



NAICC NEWS

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT CROP CONSULTANTS

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



By
Jim Steffel
NAICC
President

The High Cost of Doing Business

Summer is quickly slipping away and it sounds like everyone has been too busy to notice. Conversations with a number of our members indicate that strength in the agricultural sector has increased demand for our services. Exploding commodity prices and the complexity of making decisions on crop inputs compatible with potential returns at harvest have created an appreciation for the experience and expertise of a professional crop consultant. The increased value of all crops has encouraged manufacturers to place new products and technologies on a fast track to commercialization, strain-

ing the capacity of our contract researchers and quality assurance members.

Despite all the work created for NAICC members there is a downside to this story. Since last winter when contracts were signed and projects bid we have seen a phenomenal increase in the cost of delivering on those agreements. Have you filled your pick-up lately? It makes you wonder if there will be anything left for profit when the season ends. All water over the dam at this point. Now is the time to focus on those increasing costs and develop imaginative strategies for 2009. Business owners need to consider pricing adjustments and seek ways to conserve or become more efficient. Employees need to think carefully about the many daily tasks performed and consider inventive ways to get the job done with better organization or changes to current procedures. Obviously some cost inflation needs to be balanced with increased pricing, but often such times of strain lead to innovative changes that can improve profitability and quality while providing cost containment. Although NAICC members provide a wide variety of services to a very diverse client base, much of what we do involves standardized procedures. That makes it

easy to get into a routine and not give thought to how we might improve efficiency, the "if it works, don't fix it" approach. Now with costs increasing for almost everything we need to deliver our services that approach is no longer viable.

I expect the high cost of doing business will provide much to talk about when we meet in Memphis but the real interest should lie in ways we can tame those increasing costs within our own businesses as well as for our clients. During my years in NAICC I have seen the membership tackle some monumental challenges in the various areas of agriculture we service. The result always seems to be development of 'a better mouse trap'. We are not alone in this squeeze between inflation and pricing of our services and the resulting chain reaction is the driving force that makes it difficult to predict the cost of doing business in the future. In a way we are fortunate that agricultural commodities are one of the primary inflationary factors which should help us pass on cost increases and with some innovative thinking about how we do our jobs there could be a rainbow behind this cloud.

FEAE News

by *Don Jameson, President*

To the NAICC membership, I commend you for taking the time to give thought to what the NAICC is doing.

I also want to take this occasion to make sure that each of you, our members, knows what your foundation, The Foundation for Environmental Agriculture Education (FEAE), has been doing to serve the NAICC membership.

Becoming a member in the NAICC is one of those commitments that long-time members see as being worthwhile, with both intangible and direct benefits. It has given me a wide array of associations with people whose insights about running a

business, handling agronomic problems or consulting questions I appreciate.

My NAICC membership has also provided a resource to some of my grower clients. It has been possible for me to contact various NAICC consultants across the country to get their slant on a new problem or information about a crop with which we have limited experience. I, in turn, have been able to help some of you. I think this is one of our core strengths, and many clients would say it is a benefit to hiring an NAICC consultant.

Another core benefit that comes with membership is the Foundation's work to

provide education and raise awareness of crop consultants. We administer the Jensen Memorial Scholarship and select the winner each year.

Now, my mentioning of this scholarship should be a prompt for some of you to pass on information to worthy undergraduate students who could easily qualify. The criteria have been changed to allow a wider audience of students to qualify and the due date for the application has been extended into August. This is all updated on our NAICC website, with links to the FEAE and the Jensen Memorial Scholarship. We expect many of you to support this by

pointing your worthy friends or undergraduate summer interns toward this \$2,000 scholarship opportunity.

The Foundation also supports your NAICC by raising money through an annual raffle (and conversely, you support the raffle). In part this money is used to underwrite some costs for the Precision Ag workshops and bring speakers to our annual convention. Case in point is the annual key note/Jensen Memorial Address to be given at the convention next January by a very worthy and interesting speaker but that will be news for the convention committee to release!

In past years, The Foundation has also been particularly involved in supporting the developmental work of the Doctorate of Plant Medicine degree now offered at Florida, and we continue to support the development work for the same program at the University of Nebraska.

One step in getting this word out and educating the public on the value of interdisciplinary integrated training programs at the universities is our presence with an NAICC/FEAE booth at the American Phytopathological Society Centennial Meeting in Minneapolis this summer. Some of you in the membership are planning to

attend that meeting. I will be there, as well as NAICC president Jim Steffel and Billy McLawhorn.

Anywhere we read currently, the challenge to producing more food, fiber, fuel and feed is being highlighted. Our profession is in the spotlight. We are, as some might say, in the catbird seat. Yet we need to play a significant role in "catching up," if you will, to highlight advantages, opportunities and societal contributions that independent crop and research consultants are doing. The need for well- and continually-trained practitioners of crop consulting endeavors is more vital now than ever.

To summarize, I believe your Foundation is working actively to raise awareness, credibility and respect for your crop consulting profession. We are endeavoring to raise money from different entities to advance the work of this foundation and to provide the financial engine to drive many of the direct educational programs that will be demanded by NAICC members in the future. As one involved in both agronomics and sales, I invite our members to consider ways they can contribute financially through direct support, legacy grants or as other means become available.

QA Corner

*Debra L. Green, RQAP-GLP
Renee Daniel*

Francisca Liem, Chief of the EPA's Laboratory Data Integrity Branch of the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, was a speaker at the annual Society of Quality Assurance meeting held this April in Memphis.

She reminded attendees that it is a GLP requirement to notify the EPA in writing if a facility is getting out of the GLP business (see 40 CFR 160.195 (g)). By doing so, the EPA's database can be updated to remove your facility from the list of sites to be inspected. In addition, if there are changes in ownership or the name of a testing facility, the EPA should be notified. This notification will keep you from going to the top of the priority list as a new facility. To notify the EPA of changes, contact:

FRANCISCA LIEM
USEPA Headquarters • Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N. W.
Mail Code: 2225A
Washington, DC 20460
202-564-2365
liem.francisca@epa.gov

Look for a list of the most frequent compliance findings in the next issue.

MEMPHIS IN 2009 - A GREAT MEETING LINE-UP, INCREDIBLE FOOD, SITES...

NAICC is headed to Memphis in 2009 – and there's simply no better spot to gather than the Peabody.

Where the Mississippi Delta begins, the Peabody is in the heart of Memphis' downtown.

Just two blocks from Beale Street and adjacent to the Peabody Place entertainment complex, the hotel is ideally located near great restaurants, sites and shopping.

And it is a place you'll remember fondly for years, with traditions like the live ducks marching daily in the lobby. Memphis' only historic hotel, the Peabody was built in

1869. It has hosted former presidents, renowned actors, famous writers – and thousands of tourists – throughout the years. Recently renovated, you're sure to rest comfortably in this symbol of southern hospitality.

When it comes to sight-seeing, Memphis is a real treasure. With 50 unique attractions, including music museums, art galleries, pro-sports arenas, Mississippi riverboat tours, the Memphis Zoo and the Civil Rights Museum, you'll have plenty of choices! Check out the infamous Graceland and Beale Street historic districts or discover

hotspots like the nation's largest urban park and the "twisted" Ornamental Metal Museum. Or simply savor the sunset over the Mississippi.

And with regard to savoring, start thinking about food. Because Memphis has a great food scene, from incredible local barbecue to five-star restaurants and award-winning international cuisine...

So get ready – we've got a full agenda on tap – and a whole lot of Memphis-style fun!

Registration and program materials will be available in October.

NAICC Supports PIPE

NAICC recently signed a letter to the US House and Senate Appropriations Committee along with other agricultural groups to encourage USDA to continue supporting PIPE — The Integrated Pest Management Pest Information Platform for Extension and Education. We believe the program has the potential to revolutionize pest risk management across the nation, as we wrote in the letter.

About PIPE:

PIPE is a monitoring and early-warning system developed in 2004 to alert farmers to the presence and spread of soybean rust. It has since been expanded to include other crops and pests. The President's Budget for FY 2009 requests \$2.27 million in the Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative to maintain the core infrastructure of PIPE.

PIPE is a coordinated framework that has

been highly effective in helping growers make informed decisions about fungicide application. The system includes a surveillance and monitoring network, a Web-based information management system, criteria for deciding when to apply fungicides, predictive modeling and outreach. The development of the web-based tracking and early-warning system has greatly enhanced the ability of farmers to manage

risk and avoid unnecessary fungicide applications. USDA's Economic Research Service has found that rust management due to PIPE saved farmers as much as \$353 million in 2005 alone.

The PIPE system has now been extended to control pests for additional crops: legume and pulse crops, melons, cucumbers, squash and pecans. By maintaining the core PIPE infrastructure and adding new crops, the potential for PIPE to help growers manage pests and diseases is unlimited.

The PIPE system was funded primarily by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) in crop years 2006-2008. This funding is available only for development projects and can no longer be used to maintain the PIPE system.

In the U.S., there are thousands of crop consultants who routinely survey agronomic crops for pests and diseases. This represents a source of data that could potentially be used in the iPIPE. Many consultants are users of the ipmPIPE and would benefit if it is expanded to additional pests and commodities. In addition, consultants potentially could also receive products through the restricted PIPE interface such as model output, data sheets or other management tools.

In October, Stan Winslow, NAICC president elect, will be on hand at Center for IPM at NC State University to speak about how iPIPE will affect consultants. Below is an outline of the proposed plan for Crop Consultants continued participation in the Pest Information Platform prepared by Roger Magarey, NCSU and Cooperator with USDA APHIS.

ipmPIPE

The Pest Information Platform for Extension and Education (PIPE) provides a platform for agricultural information management for scouting, diagnostics, data integration, analysis, interpretation and dissemination. The platform supports data

exchange by universities, industry, government, extension and the public. The PIPE system was first implemented in 2005 in response to the incursion of Asian soybean rust. A major barrier to the successful expansion of PIPE to additional pests and commodities is the high cost of data collection. In 2005, approximately \$900,000 was spent on the publicly funded monitoring for soybean rust with a similar amount spent in 2006.

The Industry PIPE

A complementary model for PIPE expansion builds upon survey and diagnostic data currently collected by industry. Many large agronomic companies have field agronomists that routinely collect observations of pest presence or absence. Many companies also maintain diagnostic laboratories that handle thousands of agronomic samples. The development of an Industry Pest Information Platform (iPIPE) is under discussion with the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), North Carolina State University and the agricultural information technology company ZedX inc.

Crop Consultants

In the US, there are thousands of crop consultants (CCs) who routinely survey agronomic crops for pests and diseases. This represents a source of data that could potentially be used in the iPIPE. Many CCs are users of the ipmPIPE and would benefit if it is expanded to additional pests and commodities. In addition, CCs potentially could also receive products through the restricted PIPE interface such as model output, data sheets or other management tools.

Proposal

Crop consultants can potentially be participants in the iPIPE. The participation of CCs could be managed by a committee representing the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) and other consultant groups. The committee could

nominate a list of pests of concern and decide which organizations would be able to see data collected by CCs. These organizations might include ASTA, USDA-APHIS, ipmPIPE and university researchers. The funding to customize the iPIPE to the needs of crop consultants could be provided by these organizations in exchange for data access.

Crop consultants who volunteer to participate in the program would receive access to the iPIPE interface. These crop consultants would upload data such as the first pest occurrence by county. The individual locations or names of farms would not be uploaded to the system. Participating CCs would be able to view pest model output and other products on a restricted interface. Some products may be able to be downloaded or printed and shared with grower clients.

Pests of Concern

Crop consultants would nominate a list of pests of concern for a pilot phase project. The ideal pests might be of national significance, migratory in nature and are easily recognized, trapped or diagnosed. Candidate pests might include soybean rust (*Phakopsora pachyrhizi*), Corn Ear worm (*Helicoverpa zea*), Wheat Stem rust (*Puccinia graminis*) and Black cutworm (*Agrotis ipsilon*). *PLEASE SUGGEST OTHER PESTS.*

Next Steps

Stakeholders in the development of the industry PIPE will meet in Raleigh, NC on October 15. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the future development of the iPIPE, including the role of crop consultants. Invitees to the meeting include representation from USDA, ASTA, ipmPIPE and universities. Stanley Winslow has been invited to make a presentation on behalf of crop consultants.

NAICC Welcomes Analync as New Sustaining Member!

NAICC proudly announces Analync, Inc., as our newest sustaining member. You'll have the opportunity to learn more about the company firsthand at the 2009 AG PRO EXPO in Memphis; in the interim, below you'll find a bit of information about its origins.

"Analync - The Newest Tool for Optimizing Agricultural Nutrition"

By Timothy Cartwright, MS ChE, Vice President - Technical Services, Analync, Inc.

The traditional soil test is based on the Albrecht science which incorporates the use of the CEC and cation base saturation. These values then become the basis for making nutrient applications. This technology was "cutting edge" 60 years ago and continues to have relevance today. However, the Albrecht method has short-

comings and the need for more accurate nutritional applications became the focus of Analync research almost 10 years ago. The thrust of the Analync system was to base recommendations on the nutrient availability and not nutrient content. Ultimately, our research found correlations that accounted for the differences between

soil types and regions and provided the consultant and end user more accurate data for making bulk recommendations and setting nutritional guidelines.

A perfect example of this can be found in the historical recommendations of calcium. The traditional soil test would find an acid extractable level of Ca in ppm. This was

then used with the other base cations to calculate CEC and PBS, from which bulk calcium recommendations would be made. This method assumed a set value for calcium availability but didn't account for calcium interaction with other nutrients. Further, if the Ca- ppm were above a certain level, then no bulk amendments were recommended – regardless of plant need or soil availability.

But, what if, in reality, the calcium available for root uptake was significantly less than desired? This is the gap that Analync fills and the report would actually recom-

mend calcium applications to satisfy the nutrient demand in the plant. This is but one example and Analync has made similar availability determinations for 17 other nutrients and parameters of the soil.

The newest feature of the Analync report is the use of the ENR – Estimated Nitrogen Release. This value is location-specific and considers the impact of organic matter, temperature and rainfall on the release of nitrogen from natural sources. This is an invaluable tool for predicting the timing and quantity of N release resulting in more efficient bulk applications and less chance

for runoff and groundwater contamination.

Since its inception, Analync was primarily used in the golf industry. However, over the past eight years, several analyses were performed on agricultural crops with noticeable success. Because of this success, the new owners of Analync want to share the potential of this analysis tool and are dedicated to providing the same level of service to the agricultural consultants.

For more information about Analync, Inc., contact Timothy Cartwright at 901-854-8331 or info@analync.com

NAICC Investigating Discounted Health Coverage for Members

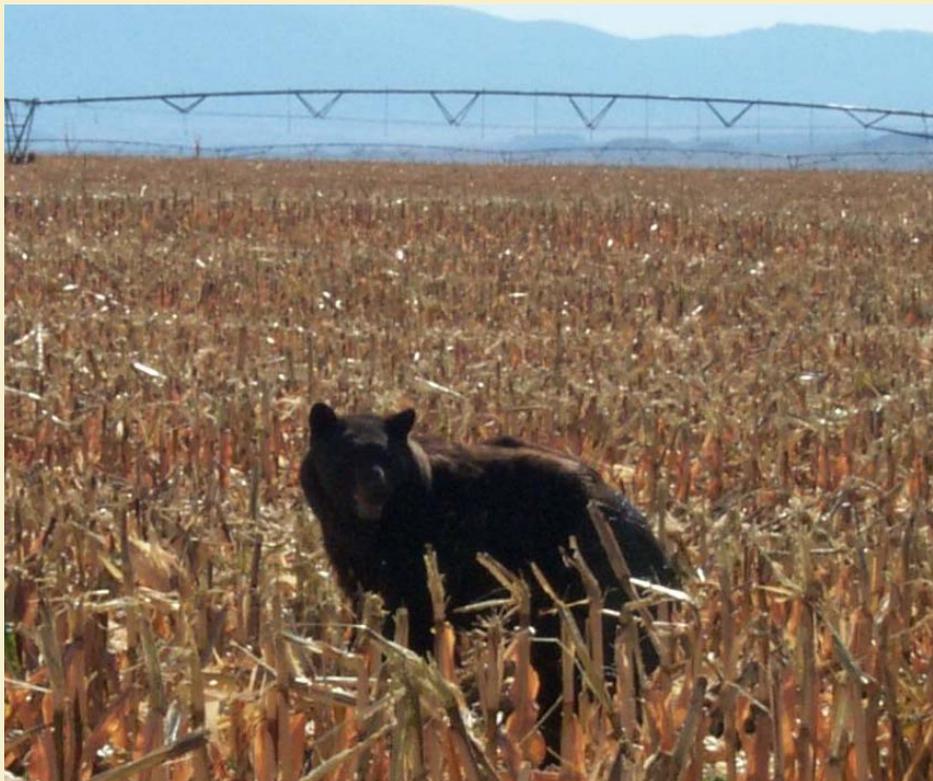
NAICC offers many membership benefits and one new way to do so is to offer different types of insurance to our members. Danielle Johnson of John Hancock is proud to offer members of the NAICC the opportunity to participate in discounted health coverage. Through their benefits company, Innovative Benefits Group we are able to

shop several leading carriers of health coverage in order to provide your membership with the best quality for the best price. Please assist us in providing you with the most accurate quote possible by completing the attached questionnaire. If you decide that you are not participating please submit your information and check the

field for decline.

If you are interested in health coverage please fill out the form at the end of this newsletter and return it to Danielle by August 29.

NAICC is also considering looking for accident, life insurance and other insurance coverage.



Crop and Research Consulting – Never a Dull Moment

*Photo by John Hecht
Cortez, Colorado*

CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL CROP CONSULTANT

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