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Launch of uLethbridge Agri-Food Summer Series brings research and agriculture industry together

Big ideas are growing in southern Alberta, and it's one of the reasons the area is one of the world's most important agricultural zones. The University of Lethbridge and area producers are looking to ensure ideas continue to germinate with the launch of the [uLethbridge Agri-Food Summer Series](#) conversations.

Each month, the uLethbridge Agri-Food Summer Series will bring producers and researchers together to discuss topics related to southern Alberta's agriculture industry. It's an opportunity to hear from the people who know this industry inside and out as they generate ideas and push the boundaries of agricultural potential in southern Alberta.



“We’re really excited to launch this series of conversations and showcase some of the active partnerships that are driving innovation in the agriculture industry and helping to solve some of the most pressing issues facing our producers,” says Dr. Danny LeRoy, associate professor of economics in the University of Lethbridge’s Faculty of Arts & Science. “It’s also an opportunity to spur new conversations and relationships between the U of L and the agriculture industry.”

The five-part series will kick off virtually on the Zoom platform on Tuesday, June 29 at 5:30 p.m. with [Can we save the planet by directing cattle feed to people?](#) The conversation features U of L researcher Dr. Kim Stanford, who grew up on a family farm in the Spring Coulee area before embarking on a career in the research industry that led

her to work with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and eventually the University of Lethbridge. She will be joined by Leighton Kolk, who, along with his wife and three adult children, own and operate Kolk Farms Ltd., which is focused on finishing cattle, raising irrigated crops, selling cereal seeds and striving for efficiencies and sustainability in these areas of agriculture.

Climate experts are calling for less meat in our diet to ensure the future viability of the planet, claiming cattle are taking valuable resources away from people and increasing greenhouse gas emissions in the process. But is that the full story? The conversation will focus on how southern Alberta producers are balancing the health of the planet with the important role animal agriculture plays in feeding the growing population.

Le Roy will moderate the discussion and, following the talk, the panel will take questions from listeners, highlighting industry developments, advances in research, and how we as a community can come together to tackle issues faced by southern Alberta cattle producers.

Bev Thornton, executive director for Alberta SouthWest Regional Alliance, which is supporting the series in partnership with SouthGrow, says the talks will highlight the value of industry and research collaborations.

“This Summer Speaker Series enhances the Alberta SouthWest Energizing Agricultural Transformation (EAT) project and the work of SouthGrow, Canada’s Premier Food Corridor (CPFC), and all the partners in the Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta (RINSA). Exciting innovations can be sparked by connecting outstanding research programs with the real-world agricultural industry in our regions.”

LeRoy adds the goal of organizers is to eventually bring people together to further solidify working relationships.

“While this first talk will be virtual, we are hoping as COVID-19 restrictions continue to ease, we will be able to present some in-person events as well,” says LeRoy. “We just want to make these conversations available to as many people as possible and hopefully it will spur further collaborations.”

To learn more about the uLethbridge Agri-Food Summer Series, visit the [website](#) and attend the [first event](#).

Further scheduled events are as follows:

July — Crops & Irrigation

Dr. Tom Jensen

Autumn Barnes (BSc '09) | Canola Council

August — Pollinators

Dr. Shelley Hoover
Alberta Beekeeper Commission Board representative

September — GIS/Smart Farming

Dr. Craig Coburn
Remi Schmaltz (BMgt '06) | Decisive Farming

October — Agriculture Economics

Dr. Mehdi Jourabchi
Producer Panelist TBD

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