



**FOOTHILLS FORAGE  
AND GRAZING ASSOCIATION**

*Innovation, education and regenerative agriculture*

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# GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS October 2024

## Director's Note — Wolter van der Kamp

### Greetings FFGA Members

And just like that, summer has passed and fall is here. It seems that within the last week, the leaves have suddenly turned, we've had a night with some real frost, and the chinook winds have started to howl. It's been a good summer for us. Not only did we finally get rain, but it fell when we needed it to. This led to some great grass, and fat cows with nice calves at their side.

Fall to me is an exciting time. It's time to get paid for all that hard work we put in over the summer. Crops and haying is done or underway, but for me its mostly about getting those calves weaned. In our area this means lots of gathering public lands, and big pastures, followed by sorting and shipping. Lets not forget about the preg checking. For me, most of these things are done horseback, which makes this time so exciting and enjoyable. Long hours in the saddle spent exploring new country looking for stray cattle, or helping to sort calves from their mothers, then getting them ready to truck. Being that I am passionate about stockmanship, I see this time of year as a great opportunity to put what you've practiced and learned to use, especially horseback. Helping out friends and neighbors while doing what we love, all set in some beautiful surroundings is one of the things that just makes this lifestyle so great.

With great cattle prices, and what seems like an abundance of feed in the country, we should see some big smiles. I hate to bring up the past, but with a severe drought last year, this year is sure a welcome change. However just

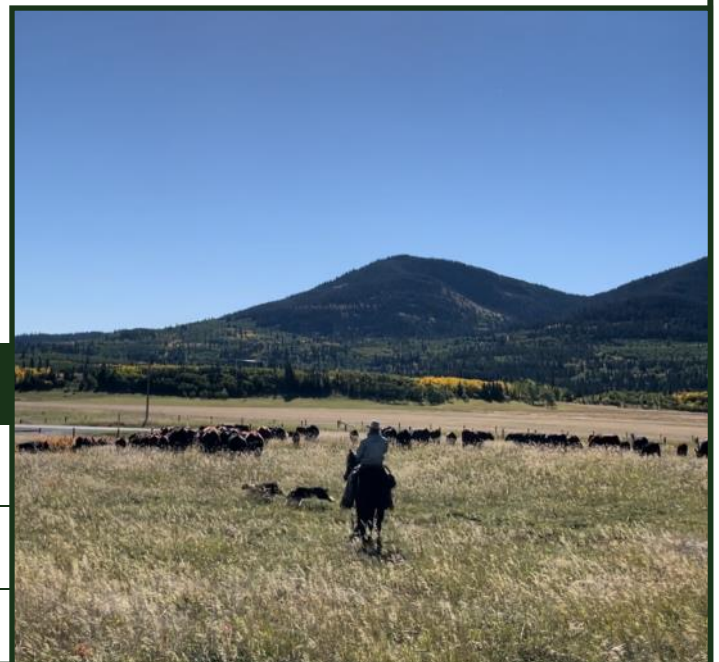
because all looks great now though, don't forget that everything cycles. Drought and lesser prices are likely to return. Winter allows us a great time to look ahead, and plan for next year and beyond.

With that in mind, make sure to check out the workshops FFGA is putting on. If you have some project you need help funding, great programs like RALP and OFCAF are available, and more information on them can be found at the FFGA funding workshops.

A very big help for me, both in my personal life, and in the business side, was attending Ranching for Profit last year. Especially with a good year like this, coming out of the drought, it really gave me some insight, and with that helped to enforce a positive outlook on my future. If you've been on the fence, I would highly recommend attending.

**Wolter van der Kamp**

*Photo: Wolter van der Kamp*



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# RANCHING FOR PROFIT SCHOOL


with Dave Pratt & Jordan Steele



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- **\$3,300.00 CAD for additional people from same operation**
- **\$1,340.00 CAD Ranching For Profit Alumni**

**NOVEMBER 17 – 23, 2024  
OKOTOKS, ALBERTA**

For more information contact Kayla at Foothills Forage & Grazing Association

 (403) 995 - 9466

 [comm@foothillsforage.com](mailto:comm@foothillsforage.com)

*On the Cover: Spring Development Field Demo at Mt. Sentinel Ranch Sept 17. Photo: FFGA*

Thank you for your support!



# Eight Recommendations to Consider When Looking at Cover Crops



Photo: FFCA

The systematic and strategic use of cover cropping systems is vital for sustainable agricultural production as this practice can help alleviate soil stress as a result of intensively managed agricultural land. Cover crops offer multiple ecosystem benefits including: reducing soil erosion, conserving and enhancing soil quality by increasing soil organic matter, reducing fertilizer use, disrupting crop pests and disease cycles, increasing biodiversity, and weed suppression. Several studies have reported positive effects of cover cropping on soil microbial biomass and diversity, and total soil carbon and nitrogen. In addition, cover crops have been reported to enhance soil structure and water retention, reduce nitrogen leaching, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Most cover crop species make excellent cattle forage (for stocker and cow-calf operations alike) and thereby can reduce the expense of feeding hay. Cool season legumes can be used to improve wildlife habitat during winter and early spring when warm season feed resources are scarce. That being said, cover crop success depends on the selection of the best adapted cover crop varieties depending on the goal you plan to achieve. For example, winter wheat may yield the most pounds beef produced per acre whereas a mixture of clover, winter cow peas and radishes will do more to break through a hardpan soil and reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizer.

Accordingly, when choosing a cover crop, producers should consider a variety of factors, including the cost of the seed, the intended use (cover only, grazed, or harvested for forage), how the cover crop fits into the cash crop rotation in relation to anticipated planting and harvest dates, and long-term management goals such as preventing soil erosion or to improve soil organic matter. Soil and climate, as well as the availability of financial assistance,

are also important factors.

Consider the following to determine what, when and if to utilize cover crops:

- Determine your purpose - start by setting goals.
- Diversity of the cover crop mix has advantages and reduces risk over monocultures.
- A well-maintained and properly calibrated planter or drill is key when planting – especially for a diverse crop mix. A diverse cover crop mix consists of both large and small seeds, making calibration a challenge. This can be helped by making it a standard practice to physically stir the seed in the seed box every hour or so and keep planting speeds below 5 MPH.
- Planting depth is important. Successful cover-croppers have found that planting at 1 - 1.5 inches depth provides a more uniform stand.

- Monitor the weather and soil moisture which will impact planting depth and potentially time of planting. Typically in Oklahoma, we plan to seed wheat and rye for grazing by early September, this is not a fixed rule for all cover crops. Weather forecasts should be considered when determining the best time to get seed in the ground.

- Establish cover crops by no-till (when possible) to help retain soil moisture.
- Establish a budget and stay within it. Determining what cover crop mix works best for your operation may take some trial and error. Start small, keep records and monitor success. Think long-term.

Author: Mark Z. Johnson

Original Article: <https://www.drovers.com/news/beef-production/eight-recommendations-consider-when-looking-cover-crops>

## ← YOUNG AGRARIANS → BUSINESS MENTORSHIP NETWORK

**Do you love farming but feel overwhelmed managing your farm business? Are you running a new farm or taking over the family farm and looking for business support?**



**GROW YOUR FARM BUSINESS WITH THE SUPPORT OF AN EXPERIENCED FARMER!**

Young Agrarians Business Mentorship Network matches new and next gen farmers 1-5 years in business with mentors to cultivate the skills for running financially and ecologically viable farms. Mentors support you to dig into the business of farming and lay the groundwork for long-term sustainability.

Mentorship opportunities are available in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

### MENTEES RECEIVE:

- 30 hours of business mentorship with an experienced farmer
- Webinars on business basics, finance, marketing and more
- A profile feature on the YA website and social media
- Opportunities for peer networking and monthly virtual meet ups



### TO LEARN MORE & APPLY VISIT:

[youngagrarians.org/business-mentorship-network](https://youngagrarians.org/business-mentorship-network)

📞 @youngagrarians ✉️ [business@youngagrarians.org](mailto:business@youngagrarians.org)

# ITALY AGRICULTURE & SIGHTSEEING TOUR

FEBRUARY 19 - MARCH 5, 2025



Experience the nature, rich history, and culture of Italy. There will be opportunities to take in the culture through a guided tour through the city of Florence, Cathedral's, the Baptistery, and the Campanile by Giotto. We will also visit the old town of Siena, with the chance to explore the medieval streets, the Piazza Del Campo, and palaces along the way. We will get to experience Rome's deep history with visits to the Christianized Temples, ancient defensive walls and ruins, the Roman Forum, and the iconic Colosseum. We will also get the real agriculture experience by visiting an olive farm, a Chianina Beef farm, an organic cheese made from Sardinian Sheep farm, a black truffle hunt, and a mixed farm with 8 hectares of vineyards in the Vesuvio Slopes.

Packaging Pricing includes: Land only

Prices vary depending on group size  
Twin Rates for Land Tour Arrangements - \$6782.00 - 7637.00 per person

Flights: International flights will be booked once we have final numbers to request group flights, please call if you wish to book on air miles or air points.

For Full Itinerary <https://www.foothillsforage.com/events>

To Book, Contact Lawrence Rowley  
(403) 764-2044 or [lawrence@leadertours.ca](mailto:lawrence@leadertours.ca)



Leader Tours Inc.

# JOIN US!



## Getting Started on Farm Succession with *Annessa Good-Hassard*

**November 14, 2024 - 4:30pm - 8pm**  
**Rockyford Community Center**  
(412 Serviceberry Trail, Rockyford, AB T0J 2R0)

*Annessa is determined to provide her clients with unique options, strategies and outcomes that dive in to the heart of family dynamics, business issues and complex estate plan ramifications.*



**\$40/Individual**

**\$70/Family (2-4)**

**Supper Included**

For more info & to register, visit:  
<https://farmsuccession.eventbrite.ca>

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# Profitable ranching — is it possible?



Photo: FFGA

While not intending to offend anyone, I will express some concerns that may do just that.

Most of the conventionally managed ranches on the North American continent are not profitable. A few are. Many are just breaking even when you take an average of good and bad years. And, quite a few are going broke. Some of those haven't figured it out yet because increasing land values enable them to borrow a little more money each year to keep operating.

If you are going broke, you need to make changes quickly or sell out quickly to stop the erosion of equity. If you are just breaking even or perhaps a little better than that, you should consider making changes that will improve your profitability over time.

Over several decades, since the end of the Second World War, we have been developing a ranching and farming culture that has become more and more dependent on fossil fuel, iron, synthetic fertilizers and chemicals. During that time the prices of those inputs have increased at a rate that exceeds the price we receive for what we produce. Would it not make more sense to reduce dependence on those inputs and develop a system that has a much higher dependence on soil, rainfall and sunshine?

For most of us, it takes a change in mindset to begin to make the necessary changes to become profitable. I was fortunate that early in my story, I was led and mentored by some people who helped me see that there is always a better way. I was then shown some of those better practices and began to recognize that they were based on sound and true principles.

The next step for me was to learn that more production (heavier weaning weights, etc.) was seldom the right objective. I began to recognize the major or big determinants of profit and understand how much they could leverage profitability. I

also began to learn that I needed to think holistically and see our ranch businesses as entire systems with all the parts interconnected and interacting. I have never learned how to clearly explain that in a brief article. Let's just say understanding grows with practice and exposure to other good systems thinkers.

In a ranching business, we must manage four large areas: 1) production, 2) economics and finance, 3) marketing and 4) people. Each of these affects profitability and they all interact with each other. We need to learn to see that and anticipate how a change in one might affect the others. It is easy to let production alone dominate our thinking and decision-making.

There are only three ways to improve profit: 1) increase turnover, 2) decrease overheads, 3) improve gross margin (total returns minus direct costs).

You will say there are more ways than that. However, anything you do to improve profit will be through one or more of the "three ways." Those who have attended a Ranching for Profit school will have been very well exposed to this concept.

For most people starting to attack a problem of low profitability, the most and quickest progress will be made by reducing overheads as much as possible — cutting to the absolute needs. (Overheads are land and the fixed facilities attached to the land, and people and their tools and equipment.) We need overheads, but not as many as most ranchers have.

Remember, in improving profit we are striving to improve "whole ranch profit" or "profit per acre" — not production or even profit per cow.

There are five essentials for successful ranch management that we should adhere to for excellent profitability:

The approach must be both integrative and holistic.

Strive for continuous improvement of the key resources — land, livestock and people.

Acquire and use good planning and decision-making tools.

Wage war on costs.

Emphasize marketing.

These should constitute your approach to management.

The following are major determinants

of profit:

Enterprise mix and choices.

Overheads.

Stocking rate, affected by:

Cow size and milk production.

Grazing and pasture management.

Fed feed versus grazed feed.

Calving season.

Realized herd fertility (from conception to an animal to sell).

Wise input use for optimum production.

Marketing.

All of this leads to two summary statements which come from putting all of the above together.

The first is "adapted cows, calving season and grazing management have high-leverage effects on soil health, carrying capacity, fed feed versus grazed feed, overheads, labour requirement and herd fertility."

Adapted cows, calving season and grazing management work together to have a big influence on soil health, carrying capacity and herd fertility which all affect revenue. They also have cost-reducing effects on fed feed, overheads and labour requirements. You see, these are the big dollars and have little to do with weaning weights or what you do with your supplemental feeding program or the use of pest control products.

The next summary statement and an overall formula for profitability is "reduce overheads, achieve excellent herd fertility, market well and then improve three key ratios: 1) acres per cow (fewer is better); 2) cows per full-time labour equivalent (more is better); and 3) fed feed versus grazed feed (more grazed feed and less fed feed is better)." If you completely understand this statement and know how to make improvement in each of the components listed, your ranch will become significantly more profitable.

It took me many years to put this all together. And, there is much between the lines. However, I hope it is well enough organized to help you understand that there are a few important things to work on to improve the profitability of your ranch.

Questions to ask yourself are:

What overheads can I give up?

Trucks, tractors, horses, unneeded buildings.

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How do I cull cows and select bulls to achieve better herd health and fertility with fewer inputs? How does grazing management play into that? What are the marketing implications?

How do I market to fit my changed and improved management and not just sell?

How can I manage grazing to achieve greater carrying capacity followed by a greater stocking rate and better overall herd performance? If I hold back more females to enlarge the herd, will I have enough cash flow for other needs or might I need to consider grazing outside cattle or using other species?

How do I organize and plan so that

we can run more livestock with less labour and not work harder or more hours?

Will better grazing help me lengthen the grazing season (less fed feed, more grazed feed) — start earlier in the spring and graze later in the fall and perhaps even through winter?

Getting good answers to these questions will require a serious “conventional” rancher to move well outside of his or her current comfort zone. It will require a new mindset and an open mind. It will also require some reading, perhaps some seminars, workshops or short courses, and some visits to ranchers who have already started down the road on some of these recommendations. He or she will no longer be conventional.

What I have written here is an outline of advanced and adaptive ranch management — just an outline.

So, you might guess what to expect in future articles, and you might also review what I have written in previous articles on grazing management, soil health and selecting for good cattle.

Author: Burke Teichert

Original Article: <https://www.canadiancattlemen.ca/livestock/profitable-ranching-is-it-possible/>

## ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN (EFP) WORKSHOP

STARLAND COUNTY OFFICE - MORRIN, AB  
OCTOBER 24, 2024

### WORKSHOP DETAILS:

- Workshop will begin at 9:00am and wrap-up around 3:00pm
- Lunch will be provided
- Please bring laptop or tablet
- Please bring information on your water sources & water bodies if you have them
- If you are renewing your EFP and you have your old binder, please bring it as this can be helpful

*\*Please register before October 21, 2024\**

**TO REGISTER VISIT:**

<https://www.foothillsforage.com/efp2024>



# Funding Opportunities in Alberta: SCAP and OFCAF



Alberta's agricultural sector is a cornerstone of its economy, and funding opportunities like the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) and the On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF) play crucial roles in supporting its growth and sustainability. This report provides an overview of these funding programs, their objectives, eligibility criteria, and the types of projects they support.

## **Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP)**

The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) is a comprehensive initiative aimed at enhancing the competitiveness, innovation, and resilience of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. Launched on April 1, 2023, SCAP is a five-year, \$3.5 billion investment shared between federal, provincial, and territorial governments.

### **Objectives**

SCAP focuses on five key priority areas:

**Building Sector Capacity, Growth, and Competitiveness:** Enhancing the overall capacity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector.

**Climate Change and Environment:** Promoting sustainable practices to mitigate climate change impacts.

**Science, Research, and Innovation:** Supporting scientific research and innovation to drive sector growth.

**Market Development and Trade:** Expanding market opportunities and trade.

**Resiliency and Public Trust:** Building public trust and ensuring the sector's resilience.

## **Programs and Eligibility**

SCAP offers various programs tailored to different needs within the agricultural sector. Some of the notable programs include:

### **On-Farm Efficiency Program:**

This new program supports producers in achieving environmental benefits by improving the efficient use of agricultural inputs.

**On-Farm Value-Added Program:** This program helps producers grow sales, expand production capacity, explore market opportunities, and create jobs in Alberta.

**Resilient Agriculture Landscape Program (RALP):** Supports producers to conserve and enhance the environmental resiliency of their agricultural landscapes. Up to \$150,000 in eligible funding is available per producer. The final year to apply for funding is 2025, be sure to have your application ready to submit when the program opens February 1st, 2025 to avoid disappointment.

**Water:** Supports agricultural water management by helping primary producers adopt agriculture water better management practices and priority actions. This supports better management of risks to water quality and supplies, adaptation to climate variability and the efficient use of water resources. There are 2 funding streams; On-Farm Irrigation and On-Farm Water supply.

### **Funding Details**

SCAP programs typically offer cost-shared funding, with grants covering up to 50% of eligible expenses, (except for RALP which covers producer's implementation costs). The maximum grant amount varies by program, with some programs offering up to \$100,000 per applicant<sup>1</sup>.

### **On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF)**

The On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF) is designed to help farmers adopt beneficial management practices (BMPs) that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance sus-

tainability. Administered by Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR), and the Canadian Forage & Grasslands Association (CFGGA) in Alberta. OFCAF provides financial support to accelerate the implementation of BMPs.

### **Objectives**

OFCAF aims to:

**Improve Nitrogen Management:** Supporting practices that optimize nitrogen use and reduce emissions.

**Increase Adoption of Cover Cropping:** Promoting cover crops to protect and enhance soil health.

**Expand Rotational Grazing:** Encouraging rotational grazing to improve pasture health and soil quality.

### **Programs and Eligibility**

RDAR OFCAF offers funding for various BMPs, including:

**Nitrogen Management:** Funding for agronomic services, equipment rental, and soil sampling to develop nutrient management plans<sup>5</sup>.

**Cover Cropping:** Payments per acre to cover adoption costs, including seed and custom seeding.

**Rotational Grazing:** Support for developing grazing management plans, installing fencing, and planting legumes and forages.

Eligible applicants must be active producers with a minimum of \$25,000 in gross farm income in Alberta. They must also work with a Professional Agrologist (PAg) or Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) to develop a BMP Action Plan.

CFGGA OFCAF offers funding for:

**Rotational Grazing:** Support for developing grazing management plans, installing fencing, and planting legumes and forages.

Eligible applicants must be active producers with a minimum of \$25,000 in gross farm income in Alberta. CFGGA also provides Grazing Mentors to work directly with producers, as well as the Advanced Grazing Systems; an online course for farm producers to learn the basic techniques of rotational grazing and improve their

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grazing systems.

### Funding Details

OFCFAF provides up to \$75,000 per project, with a minimum eligible project cost of \$2,500. All costs must be paid upfront by the applicant, and funding is provided as reimbursement.

### Conclusion

Both SCAP and OFCAAF offer significant opportunities for Alberta's

agricultural producers to enhance their operations, adopt sustainable practices, and contribute to the sector's overall growth and resilience. By leveraging these funding programs, producers can not only improve their productivity and efficiency but also play a vital role in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable agriculture.

For more detailed information and application guidelines, producers are

encouraged to visit the respective program websites and consult with program administrators to ensure they meet all eligibility requirements and deadlines.

If you have any specific questions or need further details on any of these programs, please connect with Sonja at [enviro@foothillsforage.com](mailto:enviro@foothillsforage.com)

# Beef Health and Nutrition Webinar

This **FREE** webinar will outline the importance of CowBytes, a ration balancing software, that helps producers optimize the nutrition of their cattle, ensuring healthy growth and productivity. The VBP+ program supports Alberta producers in implementation of best management practices related to managing risk associated with disease management, animal care, and food safety. The new ABP's VBP+ Incentive, which supports producers in accessing up to \$5000, based on a 50:50 cost share will also be discussed. Blue Rock Nutrition will discuss their preliminary results from the Nutrient Composition of Alberta Pastures Research Project showing the mineral content of several pasture's throughout the province, & how mineral levels change throughout the grazing season.

**November 19, 2024 - 7pm**

**[www.foothillsforage.com/livewebinars](http://www.foothillsforage.com/livewebinars)**



**Kristin Thompson, BCRC**



**Kaley Segboer-Edge, ABP**



**Courtney O'Keefe, Blue Rock**





## Looking to get your feed Nitrate Tested?

### Looking for producers who have:

- Dry Hay
- Standing Forage (Barley, Triticale, Oats, Corn, Grasses, Sweet Clover & Alfalfa)

**The project will include two rapid in-field nitrate test kits.**

Interested producers will need to provide contact information to Olds College.

Producers will receive results of analysis at no cost.

**Contact:** Laio Silva Sobrinho. *Research Manager*  
Technology Access Centre for Livestock Production  
Olds College  
Phone: (403) 556-8352  
Email: lsobrinho@oldscollege.ca

# 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Hereford & Angus Bull & Female Sale

December 4, 2024, 1pm Brooks, AB @ BSSA



## GEMSTONE CATTLE COMPANY

Daniel & Kimberly, Gradey, Bowden,  
Kyleah Doerksen  
P.O. Box 13 Gem, Alberta T0J 1M0  
Cell: (403) 633-0530  
Email: daniel@gemstonecattle.com

Arno & Wanda Doerksen  
P.O. Box 1 Gem, Alberta T0J 1M0  
Res: (403) 641-2498  
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70 Forage developed Hereford & Angus Bulls & 140 Bred Females

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# SECURING SUCCESS

## PRODUCER OPPORTUNITIES

• • • • •

### November 28 2024

### Claresholm, AB

### 9:00am - 4:00pm

Join us to learn about available producer funding opportunities. You will have the chance to network and learn with the experts from different local and federal organizations. In the afternoon, you will have the opportunity to work with experts in 1 of 3 breakout sessions: Environmental Farm Plans, RALP Funding Support, or How To Build Your Grazing Plan.

### Cost

**\$25 - FFGA Member / \$35 - Non-Member**

**[www.foothillsforage.com/securingsuccess](http://www.foothillsforage.com/securingsuccess)**



# NATURE STRATEGY ENGAGEMENT

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas is creating a Nature Strategy to help conserve, manage, and restore our province's natural spaces. This made-in-Alberta plan will support both our communities and economy, much like the successful Water for Life strategy. Your feedback is essential!



WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!



*take the survey*

[www.alberta.ca/nature-strategy-engagement](http://www.alberta.ca/nature-strategy-engagement)

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**Mission:** Assisting producers in profitably improving their forages and regenerating their soils through innovation and education.

**Vision:** We envision a global community that respects and values profitable forage production and healthy soils as our legacy for future generations.

This Publication is made possible by our major funder - Results Driven Agriculture Research



FFGA is a proud member of

