Pilot-Less Program Gives Green Gold Program a Birds-Eye Scope On Alfalfa Crops

MFGA and M3 Aerial Production Drones partnership may add huge value to first-cut alfalfa program

(Winnipeg, Mb) June 2, 2016— An exciting program partnership between Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association (MFGA) and M3 Aerial Productions is investigating a drone-view component for the alfalfa producers that utilize MFGA's Green Gold Program for the best first-cut date of their crop.

"We are continuing to grow our Green Gold program in all ways possible," says John McGregor, MFGA's hay expert and Green Gold Program manager. "We've been providing the Green Gold program for more than 20 years and have a solid base of producers that rely upon our information to first-cut their alfalfa crops when the Relative Feed Value (RFV) is at the highest percentages, which means higher quality feed for livestock."

According to McGregor, the MFGA's 2016 Green Gold's Hay Day best-RFV-cut day was earlier this week. He says the partnership program is an opportunity to bolster the Green Gold's on-ground, twice-weekly alfalfa clipping service. The existing lab results from Central Testing Laboratories will be cross-referenced with an aerial infrared sensing component and that really interested the MFGA. The first year program was deliberately limited to a few fields this year to gain a working understanding of the best route for the partnership going forward. The irony of the pilot program, of course, is that there are no pilots. M3 Aerial Productions utilizes unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), a.k.a. "drones," equipped with state-of-the-art camera and remote sensors that are changing the picture of agriculture practices.

"There are valuable applications for UAVs in the agriculture industry," says Matthew Johnson, owner of M3 Aerial Productions. "Farmers around the world are being educated on the benefits that UAVs can provide to their operations. From increasing efficiency and profitability, to decreasing waste and environmental impacts, the solution is clear, and it is UAV-based technology. We are very pleased to have this opportunity to work with and help MFGA showcase their Green Gold program."

Johnson says his aerial imaging service can provide farmers and agronomists with detailed data that can be used to help identify specific areas within crops that are suffering from a lack of nutrients, dehydration, disease, and pests. Using a specialized spectral imaging sensor and algorithms (NDVI), M3 Aerial's 5 foot wide AgEagle RX60 UAV is capable of mapping a section of farmland in about an hour. For the Green Gold Program, Johnson says that the pilot program makes total sense.

"We are currently looking at a couple fields in Southern Manitoba with this program and will look to expand to the other growing regions of Manitoba next year once we are able to correlate the results from the lab and the aerial mapping," says Johnson. "UAVs will help make this process more efficient by cutting down on processing time, so alfalfa growers across the province can get same-day notice of when to harvest from the results. It's a win-win situation, and, we are taking a great producer program to even higher levels."

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FOR B-ROLL OR WEBSITE POSTING: M3 GREEN GOLD ALFALFA VIDEO (May 29, 2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsnbIAy75BE&feature=youtu.be

More Information on Green Gold Program: http://mfga.net/green-gold-program/