2016 ACORN Conference & Trade Show

Delta Beauséjour Hotel, Moncton NB

Workshop Title:

On Farm Record Keeping

Speakers:

Chris Wooding

Executive Summary:

This workshop summarizes the reasons and outcomes of a comprehensive record-keeping process. Chris introduces us to a refined information tracking system he uses called Keyhole Mark-up Language.

Main Notes:

Recording keeping can be found in many aspects of the planet: geology, biology and through oral history.

We keep records with the following goals in mind: compliance, financial, cost of production, traceability, too much to remember and tracking long time frames. Records are the knowledge capital of the farm and they form the basis for analysis and management. Repeatability is the key to record keeping. We create systems so we can repeat them. There are multiple types of records: lists, process tracking, maps, organizational memberships, and observations of crops, knowledge/insights.

Chris' rule of thumb: Unless it's written down it wasn't done. E.g. tire pressure check.

There is a critical element of completeness and accurateness in record keeping so that good decisions are an outcome of the work of inventorying. Creating lists lead to insights, these insights come from the perspective of accounting for things. Information

provides multiple points of view, multiple angles of view and describing the entity gives you information. Listing develops an inventory – and there are many types of lists.

The farm model can become a concentrated list in this approach. Every time Chris enters the field he tracks activity, environment, equipment, fuel type. He spends 1.5hrs per week on record-keeping in addition to 14 hours per month on accounting. He uses paper and pencil to track all this in-situ. This data can all be tracked using spreadsheets. He then plugs the data into Keyhole Mark Up Language; a software program that creates lists and interconnects those lists. The demonstration of this software during the workshop was rapid, however, it was clear that the key is the interconnectivity of the lists. Each item on the look up list is linked to multiple categories. One possible outcome of the information is a summary of activities of a season, which is then compared to monetary activity. Chris advises that we store only the answers we want to have. It is important to start by asking ourselves: what are we asking of our system, **and** what are our goals for modifying our behaviour according to our records?

Mapping is another way of approaching this information storage. Maps have multiple characteristics. The labels track perimeter, area and much more and Google Maps is a starting point so we can track on- farm geographical information.

From the Q&A: Google Docs is another starting point tool that will allow you to format your data. Keyhole Mark Up Language is a sophisticated data storage tool and Google's spread sheet tools may be a better starting point for creating systems for gathering data about your farm and the way you are working.