor and several new fields—that significantly expanded our acreage and visibility.

The year also saw the publication of the Strip Till Canola paper, the project that originally brought me to Farming Smarter. Seeing that work come full circle was incredibly satisfying. Overall, 2025 stands out as a year when the organization's growth felt tangible and deeply rewarding. I'm proud to have contributed to the association's success.



### Claudette Lacombe

Farming Smarter is more than a job for me. It is a tight-knit group of people dedicated to supporting people and industry in southern Alberta that feeds Canadians and more. I've worked with this association for so long I'm now going

backward. I'm past 65 and poking at time to write different things.

I scheduled myself to write actual stories again for our magazine. The kind where you tell other peoples' stories and share that with our magazine readers. I talked to a bunch of people about the impact Farming Smarter made on their lives and heard such wonderful stories. It was fun to find I can still distil a good story based on multiple conversations with people. It's a challenge to take a complex topic, bring several voices to the table and then extract the important bits into an enjoyable read. Read southern Alberta stories come to life in our magazines.



### Sean Kjos

It always feels great to do something for your community, especially when you can give families a memorable experience. Providing that for 442 people was truly spectacular. Open Farm Day is the event I look forward to most each year

because it's such a joy to share agriculture with people who aren't normally involved in the industry—but this year exceeded every expectation.

We received incredible support from our partners, and everyone I spoke with was eager to help in any way they could. Those who couldn't attend lent us extra tents or swag, while those who could participate were full of creative ideas to make their booths as engaging as possible. The attendees themselves played a huge role in making the day exceptional. Everyone dove into our "Agriculture Adventure" and stayed to learn as much as they could from each booth.

A steady stream of visitors is usually a sign of success, but this year people stayed so long that staff were busy squeezing every possible inch out of the parking area just to accommodate the crowd. Proud hardly captures how I felt about the day, and I'm deeply grateful to everyone who helped make it outstanding. It's clear from the smiles that people left with that the event spoke for itself.



### Everett Krippel

I feel that 2025 held many successes. One of the most meaningful was the increase in longterm staff at Farming Smarter. With this team expansion, we strengthened both our capacity and our sense of community.

We continued to build

our programs and refine our processes to deliver the highest quality research possible. And, of course, I'm proud to be one of the individuals hired on longterm.

I'm grateful to support the team in ways that not only contribute to Farming Smarter's growth but also benefit the farmers and businesses we work with. Reaching into the agricultural community and building relationships is at the heart of why I love working here. Having the chance to talk with people and see the impact of our work firsthand truly made my year.



### Toby Mandel

My highlight for 2025 comes from how much we grew. We had so much field work on the go that our equipment was constantly in use. With so many trials, it was clear that some of that equipment had to be upgraded. This year, I rebuilt our quad

sprayers with thicker, better metal so they could keep up with the field crews' needs.

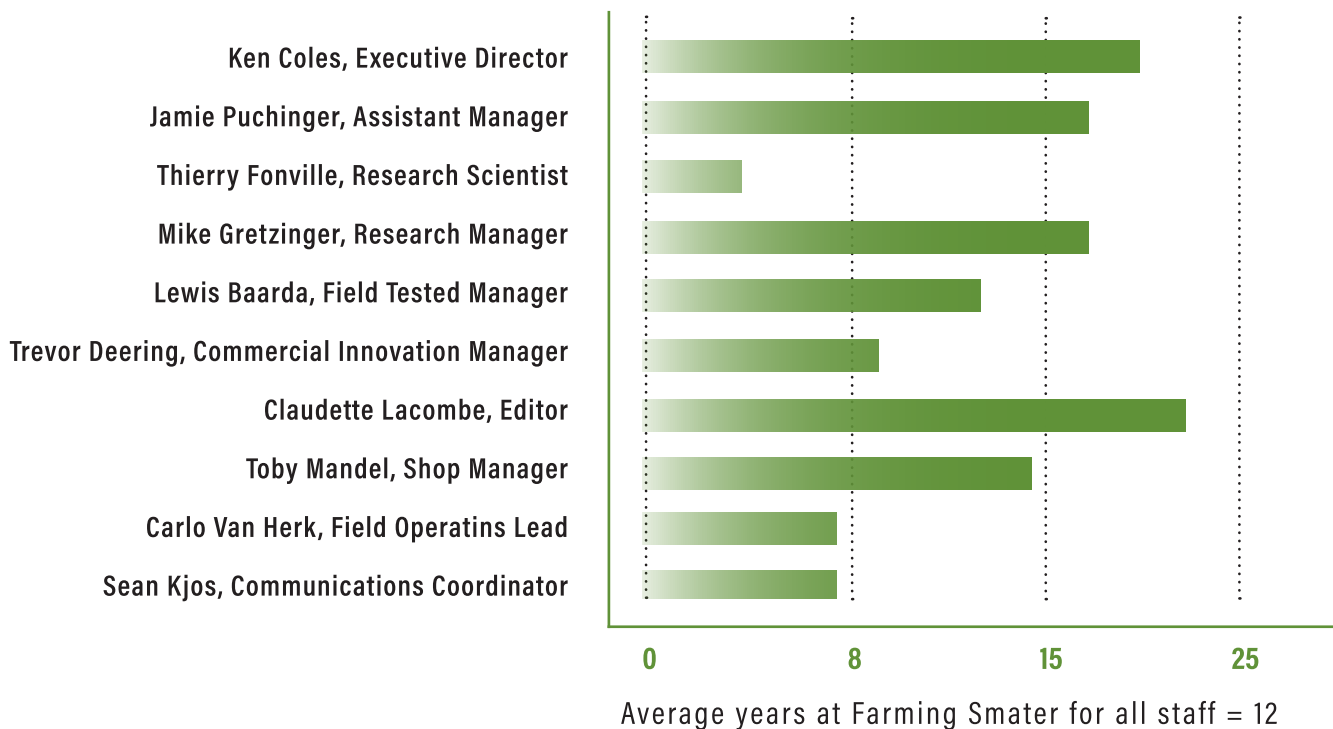


### George Joseph

I graduated college in 2025, returned to Farming Smarter for my second summer, and then stepped into a fulltime role. The transition came with a steep learning curve, but I'm grateful for how much I was able to learn. I really appreciate that Lewis and Carlo were as willing to teach as I was to learn. I gained experience operating equipment and developed a deeper understanding of how realworld challenges influence our research trials.

Lewis trusted me with setting up fall trials for our kochia projects and managing the data side of his trials. That experience taught me just how problematic kochia can be and how much damage alfalfa weevils can cause in a field. I also learned to distinguish between insect and disease damage in potatoes—something I'm proud to have added to my skill set.

I value being part of Farming Smarter's growing team and seeing the impact of our work firsthand. From industry partners using our research to guide their decisions to meeting Alberta's Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, R.J. Sigurdson, during Field School 2025, the year was full of meaningful moments. Farming Smarter is the kind of place where I can learn quickly, contribute in a real way, and continue building my future in agriculture alongside a supportive team. I'm excited for what I'll learn in 2026 and the impact we'll make together.



### Student involvement at Farming Smarter - 119 summer students trained since 2012.

Innovation is hard and about long-term results. We invite anyone interested in agriculture innovation to work with us and together we can change the way people farm.

# Board of Directors

Direct the organization through careful thought, meaningful discussion, and the establishment of written policies.



## Chairman - Ryan Mercer

Please see the Chairman (or President's) message on page 3 in the magazine

## Vice Chair - Rob Dunn

The Farming Smarter Conference and Tradeshow organized by our staff is always a highlight with the chance to network with staff, farmers, researchers, and industry specialists. I appreciate the chance to catch up on the latest trial results with presentations from our research and extension staff. The event included many great talks from researchers and industry experts and it was a fascinating keynote address by Gary Mar on the policies we might expect from the new American administration. It was also an honour to present Kevin Auch with the Orville Yanke award in recognition of his contribution to soil conservation awareness in southern Alberta over the years.



## Treasurer - Ken Vanden Dungen

It is a pleasure to work with the Farming Smarter staff and be a part of board of directors. 2025 was an exciting year for Farming Smarter as we continued to grow and expand our scope of research. I really appreciate the many things we do to spread knowledge and educate the community in southern Alberta whether it be the annual conference, field days, Open Farm Days, etc. I look forward to seeing what this amazing group of people can do in 2026!



## Adrian Moens

I've served on the board for seven years, after being involved with Farming Smarter for several years beforehand. What first drew me in was the organization's commitment to independent, thirdparty, local data and its genuine care for the land and the people who work it.

In 2025, that commitment truly stood out. We expanded our fieldscale research, strengthened our role as a trusted source of unbiased agronomic information, and showcased our work through exceptional Field Days and Open Farm Day. These events highlighted our passion for advancing agriculture and deepening the connection between farmers and the broader community.





### John Kolk

Farming Smarter has been exploring and implementing new technology that supports water conservation and predictive irrigation. Being part of this work strengthened my commitment to helping farmers make informed, data-driven decisions in an increasingly water-constrained world. It's exciting to contribute to solutions that not only improve on-farm efficiency but also support long-term sustainability for our agricultural communities.

### Mandy DeCecco-Kolebaba

Whether you are directly involved in agriculture as a producer, or like me, experience its impact as a consumer, Farming Smarter's work is essential. As a Board Member, I am proud to support an organization that advances applied research and practical innovation that benefits producers while strengthening the broader food system we all rely on. In 2025, southern Alberta benefited in many ways from Farming Smarter's initiatives and research, and even as a non-aggie, I can see how important it is to figure out real solutions to challenges like mitigating kochia.



### Nathan Stamp



2025 was a strong year for the continued growth of Farming Smarter as both a team and an organization. Highlights included being a preferred employer for summer students, making meaningful progress in leading-edge agricultural research, and strengthening innovation through collaboration and networking. The field schools offered hands on relevant, practical topics and ideas that producers could take back and try on their own operations. Together, these accomplishments reflect a practical, forward-looking organization focused on real value for agriculture.

### Scott Holtman

I'm proud to be part of an organization that is pushing the boundaries of potato agronomy and leading the Saving Soil project—work that speaks directly to the future of agriculture in southern Alberta. These initiatives aren't just research programs; they represent a long-term commitment to soil health, producer resilience, and the kind of innovation our industry needs to thrive. Farming Smarter continues to demonstrate that practical science, strong partnerships, and a clear vision can shape the future of farming.



### Will Van Roessel



It has been really exciting to see the potato research projects getting underway. The team invested in a significant amount of specialized equipment and staff learned an entirely new production system. It's all brand new and very different from any of our previous projects.

I always enjoy the summer tours and the chance to see what's growing in the fields. This year, the most interesting—and surprising—highlight was a small dryland cover crop trial. In a dry spring, canola actually established better in a field with a growing cover crop than in clean stubble. That result was remarkable, and it's clear this project deserves further research.

## Gratitude to Donors

### Support From Foundations Including



### 2025 Program Partners



### Agronomy Smarts and Digital Subscribers

Farming Smarter recognizes our annual subscribers as the base of our innovation network. We salute your dedication to on-farm and agronomic advancement in a chaotic world where we all need allies.

### Event Sponsors

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Building and inspiring a culture of innovation in Western Canadian agriculture

## 2025 Staff and Students



*Back L to R: Mike Gretzinger, Toby Mandel, Sean Kjos, Travis Petkar, Thierry Fonville, Carlo Van Herk, Brady Vucurevich, Everett Krippel, Ken Coles, Lewis Baarda, Brayden Oostlander*

*Front L to R: Levi Harasem-Mitchell, Trevor Deering, Kaitlyn Schiestel, Ariana Duerksen, Christian Alloway, Jamie Puchinger, Camryn Wojtowicz, George Joseph, Peyton Smith, Sylvia Matis, Ashley Wagenaar, Tatum Adair, Rori Ryan, Tristan Jacula, Allison Baptista*

2026

## FARMING SMARTER EVENTS

### AGRONOMY BATTLES

**October 21**  
Foremost

**October 28**  
Warner

**November 4**  
Claresholm

**JUNE 25**

FARMING SMARTER **FIELD SCHOOL**

**JULY 16**

FARMING SMARTER **FIELD SCHOOL**

**AUGUST 15**

**OPEN FARM DAYS**

**FARMING**  
SMARTER



For more information visit [farmingsmarter.com](https://www.farmingsmarter.com)