

# Woodlots more profitable than cash crops, says forester

By BRANDY HARRISON

LINDSAY — There's gold in them thar trees — or at least double the return of cropland planted to corn, soybeans, and wheat, according to a recent study.

In two East-Central Ontario case studies covering more than a 30-year period, farmers earned an average annual return of \$49 per acre from cropland, without accounting for insurance payments, versus \$95 to \$100 per acre from woodlots, says Terry Schwan, a Guelph district forester with the Ministry of Natural Resources who analyzed eight Ontario case studies.

Unlike cropland, the inputs are next to nothing — periodically clearing storm damage and poor-quality trees and then at 10- to 15-year harvest intervals, paying a forestry professional to mark trees, getting a quote from a logger, and pocketing the money. More or less, just let it grow, says Schwan, who will speak at the Kawartha Lakes Woodlot Conference and Trade Show on Feb. 15.

“That’s the beauty of it: It grows every year. If it’s relatively healthy, it’ll be there in 10 or 15 years with value,” he says, adding that farmers can earn money on poor-quality trees for fuel but get better returns on lumber, particularly veneer-quality logs such as sugar maple, oak, and cherry.

The woodlot conference, which runs from 8:30 a.m.

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