



Cropland, grasslands and wetlands can co-exist. Together, they help create a more sustainable and profitable farm.

FlexFarm

A NEW DUCKS UNLIMITED CANADA PILOT PROGRAM PUTS AN END TO THE STRUGGLE FARMERS FACE TRYING TO MAKE UNPRODUCTIVE ACRES PROFITABLE

High soil salinity. Prone to flooding. Poor soil quality.

Farming some land can be unprofitable for a variety of reasons. And when land fails to deliver yields, producers suffer.

Larry Durand understands this plight all too well. Durand operates Field Good Agronomics, a crop consulting company based in Humboldt, Sask. that works with farmers to get the most out of their land.

For years, Durand has seen producers struggle with patches of unproductive land. Other than advising his clients to take their land out of rotation, there was little else he could offer them.

Until now.

A year ago, Paul Thoroughgood approached Durand to pitch a possible solution. Thoroughgood, DUC's regional agrologist for Prairie Canada, described a pilot program to Durand that would compensate producers for taking marginal, unproductive acres out of rotation to be restored with wetlands or grasslands. Producers enrolled in the program would receive a sum of money for signing up, followed by annual payments on their restored land.

"Everyone has areas on their farm that hurt their bottom line," says Thoroughgood who farms in Saskatchewan. "Farmers are trying to produce food, turn a profit and steward their land to leave it in better condition when they started farming it." This new program could fit the bill, literally.

Durand praised the plan. "I thought it was fantastic," he recalls.

"I like to think that I have a pretty good feel for what farmers are going to find valuable," adds Durand. "Otherwise, I'd be in the wrong business."

In January 2017, DUC launched FlexFarm at the Western Canadian Crop Production Show in Saskatoon, Sask.

"This program's a win-win. Not only does it create dollars and cents for the farmer, it also creates habitat for wildlife, healthy riparian areas, opportunities for carbon sequestration and any other environmental benefits that go with putting in perennial cover or wetlands," says Durand.

While FlexFarm's currently being piloted in three rural municipalities in Saskatchewan (Hoodoo, Three Lakes, and Humboldt) Durand says, "I can really see this program taking off."

Durand's already mentioned the program to some of his clients. "I approached a couple farmers and after I gave them the details, the next thing I knew, I was getting calls from their friends and neighbours."



FlexFarm, Ducks Unlimited Canada's new pilot program, offers producers financial incentives to take unproductive, marginal land out of rotation to be restored with a slough or grassland.