



Helpful Tips for Researchers Engaging Farmers in Research.

Working with Ontario's grain farmers.

- **Recognize that every farm and farmer are unique and seek to understand the complexity:**
There is no one “typical” Ontario grain farm. Farm size, history, farming practices, geographical conditions, economic factors, and technological adoption vary widely, making each farm and farmer distinct. This diversity necessitates tailored research approaches to effectively address their specific needs and challenges.
- **Include and listen to farmers’ perspectives:**
Ensure that farmers’ voices are heard and valued. Their experience and insights are crucial to the success of your research. Engage them in meaningful dialogue from the start.
- **Respect farmers’ time and resources:**
Farmers’ time is valuable, and there are many competing priorities on the farm. Acknowledge this by being mindful of their schedules and minimizing disruptions to their operations.
- **Set clear expectations and provide notice:**
Clearly outline the time commitments and potential impacts on their farming operations well in advance. Provide ample notice before visiting the farm or requiring their involvement, allowing them to plan accordingly.
- **Regular and transparent communication:**
Maintain consistent communication with farmers, keeping them informed about the project’s progress and any changes. This will build trust and ensure they are informed. Ask what method of communication works best for each farmer (e.g., phone, text, email, etc.).
- **Show appreciation and offer compensation:**
Recognize the contribution of farmers by offering something in return, whether it’s data analysis, insights that could benefit their operations, and/or financial compensation for their time and resources.
- **Involve farmers in data interpretation:**
Discuss the project’s findings with farmers and seek their input on what the data suggest. Their practical experience can provide valuable context to the results.
- **Respect seasonal demands:**
Be aware of the busiest times for farmers during the growing season. Make participation as easy as possible and provide assistance for more complicated tasks during planting and harvest.
- **Be flexible and understanding:**
Farmers have multiple demands on their time and unpredictable growing seasons can derail the best intentions. Sometimes, despite the best planning, a field plot or experiment may not work out as intended. Flexibility and understanding are essential in these situations.
- **Foster long-term relationships:**
Build lasting partnerships with farmers by continually respecting their needs and contributions. Long-term collaboration can lead to more impactful and mutually beneficial research outcomes.