



FARM ADAPTATION INNOVATOR PROGRAM | PROJECT SUMMARY

Forage Practices Form Foundation of On-farm Research Toolkit

THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE will be felt differently in different regions. In the Central Interior, four producers are running on-farm forage trials that will help to inform a new farm research toolkit intended to assist forage producers across BC to evaluate opportunities for new crops or agronomic practices for climate change adaptation.

“Climate change is extending the growing season and allowing our growers to do things they haven’t done before,” says Sheri Schweb, manager of the BC Forage Council. “People in this area are very much aware that there’s potential to grow things they’ve never grown here before, like forage kale. There’s a renewed focus on looking at new varieties and different ways of doing things.”

The project includes the installation of weather stations, the evaluation of production practices through on-farm trials, and the production of a manual to assist producers with conducting their own on-farm trials. The project activities

PROJECT *Demonstrating Innovative Forage Production Practices to Increase Climate Change Adaptation*

LOCATION *Central Interior*

COMPLETION *May 2017*

PROJECT LEAD *BC Forage Council*

FUNDING PARTNERS *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, BC Ministry of Agriculture, Nechako-Kitimaat Development Fund Society, Omineca Beetle Coalition*

OTHER PARTNERS *Nechako Regional Cattlemen*

are intended to increase the information and management options available to producers to assist them in responding to changes in growing conditions.

The project is assessing production and harvest approaches to maintain high quality forage under a variety of conditions, as well as adaptive production options for on-farm feeding and grazing.



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Four producers have established demonstration projects with the guidance of a consultant, who is helping them to ensure that their projects are well designed and will answer their research questions. The projects include trials of forage kale as a crop to extend the growing season; a comparison of winter-hardy grasses to extend the growing season; comparison of different

seeding rates and mixes, combined with soil sampling to assess the effectiveness of passive fertilization; and an alfalfa variety trial with a focus on harvest time over yield to ensure the highest possible quality.

Data from the new weather stations (installed through the project) is available to producers in the area through www.farmwest.com. The availability of accurate weather data will give producers a quantitative foundation that they can use to verify what they are observing in weather patterns,

and to help make decisions about how to modify their practices to adapt to changes.

In addition to yielding results for the benefit of the participating producers, the projects will be incorporated into the manual as case studies and to demonstrate the variety of potential approaches to on-farm trials.

“We want to encourage producers to think about the kinds of research that they would like to pursue,” says manual author and research consultant, Catharine Tarasoff of AgroWest Consulting. “In the end we want a producer to be able to use this manual to do their own research plot — from laying it out to implementing and gathering results — and at the end of the day to be able to evaluate the results of their own on-farm trial.”

Local interest in this project has been high. Over 50 producers travelled from across the region to attend the first field day to share information from the project. A second workshop was held in May 2016 to gather input into the development of the on-farm trial manual. The manual is expected to be available early in 2017.

Projects like this are part of the work being delivered by the BC Agriculture & Food Climate Action Initiative (CAI). CAI develops tools and resources to assist BC farmers and ranchers with adapting to impacts of climate change. CAI’s Farm Adaptation Innovator Program engages directly with producers and local partners, providing funding for piloting, demonstration and knowledge transfer around farm level adaptation.

www.BCAGClimateAction.ca

The BC Agriculture & Food Climate Action Initiative was launched in 2008 by the BC Agriculture Council to enable a proactive and pan-agriculture approach to climate change issues. The Climate Action Initiative is currently supported by the BC Agricultural Research & Development Corporation and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC with funding provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the BC Ministry of Agriculture through Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

Photos in this handout are courtesy of Catherine Tarasoff.

