KSU professor specialized in weed management

A specialist in weed management is the new manager of the Monsanto Learning Center.

Brian Olson, of Colby, KS, started the new position a couple of weeks ago.

Olson fills the vacancy left by Chandler Mazour, the center's first and only manager. Mazour, who oversaw the building of the center in 2009, is the new technology development lead for Ukraine and Russia.

Before taking the new job, Olson was a weed management technology development representative for Monsanto in Colby.

His primary focus was developing management strategies for herbicide-resistant weeds and university management.

Prior to working for Monsanto, Olson was an associate professor and area agronomist for Kansas State University, based out of Colby.

Having a passion for western production agriculture, Olson said he took the job in Gothenburg because he saw new opportunities and challenges.

“I also have a passion for providing educational opportunities for farmers and those in the crop production industry,” he said.

In addition, Olson said finding better ways to manage limited resource, such as water, are needed as “we tryt to meet the challenges of feeding a growing planet.”

Olson said he believes that Monsanto has an important role to play through utilization of facilities like the learning center.

As learning center manager, Olson said he and the learning center staff will develop educational demonstrations and he’ll work with internal and external clientele.

Olson said he’ll also be in contact with the University of Nebraska to develop good and sound agronomic practices.

“You can do a lot with innovation but have to implement it in a way to maximize benefits,” he explained. “You have to know the area and what works.”

Olson said there are agricultural similarities between the Colby and Gothenburg areas such as large numbers of irrigated acres.

However in central Nebraska, dryland corn and soybeans can be rotated because of more moisture while in Kansas, wheat and corn crop rotation is more common.

Monsanto uses a systems approach when working with farmers to manage resources, he said, such as managing water for irrigation and residue to keep moisture in the soil.

Olson said he sees water, commodity and land prices as the biggest challenges facing farmers.

“Water is about utilization and the best way to use what we have,” he explained.

Agricultural producers also must plan for the future because of variability in commodity prices.

On the agronomics front, Olson said herbicide-resistant weeds are a concern.

Olson is married to Melinda Olson and the couple has three boys: Evan, a sophomore; Joshua, a seventh grader; and Jacob, a third grader.

Melinda and the boys will move to Gothenburg once school is dismissed for the summer in Colby.

In his leisure time, Olson likes to fish with his boys and spend time with the whole family which often involves following their activities.

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