NEWS RELEASE

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Advancing sprayer technology key to meeting 2020 goal: PAMI, Dr. Tom Wolf

June 7, 2013, HUMBOLDT — Advancing spraying technology is one of the key ways to meet the Saskatchewan Government's goal of increasing crop production by 10 million tonnes by 2020, says the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute (PAMI) and sprayer expert Dr. Tom Wolf.

Advancements in farm machinery in general will achieve 20 per cent of that goal, PAMI believes, and innovating to improve spraying technology is high on their short list of machinery innovations that could make that difference.

The sprayer has become the most utilized piece of equipment on the farm. More hours are spent spraying every year than harvesting or seeding.

According to a study by the Institute for Plant Diseases in Germany, globally, the potential loss due to pests (weeds, pathogens and animal pests) varied from about 50 per cent in wheat to more than 80 per cent in cotton production. They estimated losses of 26 to 29 per cent for soybean, wheat and cotton crops, and 31, 37 and 40 per cent for maize, rice and potatoes, respectively.

PAMI is exploring linkages with Dr. Tom Wolf, a world-renowned spray technology expert, to develop an aggressive spray technology program.

"There are two major reasons to advance an aggressive research program in spray technology," said Jim Wassermann, vice-president of PAMI, in charge of their Saskatchewan Operations. "The first is the financial benefit to the farmer, by optimizing their cost and maximizing their yields. The second is to assist the industry to be great environmental stewards. Improving spray technology gives us the opportunity to protect Canadian water and air quality by controlling off-target drift."

An example of a real opportunity to do both of these things is to expand the time for spraying. Today's technology means that many times, producers are forced to wait extra days to apply spray, due to wind conditions. If there was a system out there that was totally wind-proof, such as low drift nozzles, they wouldn't have to wait for the wind to be right, but spray at the right time. There is significant data on the benefits of spraying on time as opposed to spraying late.

Farmers spend a lot of money on crop protection products. Sales in Canada in 2011 totaled $1.46 billion. Herbicides are the most commonly sold type of crop protection product, followed by fungicides, insecticides and specialty products.

In excess of 45 million kilograms of active ingredients are sprayed each year in Canada. Spraying systems that properly deliver their product will ensure that farmers remain as leaders in environmental stewardship. A low drift nozzle will benefit everyone. It will help farmers keep their product on the crop, and out of our air, lakes and rivers.

There are also opportunities in terms of the crop protection products themselves. Fungicides and pesticides have the potential to have even greater impact on yields than they do now.

Advancements in sprayer technology will require the interface of spray manufacturing companies, machinery companies, and weed scientists to maximize the effectiveness of the total system.

PAMI's intent is to form a team with Wolf, whose spray technology program was previously with Agriculture Canada.

"Because of the feedback we received from producers and producer associations, we are trying to find a way to continue the innovation of sprayer technology," said Wassermann.

Researchers and Dr. Wolf will be at PAMI's booth at the Western Canadian Farm Progress Show in Regina June 19-21, to get some general feedback about spraying technology and other farm machinery advancements that are needed from producers, and representatives of producer associations. That information will be used, Wassermann said, to develop a stakeholder day in Saskatoon in July and to set the future direction.

Producers can find PAMI's booth in the Innovations Area of Arena 6, booth number 60121, at the Farm Progress Show. They can also contact Jim Wassermann at PAMI at 306-682-5033.

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