



Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

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Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association Set to Deliver New Applied Research Program

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The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) is pleased to have been named the delivery agent of an exciting new applied research initiative announced by the Province on December 5 - World Soil Day, 2019. The On-Farm Applied Research and Monitoring (ONFARM) program is a four-year, Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership)-funded initiative that OSCIA is delivering on behalf on the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). ONFARM builds on work completed under the Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative's (GLASI) Priority Subwatershed Project (PSP), supports Ontario's Soil Health and Conservation Strategy, and helps the industry meet commitments under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. The three pillars of ONFARM that will benefit Ontario's agricultural industry are: 1) Continuation of the monitoring and modelling established in PSP, 2) Establishment of on-farm paired trials in-field to identify soil health indicators and test the effectiveness of Best Management Practices (BMPs) in cooperation with farmers, and 3) Enhanced engagement opportunities with stakeholders and farmers to foster a network of demonstration farms.

PSP was initiated in 2015 by OMAFRA in six subwatersheds within Ontario's Lake Erie basin with significant nutrient loadings from agricultural activities which threatened the lake's water quality. A network of monitoring and modeling programs was established within five Conservation Authorities: Ausable Bayfield, Essex Region, Lower Thames, Maitland Valley and Upper Thames. OSCIA is looking forward to continued work with these organizations under the ONFARM program. The goal of PSP was to determine the costs of removing agriculturally sourced phosphorus from local watercourses. This was accomplished by implementing and evaluating the efficacy of certain BMPs. Continuing the research and monitoring within the PSP framework will support the development of a science-based assessment of the efficacy of phosphorus reduction of select BMPs.



In addition to supporting the continued monitoring and modeling established in PSP, ONFARM will establish an expanded network of soil health testing and assessment sites. Working closely with farmers, partner organizations, and the Soil Resource Group, BMPs will be selected that are most relevant for Ontario farmers. Field trials will be established on 25 farms throughout Ontario to enhance our knowledge of BMPs' effectiveness in various soil types and under different cropping systems. Verification and validation of soil health indicators will also be conducted at these sites, and data analysis will determine multi-year crop and economic effects of the selected BMPs.

ONFARM will provide evidence to motivate further adoption of soil health BMPs through on-farm knowledge sharing and technology transfer activities. This will complement the efforts of farmers, landowners, Conservation Authorities, and other agencies and non-government organizations, to increase the adoption of BMPs and enhance soil health in agricultural fields. Working with all of these groups, OSCIA is looking forward to laying the groundwork of a long-term, economically viable network of demonstration farms to serve as outreach and education points for years to come.

The Partnership is a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative to strengthen the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector and increase its competitiveness, prosperity and sustainability, including through enhancement of soil health and water quality. Stay tuned for more information on ONFARM from OSCIA and OMAFRA, or contact onfarm@ontariosoilcrop.org if you are interested in learning more or getting involved as a cooperator farmer.

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