

SOUTHWEST AGRICULTURAL CONFERENCE

Southwest Agricultural Conference 2014

The 21st Southwest Agricultural Conference was held January 7th & 8th 2014 at the University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus. The conference attendance was reduced by the severe winter leading up to the conference and during the conference. Amazingly around 1000 braved poor road conditions to attend the first day and about 1100 the second day. A couple of speakers went above and beyond to make it to the conference. When flights were cancelled they drove through difficult conditions to give their presentation. Several speakers who

could not make in person used video or teleconference facilities to give their presentation. In the end only 11 out of 132 sessions had to be cancelled.

The theme of this year's conference was "New Ideas, New Opportunities" and presented topics from Science vs. Perception to Soybean Strategies to Soil Health European Style to the Brazilian Bulldozer. Topics on bees, spraying, insects and diseases, nitrogen, bin ventilation, ag apps, commodity marketing, social media and weed control were some of the other topics included this year.

The feature speakers were out of this world. Well at least one of them was, David Williams the Canadian astronaut, aquanaut, emergency room physician and CEO of a hospital wowed the audience with his pictures from space of the shuttle, the earth and more. On the second day of the conference, Damian Mason, a farmer, businessman and humourist presented "Humour for the Heart of Agriculture". The audience was kept laughing as Mason shared his experiences growing up on the farm and the perceptions of agriculture from those outside the industry.



The webcast of the sessions from two rooms on January 8th was sent to eight locations this year. Participants at Thunder Bay, Sturgeon Falls and Thessalon enjoyed the program put on by OMAF and MRA and soil and crop improvement associations. In a partnership with the Grain Farmers of Ontario participants took in the program at John Deere dealerships in Omemee, Walkerton, Earlton and at the University of Guelph, Kemptville Campus. Unfortunately, Walkerton had to be cancelled due to the weather. A new location was added this year in Truro, Nova Scotia in cooperation with the Truro Agromart. The sessions were well received and it is a great way to deliver this high quality program to those who may not wish to travel to Ridgetown or who may not have the same access to speakers.

The format of the conference is seven 50 minute concurrent sessions plus the feature speaker so it is a full day of learning! The presenters are a mix of farmers, researchers, government extension staff and agriculture industry personnel. The goal of the conference is to bring in the best speaker possible for a topic, by a number of means.

Here is a sample of the more than 40 sessions that were offered concurrently over two days at the conference:

- Future Crop Options
- Working Cover Crops
- Fertilizer for Mega-Planters
- Corn Stalk Dollars
- No-Till, No Kidding
- Economic Outlook

- Growing Forward 2
- Herbicide Resistant Weeds
- Soil Conservation for Profit
- Precision Ag Wins
- Persistent, Pernicious & Poisonous
- Hay Making & Marketing



Once again the conference hosted a reception at the end of the first day. The Taste of Ontario reception featured meat, vegetables, fruit, wine, beer and spirits from southwestern Ontario. A poster session was offered again. Posters were presented from the University of Guelph (professors and students), OMAF and MRA, and others. The trade show once again attracted a large number of exhibitors.

The conference is a cooperative effort between the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Southwest Soil and Crop Improvement

Associations, many agribusiness supporters and Ridgetown Campus, University of Guelph.

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Visit our website www.southwestagconference.ca for conference information. A number of the presentations were recorded this year and are posted on the website under proceedings.

