

REGIONAL VARIETY TRIALS: NEW MANAGEMENT, NEW CONVENIENCE

APG is now coordinating this long-standing annual pulse variety showcase, and making its provincial, regional and local data available sooner and digitally.



Field peas are the most commonly grown pulse crop across Alberta. Regional Variety Trials help farmers make decisions about which variety works best in their growing environment.

It's a time-honoured part of crop planning in Alberta. Pulse growers review the data from the previous year's Regional Variety Trials (RVTs) and make their selections for the upcoming planting season when the printed guide arrives in the mail each January.

In the mail? In January?

Many producers today want their RVT data sooner and in a form that's easier to use than the traditional printed document. This allows them to secure enough seed for the varieties they want to plant. For some in-demand varieties, January is just too late.

Now, there's an app for that. The official Alberta Pulse Growers app is available for Android and iOS, and provides detailed RVT information and plenty more.

"We've received great feedback from our members," said APG Research Manager Dr. Jenn Walker. "Many growers say they appreciate that they can check out the app any time, and then drill down for more detailed information on the APG website."

Getting RVT data on your phone is just one result of a change that occurred in 2018. When the provincial government stepped back from its traditional role managing the RVTs, APG stepped

forward and took on the program's pulse component.

An essential resource for pulse growers

As Walker explains, the Regional Variety Trials program is an annual showcase of commercially available registered field pea, dry bean, faba bean, lentil, chickpea and soybean varieties across the province. It allows growers to assess the suite of varieties being sold by seed companies, and examine yield and other production data most relevant to them. Data is available in province-wide, regional and local layers.

The sites are managed by applied research organizations, as well as Lakeland College, Olds College, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

When APG stepped into the lead pulse role for Alberta, it hired AgCall as project manager. The company works with site partners and co-operating growers, then compiles the data. Yield is the number everyone looks for, of course, but growers want a fuller picture of a variety's performance than just bushels per acre.

"We now include more detailed information on precipitation, fertility and overall crop management," Walker said. "Growers can see: these peas were managed the same way I do on my farm, so this information is relevant to my operation. Detailed data tables are available on our website, and of course, we still provide all the pulse crop data for the printed seed guide."

Looking to 2020, APG will continue to evolve the Regional Variety Trials program to add more value for members.

"It's been a real learning curve since 2018," Walker said. "Our growers have indicated that the Regional Variety Trial information is very important to them and we want to make it timely and convenient for them to use as well."