

Soil Health Producer Highlights Series

My Farm, My Soil, My Story

Elgar & Annie Grinde—Holden, AB

- * What does “Soil Health” mean to you and why is it important?

A robust, diverse, healthy soil allows you to grow plants that can best take advantage of the solar energy available. Healthy soil is the foundation for plant growth and even civilization, since we all have to eat. Without a solid foundation, a building will fall or crumble and ignoring soil health puts our whole society at risk.

- * What management practices have you used to improve soil health on your operation?

We always try to think through to anticipate the end results of management decisions. We have incorporated planned grazing management including grazing 365 days per year on stubble and swath grazing into our operation. We are conscientious as to what kind of chemicals we use and when we use them. We also use crops that have fibrous root systems and avoid crops like canola and wheat that do not.

- * What changes have you seen?

Our soil now tends to be softer, mellower, and has an increased ability to absorb and hold water. We have some built in drought resistance, which was important earlier this year.

- * What are the biggest challenges for soil health in your area?

The biggest challenge is the mindset and mentality that is determined to maximize short term financial gain without regard for the long term. This is typified by the canola/wheat crop rotation over and over. These crops are not conducive to soil improvement.

- * How do you advocate for soil health?

I try to be an example; to show how to manage for soil health the way it should be done and be part of the discussion to try and improve things.

- * Do you have any future plans for improving the Soil Health on your operation?

To continue to diversify the kinds of plants grown and increase the legume component in my stands for example, plants like cicer milk vetch, red clover, and hairy vetch.

- * How has improving your soil health improved other aspects of your operation?

Improving soil health has helped us maximize our production, especially on years with limited moisture. This obviously helps the bottom line. If you take care of your soil, your soil will take care of you.

Elgar & Annie and their family operate a 500 head cow/calf operation on about 3200 acres Northeast of Holden, AB.



The Battle River Research Group is a non-profit, grass-roots organization located in Forestburg, Alberta. We are an independent, producer driven, applied research association committed to improving Agriculture.

We strive to complete our goal of improving agriculture in a sustainable manner, through a multitude of extension events, along with applied research and demonstration trials.

The Battle River Research Group provides credible, unbiased information using an integrated approach; we do this by partnering with producers, industry and government.

