

Discovery Farm: a new way of bringing innovation to farmers

Agriculture thrives on research and innovation and there's general agreement that both are needed if the sector will meet climate change and global nutrition goals.



As a country, Canada is known around the world as a leading agricultural producer, but the global ranking of its ability to move innovation from the lab to market and into practice isn't nearly as high.

One way to encourage adoption of new technologies is to give farmers an opportunity to see, experience and learn about them – and that's where Discovery Farm is filling a need in the industry.

With locations in Langham, Saskatchewan and Woodstock, Ontario, Discovery Farms offers companies in the agri-food sector an opportunity to trial and showcase new products and technologies in real on-farm settings complete with drought, excess moisture, pest and disease pressures and other challenges farmers face in their businesses.

As part of Glacier FarmMedia family, both sites are also home to large farm shows – Ag in Motion in Saskatchewan and Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in Ontario – and can leverage Glacier's portfolio of agricultural publications to help transfer knowledge directly to farmers.

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What's unique about Discovery Farms is that we work with companies who are looking to further knowledge about their products and help put that into a digestible format for farmers. We take what we're learning in the field and make it available to farmers so they can be better managers and decision-makers.

— **Brayden Bell**, Field Manager at
Discovery Farm Woodstock

It's a new approach in an industry where research most often is concentrated at academic institutions or government facilities, he adds, with Discovery Farm working collaboratively with industry on demonstration research and events, and networking and connections through tours, training days and educational events.

As an emerging innovation hub, Discovery Farm is a place for testing new and cutting-edge technologies that researchers might not normally have a chance to use or have access to. Kubota Canada, for example, used Discovery Farm Woodstock to trial its variable width planter in Canada for the first time.

In addition to Kubota, other Discovery Farm Woodstock research partners for 2023 include A&L Canada Laboratories Inc., AgroLiquid, Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Network (YEN), Grober Nutrition, Koch Fertilizer Canada, Maizex Seeds, Oxford Agropro, Sevita International, SoilOptix Inc., and SWAT MAPS/Fieldwalker Agronomy, Timac Agro Canada, and also University of Guelph grad student Matthew Rundle.

They're involved in a range of activities through individual projects and the collaborative Field of Excellence demonstration research program, from soil mapping, sampling and testing to trialing seed varieties and testing new fertilizer technologies.



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One of our main projects is Field of Excellence where we work on every aspect of management of a field. This year, the focus is on minimizing the yield gap and what we can use to propel the lowest yielding corner of the field to the top yield level. We're using the best technology, the best genetics, best management practices and gathering information through soil tests and plant tissue sampling to look at how we can unlock that knowledge and apply it to the field's potential – and ultimately the farmer's bottom line.

— **Brayden Bell**, Field Manager at Discovery Farm Woodstock

In Langham, demonstration research addresses topics like soil health, nutrient use, intercropping, new variety trials and more.

Both the Langham and Woodstock sites are also part of the national Olds College Pan-Canadian Smart Farm Network, which tests and validates digital agriculture innovations in the context of farm practices and research to help enhance the efficiency, sustainability and resilience of the agriculture sector.

The Langham site has been operational as a Discovery Farm for several years, but the Woodstock location, which has been home to Canada's Outdoor Farm Show since 1997, only became a Discovery Farm site in September 2020. The 2023 crop year marks its third year of operation under that banner, with an increasing momentum of research projects and industry partners each year.