

**Saskatchewan Forage Council News Release
July 2, 2018, For Immediate Release**

The Saskatchewan Forage Council (SFC) recently held their annual general meeting in Swift Current, SK on June 28, 2017. Participants had an opportunity to learn about ongoing research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Research and Development Centre.

The tour, hosted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada featured several forage projects including: establishment of saline forages, re-introduction of sainfoin to alfalfa and grass pastures, perennial mixtures study, and time of grazing native deferred pastures, annual forage polycultures, forage Galega and more.

The tour was followed by the annual general meeting at which the SFC named Dr. Bill Biligetu as the 2018 recipient of the Forage Industry Innovation Award.

Dr Biligetu, is an Associate Professor and Forage Breeding Research Chair at the University of Saskatchewan. In the relatively short time that he has occupied the position Dr. Biligetu has embarked on an ambitious breeding program that not only explores new types of forages, but also seeks to improve a broad range of existing species including alfalfa, sainfoin, crested wheatgrass, hybrid bromegrass, and several other legume and grass species. In addition Dr. Biligetu established and staffed his own laboratory, acquired state of the art field and laboratory equipment and negotiated the transition of the breeding plots from AAFC to the new Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence at the University of Saskatchewan.



Terry Kowalchuk, Provincial Forage Specialist and Dr. Bill Biligetu (right)

Dr. Biligetu has also introduced several new technologies such as the use of near infrared scanning for assessing quality parameters during the variety development process and the use of genomic techniques to increase breeding efficiencies.

Bill is a favourite with his staff, fellow colleagues and students, and has made a point of being accessible to the forage and beef industry. He has rapidly developed contacts within industry and has an extensive network within the research community where he is collaborating with other scientists on a broad range of forage issues and projects.

Current President of the SFC Tamara Carter, who is a forage, beef, and grain producer from Lacadena says, "A strong forage breeding program is the foundation of the forage and beef sectors in Saskatchewan. In the relatively short time that Dr. Biligetu has been a research chair at the U of S he has built on the work of his predecessor Dr. Coulman while at the same time responding to new industry needs."

During the meeting, Sask Forage Council directors Alan VanCaesele, Trevor Plews and Tamara Carter renewed their terms, and also welcomed new nominees, Garnet Ferguson and Holly Thompson to the SFC board. Garnet is the general manager of one of the few remaining alfalfa dehydration plants in Western Canada, Can-Pro Ingredients Ltd in Arborfield. He has extensive experience in managing large farm operations as well as in the production, processing and export of hay products. Holly Thompson was born and raised on a 4th generation family farm, Tee Two Land and Cattle Co. 6 miles south of Kelliher. Her involvement in the family cow/calf and backgrounding operation led her to pursue a degree in Animal Science at the University of Saskatchewan. She joins the board as a student member, and as a representative of the next generation of forage producers and managers, her perspective is welcomed by the board.