



NAICC NEWS

Official publication of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants

Volume 8, Number 1

The Voice of the Professional Crop Consultant

January 1994

NAICC White Paper

Who Are America's Independent Crop Consultants? How Do They Affect 16 Percent of Our Farmland?

Over the last year NAICC developed a white paper designed to introduce the profession to those outside agriculture. This paper was developed from nationwide research performed by various NAICC members, particularly Doane Agricultural Services in cooperation with 'Ag Consultant' magazine, and an agricultural specialist. This article is taken from a longer version.

In agriculture, as in all modern business, information is the raw material that good managers use to become smart ones. Thoughtful use of accurate information is the common denominator linking successful farmers across the nation. But successful farmers require information that is timely, specific to their fields and integrates practices to meet multiple needs, always with an eye toward profitability and long-term resource stewardship.

That's where independent consultants come in. And they come in often. A nationwide survey conducted by Doane's Agricultural Services in 1993 showed independent consultants virtually control 15.7 percent of U.S. farmland. And the profession is growing every day.

But who are they and what do they do?

Independent consultants are professional practitioners who draw upon applied problem-solving skills, backed by experience and training, to solve farm management problems. They are comfortable working across scientific disciplines and linking technical knowledge from research

with practical knowledge from the school of hard knocks.

Independent crop consultants are professional information-gatherers and integrators. Some serve grower-clients. Others generate knowledge through contract research on specific practices and technology. Many do both. Their common purpose is turning good managers into better ones by helping manage risk more effectively, while also turning biological opportunities on the farm into tangible, end-of-the-year, in-the-bin and on-the-ground accomplishments.

Consultants are professional trouble-shooters. They always try to help clients avoid problems, but when trouble does arise, they help clients find and implement solutions in two ways:

- by gathering real-time information on what is happening in individual fields;
- by piecing together imperfect information into practical, timely solutions.

Here are some examples of NAICC members in action:

It's the Water!

In southern Florida, Glades Crop Care provides a range of services to vegetable producers. One grower-client with 1,800 acres of staked, fresh-market

tomatoes had a serious problem with Fusarium crown and root rot. Fungicides were ineffective and the disease was cutting yields by up to 30 percent. The grower was facing a fiscal disaster.

By carefully assessing conditions and practices in the affected fields, **Charles Mellinger** of Glades correctly diagnosed the source of the problem— inadequate attention to water management. Where the water table rose for prolonged periods following the heavy rains common in the area, the

(Continued on page 7)

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Addresses NAICC Meeting

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy will be the keynote speaker at the NAICC annual meeting in Memphis Jan. 28. He will address the plenary session at 9 a.m.

Prior to his appointment as agriculture secretary, Espy represented the second district of Mississippi in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was first elected in 1986.

Espy served as Majority Whip at Large and vice-chair of the Democratic Leadership Council. For six years he served on the House Agriculture Committee.

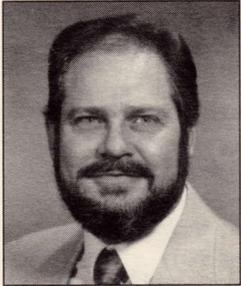
Before coming to Congress Espy was a Mississippi assistant state attorney general.



Mike Espy

Picking Up Inventory

Bruce Nowlin, NAICC President



I will be at the NAICC annual meeting in Memphis this month. Stocking up on inventory. What is my inventory?

Same as yours, of course. Crop consultants and contract researchers deal in information. That's all we have to sell.

Businesses that have more traditional inventories, like tires or clothes, go to market to stock up on inventory. They go to meetings to learn about new developments that have a bearing on what kinds and how much inventory to buy. A successful business has to be pretty selective about what types and how much inventory it keeps on hand.

If your inventory is information, quality control is even more important.

What kinds of information do we need to keep in stock? We need information that will keep us in business. Information that will keep our clients coming back for more. Information that will help us utilize what we learn and convert it to a form that will help us and our clients.

I guess there are three main ways I get my inventory of information during the course of a year:

1) **Reading.** From trade magazines like *Ag Consultant* to professional journals. This area is the one that suffers the most. I have high hopes of getting around to all the reading I need to do, but it just does not seem to happen.

2) **Listening.** Some like to call this networking, but that is an overused word for communicating with the people we know and trust to give us answers or referrals for information. I am not shy about getting on the phone and calling other professionals for help.

3) **Meetings.** This is probably the most important way I get information. Professional meetings, commodity meetings, industry meetings. These meetings are also a way to meet the

people who become important to method #2 above.

My place to get inventory each year is the NAICC annual meeting. It has been my favorite since the first one I went to in Austin, Texas, in 1981. It is my favorite because over the years it has been valuable to me. It is attended by other consultants who do work similar to mine, but who may approach it from a much different standpoint. I learn from these people. When I go home, I have valuable information to sell.

Some meetings are free or do not cost much to attend. This is a meeting I am willing to pay for. Isn't that one of the maxims of the business world—you get what you pay for?

I don't think it's all that expensive anyway. If you combine the NAICC membership dues (\$195 a year) with the cost of meeting registration (\$235), it works out to about \$35 a month. I'll bet most of us spend more each month on (pick one) dog food, payments on shotguns, satellite dish, cable TV. Even when you add in a plane ticket and room (all meals are covered by the registration fee), it is still less than \$100 a month.

Sounds like a small amount to spend on the inventory I'll be selling all year.

I hope I run into you at the meeting in Memphis. We can both stock up on some inventory.

Annual Meeting

Companies Sponsor Meeting Events

Private industry is helping sponsor events at the NAICC annual meeting Jan. 27-29 at The Peabody Hotel in Memphis.

Supporters such as NAICC sustaining members not only contribute money—sustaining members contribute \$2,500 in membership fees—but bring a wealth of information to NAICC. Some sustaining members also serve as members of the Allied Industry Committee.

At this year's annual meeting, Ciba Plant Protection will help underwrite expenses of the banquet, NOR-AM Chemical Co. will host a coffee break, DowElanco will sponsor the

awards luncheon, Little Publications and Rhone Poulenc Ag Co. are hosting the new members' reception, *Ag Consultant* magazine is sponsoring the program, and FMC Corp. will sponsor the president's luncheon. Miles Inc. Crop Protection has donated money to help defray the cost of other annual meeting expenses.

The contributions and donations of NAICC supporters enable the organization to expand, to reach out to more consultants and researchers and to keep annual meeting fees as low as possible. They also provide a valuable resource for individual consultants and contract researchers.

NAICC Joins in Sponsoring Conference

The future of the Conservation Reserve Program and what use might be made of the acres now enrolled in the program will run Feb. 10-11 at the Arlington Renaissance Hotel in Arlington, Va.

The primary sponsor of the conference is the **Soil and Water Conservation Society**, one of NAICC's cooperative member organizations.

NAICC is co-sponsoring the event.

For more information contact the SWCS at 7515 Northeast Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, Iowa.

Gain The Competitive Edge: Changing From Bug-Checker to Business Person

By James Powell

The best consultants in the country have at sometime all lost a client or did not get him to re-sign for the new year and asked themselves: "Why?" One totally unnecessary and absolutely preventable reason so many independent consultants lose a customer is by failing at what I feel is 50 percent of your job as a consultant—*customer relations!* We simply get so busy being field consultants that we tend to ignore the customer relations end of the business.

There are several steps that a consultant could take to improve

"Quality service—that's my edge."

communication and public relations with the grower. Failure to establish and maintain this early bond and feeling of trust with the client could result in misunderstandings and the need to sell yourself to your customers each year.

About three years ago Powell Agricultural Consulting Services, Inc. recruited a small private business management and PR firm to help set and implement a long range goal of expansion and improved services to my clients. I simply wanted to offer more to my growers.

Guide

The first thing we did was to write and publish a "Cotton Producers Guide" that was distributed at no charge to over 500 growers, gins and coffee shops. This booklet gave basic guidelines for selecting a well-educated, experienced, professional crop consultant. It was well received by my existing clientele and by producers that I had not worked with before. The time-consuming editing, lay out, print production and mailing for the 15 page booklet was made easier by hiring outside help—people who knew what they were doing.

Next we implemented an early season "Update" flyer that we mailed to each client to get them thinking about my services. Throughout the season we

mail regular "Update" flyers to each client to keep them informed of anything new. I find that reiterating information from my one-on-one meetings with clients is very helpful. The "Update" publications also keep my clients informed of any changes that I become aware of. We close out the season with an end-of-season summary.

Although all these additional marketing tools are time consuming, I feel that they were instrumental in helping me increase my business and to keep clients for whom I have worked for several years well satisfied. Many of my growers look forward to the updates and publications as a source of timely information.

One-on-One

The final, rather obscure part of our long range planning was to redouble efforts in one-on-one client communication. Every client has my office, home, and mobile number. Every "Update," correspondence, invoice and statement sent out reminds my clients that I welcome their calls anytime day or night, workdays or holidays. This makes Powell Ag a vital

link in all their crop management decisions. The down side is that I am always "on-call." The up side is a much stronger working relationship and closer bond with my growers. The more valuable consultants are as advisers and information sources the more likely the grower is to retain their services—even in a tight financial year.

Since implementing these intense customer relations efforts, the benefit has been a dramatic increase in my business. My monthly financial statements assure me that improved customer relations have improved my bottom line.

The consultant with a future needs to be more than just a "bug checker." He or she needs to constantly change and improve a professional image in every way. The consultant who survives in this fast changing agribusiness environment must seek out and heed professional advice on marketing and management strategies to keep abreast of the latest trends. Not only must we stay current on the latest research and crop management techniques, we must be able to accurately communicate this information to our clients.

When somebody asks I always say: "Quality service—that's my edge."

(James Powell of Powell Agricultural Consulting Services, Inc. in Lubbock, Texas, is a voting member of NAICC.)

Annual Auction

Last Call for Fun Things to Buy

For the driven consultant: show friends and family that you *can* lighten up. If Gary Larson's quirky Far Side comics appeal to you, then you'll want to bid high on a cross-stitched, one-of-a-kind Commodity Sweatshirt when it goes up at the NAICC annual meeting auction.

Mark Otto's potato sweatshirt collection has developed quite a following among friends and family. From the classic "Death Throes of a Potato Beetle" to "Potato Nightmares," the artist Jennifer Otto has done her best to improve her husband's perspective on potatoes and their maladies.

The highest bidder will win a personal consultation with the artist to determine his favorite commodity and its pests. She will then design and stitch a unique Commodity Sweatshirt just for you. (*Artist's disclaimer: You get what you get, but I think I'm pretty funny.*)

There is still room for trips to Europe, knitted socks, hand-crafted pipes, woodcarvings, tickets to a football game or any other item you wish to donate to be put into the raffle.

Raffle proceeds benefit NAICC. To donate contact the NAICC office in Memphis.

Networking Trip Yields Tips for Consultant and Growers

By Billy McLawhorn

There has been little minimum tillage work done in cotton acreage in the sandy soils of eastern North Carolina and limited available data on crop management considerations. But Donald Heath is a cotton and tobacco farmer who is a client of ours and interested in minimum tillage work.

He and I have visited growers and SCS officials in a small area of northeastern North Carolina who had recently adopted minimum tillage systems. Additionally, he had visited a number of growers in South Georgia who were adopting a "row-till" system, but he still wasn't completely comfortable with some of the changes he was about to make. He was also making a major investment in converting his operation from four to eight row equipment.

I told him I knew several members of NAICC who had worked with minimum tillage systems, including **Ray Young** of Wisner, La., who had invented and developed the "stale seedbed" approach. The "stale seedbed" is a term used for a tillage system when the soil is bedded in the fall several months before planting, rather than in the spring immediately before planting. Young had asked me to come down and visit him when I could, so this situation created a perfect chance.

I asked Bill Smith, another grower in the area who is extremely innovative, if he'd like to join us, thinking he'd enjoy visiting my friends in Louisiana. Although Bill wasn't particularly interested in minimum tillage, he is an extremely sharp grower who is always looking for

ways to make his operations more efficient.

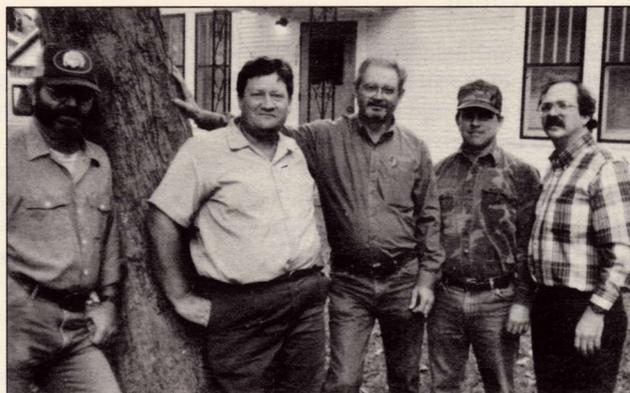
What follows is an edited chronology of our visit with NAICC members in Louisiana:

Nov. 11

12:30 p.m. CST—Arrived in Jackson, Miss., and rented a car to drive down I-20 then on 65 south through Delta cotton country. All of us are amazed by soil uniformity, large field sizes, amount of irrigation. Our area consists of field sizes of about 10 acres, sandy, highly variable soils and essentially no irrigation.

3:30 p.m.—Stopped near Clayton at a John Deere dealership and visited with Ken Hines, a salesman. He was very cordial and showed us some of the tillage tools used in the area and explained a little about local cultural practices such as trends toward disking less and doing more land preparation in the fall. Bill offered Ken some good ideas to pass along to John Deere engineers on how to improve their highboy sprayers.

7:10 p.m.—We finally arrived at the Holiday Inn where we met **Grady Coburn** and **Harold Lambert** and two of Harold's clients who are also part owners of a new cotton gin. Harold and his growers were gracious enough to drive 90 minutes each way to meet us for dinner. We feasted on fried alligator, froglegs, crawfish cooked three or four different ways, steak and ice cold beer at a place called Tunk's in



***New Friends, New Colleagues.** North Carolina NAICC member Billy McLawhorn, at right, took two of his grower/clients to Louisiana to study tillage methods. In Cheneyville he and his growers met with, from left to right: Bobby Stanley, research farm manager for Pest Management Enterprises, Inc., Bruce Allemand, Grady Coburn, Rusty Elston of Pest Management. Allemand and Elston are new NAICC members while Coburn is one of the founding members.*

the middle of nowhere. The conversation ran the gamut of why we had converted so much corn acreage back to cotton, to cotton production, tobacco, rice, sugar cane farming. They're amazed at how cheap our rent is and we're amazed at how cheaply they get their cotton ginned.

Nov. 12

8 a.m.—Arrived in Cheneyville and found Grady, his research farm manager and several of his consultants and technicians in the office drinking coffee and planning their work schedule. Several of these guys have recently joined NAICC. We sat around discussing mostly sugar cane and tobacco production. We got a glimpse of the very efficient way Grady handles field reports and in-season recommendations.

8:30 a.m.—Grady took the three of us to show us the countryside. We visited a cane operation where cane is currently being gathered and they taught us the basics of their cultural practices. Also, we visited another of Grady's farmer/clients who showed us his equipment and went through the detail of his cultural practices raising corn, soybeans and cotton—probably more similarities than differences to our



***Deere Me, More Equipment.** North Carolina grower Donald Heath, left and Bill Smith, center, talk with Louisiana John Deere dealer Ken Hines about local preferences in equipment.*

methods. Our discussions mostly involved labor management and government regulations.

1 p.m.—Arrived at Ray Young's house in Wisner. He showed us some of his farms, including the farm where they first developed the "stale seedbed" concept. These seedbeds were on soils that had a high clay content and were difficult to work in the spring—timely planting and stand establishment problems were primary motivating factors in developing this practice, but since then he has realized more benefits from the program than he expected.

We also saw several farms Ray has planned for furrow irrigation. He gave us a lot of interesting information on techniques, water and equipment requirements, etc. Although field situations where this method would work would be limited in our area, both Bill and Donald have farms where this possibly would work and they intend to investigate it.

Later, we went to see Ray's equipment site—and we found possible solutions to a couple of our problems. Ray Young has a directed sprayer that is much better designed than the ones that are marketed in our area, and it appears that it will solve a couple of application problems that we've had with every cotton grower we work with. Donald said he will probably buy one since he will need an eight-row anyway and Bill will probably make modifications to his.

We also saw a row guidance system that is incredibly simple and much less expensive than others we have looked at. Ray pointed out the merits of a mower that he has that shreds as well as cuts to improve stalk degradation. This is a good idea anyway, but especially important in a no-till or minimum-till system.

8 p.m.—After feeding us dinner at a local restaurant, Ray and Dorothy Young insisted on having us spend the night. We only put up token resistance since we were having so much fun and learning so much we didn't want to leave anyway. We talked some more about cotton production, pest problems and solutions.

Nov. 13

8 a.m.—Ray took us out to meet one or two of his clients. Although the cotton

had been harvested (except for a little scrapping), it was obvious that most of the cotton stalks remaining produced only a bale or so on land that Ray doesn't consult on. In contrast, Ray and his customers—and perhaps a few others in the area who have adopted his "stale seedbed" approach are consistently producing yields over twice that level. Since the soils in the area are pretty uniform within a given neighborhood, we are all surprised at



Inspecting Equipment. North Carolina grower Bill Smith appears interested in equipment shown to him by Ray Young, left.

the tremendous variance in yields when management was the only variable.

9 a.m.—We went to the Macon Ridge Research Station and visited another gracious person, Bob Hutchinson, who has been doing research on reduced tillage systems for a number of years. Due to differences in soil types and erosion problems we feel we have a special need to subsoil and to plant cover crops. Bob has been doing work that includes similar systems to the ones we are trying to adopt. He gave us a lot of information on cover crop management, residue management, pest management considerations and his experiences with various minimum tillage equipment. We left with more ideas and a number of manuscripts to reinforce much of what he told us.

12:30 p.m.—After we visited Ray's new cattle herd, we stopped by his son **Jesse Young's** house and spent some time talking about production inputs, ginning, pest problems—especially boll weevil eradication—and compared notes on production.

1:45 p.m.—Donald, Bill and I stopped by Ray's house to say goodbye and try to thank the Youngs for their hospitality. Then we headed to Vicksburg, stopping at a few tractor dealerships to check out the equipment.

After our trip, Donald is leaning more toward consideration of a no-till system rather than a row-till operation and both of us need to re-examine some of the preconceptions than we've had about

weed control particularly. Maybe we *can* do some of the things that we've been repeatedly told won't work around here.

While Bill isn't in a position to adopt no-till at this time, after our trip he is definitely examining the number of trips he makes across the field and trying to work out ways to reduce them.

At the risk of sounding overly dramatic, I think all three of us will do

some things differently and look at what we are doing more critically—thanks to our visit with NAICC friends in Louisiana.

(Billy McLawhorn, Jr. of McLawhorn Crop Services, Inc. in Grifton, N.C., is chairman of the NAICC Membership and Rules Committee.)

Speak Up on WPS

Therese Murtagh, EPA Occupational Safety chief, will review the new WPS manual at an opening session workshop at the NAICC annual meeting Jan. 27 at 1:30 p.m. at The Peabody Hotel in Memphis.

If you want your voice heard by someone intimately involved in EPA's regulatory process, this is the place to be.

Retirement Planning: Using Mutual Funds Proves Wise

By Harold Lambert

Most of us in the ag consulting profession are self-employed small-business people. This often means we must plan and execute our own retirement program. It is one of those things so easily put off, but it is such an important part of managing our business. Without a doubt, retirement planning is absolutely necessary. Fortunately, you can do most of it yourself and it can be easier than you think! Always consult with your lawyer or accountant on major financial matters.

Get Started

Beginning and planning is most of the work to retirement.

The Vanguard Group offers a new software package for \$15 that you put on the computer and it allows you to plug in your key retirement factors—including your current situation and estimates of the future—then calculates how much you should save today to be comfortable tomorrow. Now you have a goal.

Once started you have some saving and investment options.

Those of you using mutual funds know what I mean. Mutual funds are easy and fun to use for self-directed retirement planning. You can be a part of a number of investment areas, like the stock market, and never have the hassle and risk of purchasing individual stocks and bonds. If you have IRA funds in certificates of deposit (CD), you have probably thought of moving some monies into a higher yielding vehicle. That's easy to do with mutual funds:

simply have your new IRA custodian receive a transfer from your CD custodian. Such a move introduces risk (no FDIC guarantees), which you may not like. Higher risk investments demand extra consideration and study, especially if you are new to a more diverse savings program. Many low risk mutual fund investments are also readily available if you look for them.

Learn the Jargon

Keoghs, 401(k)s, SEPs,... What do all these mean? An excellent resource is Kiplinger's *Invest Your Way to Wealth* (Call 1-800-544-0155. The book costs \$18.95 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling) for background on retirement planning and personal financial management.

Whether or not your retirement or savings program includes mutual fund investing (it should, I assure you), another "must have" booklet is *Directing Your Own Mutual Fund Investments*. It is available from the Mutual Fund Education Alliance, 1900 Erie St., Suite 120, Kansas City, MO 64116 for \$15 (includes shipping and handling). Consider joining the American Association of Individual Investors (AAII) at 1-800-428-2244 for \$49 per year. It is a non-profit educational organization and has local chapters in most major cities.

The monthly AAII Journal and annual AAII guide to no-load mutual funds are invaluable. AAII has many other member benefits as well, like quarterly mutual fund updates on diskette, etc.

And one more guide is Personal Advantage Financial, \$49 per year, P.O. Box 53751, Boulder, CO 80322.

Follow Leaders

And follow some others, too. Some leading no-load mutual fund families that I like are (all offer IRA investing): Vanguard, 1-800-653-1551; Twentieth Century, 1-800-345-2021; Fidelity, 1-800-544-8888; Invesco, 1-800-525-8085, and Harbor, 1-800-422-1050. But your favorite may be among the hundreds of other fund families. Study the types of funds offered and choose several to watch for a time before actually investing. Daily mutual fund quotes are in most large newspapers and publications like *The Wall Street Journal*. You'll impress your friends and look like a big shot studying the financial section each day! Try to choose funds with no sales load, an expense ratio of less than 1 percent, and good average annual return under varying market conditions. Soon you will see ways to lower your risk and raise your potential return by being familiar with things like: dollar cost averaging, timing, seasonality.

Footnote

There is only one thing I would suggest regarding stock brokers, and it relates specifically to Merrill Lynch. Find a Merrill Lynch Financial Consultant (which is Lynch's term for "broker") that you trust and ask about their "Financial Foundation Report." You will supply detailed information on your own personal financial situation—every detail! They will produce a comprehensive and revealing report for you that is so thick that it comes back as a hard bound book. It will contain data that you will find surprising, and useful in planning for retirement and other things. And of course, the Merrill Lynch broker will use it to try and sell you something or other, but you are under no obligation. There is a \$175 fee for this report, but it is well worth it!

(Harold Lambert of Lambert Agricultural Consulting Inc. in Innis, La., is a member of the NAICC Executive Board.)

Calendar of State Groups Lists Meeting Dates

Mark your calendars for state consultants meetings listed below. If your state group isn't listed, please send the information to newsletter editor Jackie Flaum at 3279 Kinderhill Lane, Germantown, TN 38138.

<u>State Association</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Location</u>
Texas	Jan. 23-25	Austin, Texas
Mississippi	Feb. 8-9	Greenwood, Miss.
Georgia/Alabama	March 10-13	Callaway Gardens, Ga.

What They Do

(Continued from page 1)

root zone was becoming fully saturated, in effect suffocating some roots and hastening their decay. The decomposing roots provided a food energy source to invading pathogens which multiplied, jumped from dead roots to colonize live ones as the season progressed, and moved up the growing plant to do their damage.

Mellinger suggested changes in irrigation and water table management with the goal of managing pathogen levels in the root zone. Following the new program the water table was kept at a more uniform level and the problem with *Fusarium* crown and root rot disappeared, lessening the need for fungicide applications.

Balancing Bugs

In Texas cotton country, consultant **Reed Green** developed an Integrated Crop Management (ICM) system used on more than 20,000 acres. Paradoxically, the success of Green's system is measured, not only by how many bad bugs it kills, but by how many good bugs it preserves!

Essential elements of this consultant's cotton ICM include:

- Early planting of properly adapted varieties so that plants get a head start and reach maturity early, thereby avoiding the third *Heliothis* generation that hatches in the area—the generation that is toughest to control;

- Reducing the amount of nitrogen applied. Too much nitrogen makes plants produce vegetation rather than fruit, which reduces yields and creates lush, green plants that attract insect pests;

- Intensive field monitoring and careful timing of pesticide applications;

- Use of selective pesticides to preserve natural predators; and

- Reduced rates of insecticide application

whenever possible to cut costs and minimize adverse effects on beneficial species.

The system requires constant monitoring and timing of all field operations. Green's method is cost-effective and environmentally friendly—and it works by keeping a step ahead of problems.

Breaking Down Resistance

Reserving chemical controls for serious pest outbreaks is the agricultural equivalent of a human physician advising patients to save antibiotics for serious illness.

California consultant **Pat Weddle** started searching for non-chemical alternatives to help control the codling moth, the most serious pest problem in San Joaquin Valley pear and apple orchards.

In 1987, the codling moth was showing the first clear signs of resistance to the insecticide of choice in that area. Weddle was determined to preserve the product's effectiveness, since other chemicals that would kill the codling moth would also kill beneficial insects.

With the help of a grant from the



Checking the Crop. NAICC president Bruce Nowlin of Hydro, Okla., left, and California consultant Pat Weddle of Placerville, Calif., right, examine some apples on Pat's client's land.



Exchanging Information. Crop consultants and contract researchers get their information from many sources, including the agricultural chemical industry. In fact, several companies are sustaining members of NAICC and sit on an Allied Industry Committee that provides input to the Board. Here, NAICC member David Harms of Naperville, Ill., right, goes over last minute details for a committee report with Pat Robinson of American Cyanamid Co., center, and NAICC member Charles Mellinger of Jupiter, Fla.

Pear Industry Research Foundation, Weddle explored a number of alternative practices and biological control technologies. The resulting program used carefully timed chemical applications in conjunction with the spraying of a sex lure called a pheromone. The pheromone confused the male codling moths and kept them from locating mates.

The insect population declined, allowing a reduction by about two-thirds in the amount of chemical needed to keep the remaining moths under control. This not only cut costs and pesticide use, but pushed back the time when the moth will become resistant to the preferred chemical.

Many Heroes

Mellinger, Green and Weddle have made a difference in their clients' profitability and in the environment of the areas where each lives, works and raises a family. But their stories are not unique. In fact, they're repeated around the country every day. For example:

- Consultants working on corn in Castro County, Texas, increased growers' net returns by over \$82 per acre, according to a Cooperative Extension survey.

- In Virginia, where some of the nation's fastest race horses are raised, consultants manage grass pastures and hay fields to optimize the balance of energy and nutrients in feed, thereby maximizing performance (not to mention winnings).

- Sugar beet producers in Minnesota, following the advice of consultants, consistently cut nitrogen application

(Continued on page 8)

What They Do

(Continued from page 7)

rates by 60 to 80 pounds, resulting in healthier plants, increased sugar content, and up to a \$100 increase in net per acre returns.

Just Any Consultant?

Independent crop consultants work exclusively for their grower-clients and remain focused on one outcome—cutting costs while sustaining resource productivity. They are free to recommend technology or inputs from any manufacturer or supplier, and base recommendations solely on what makes sense for each client, given the client's level of management ability, equipment, and related needs and inclinations.

Consultants do not have sales quotas to meet, excess inventory to move, or bonuses to look forward to if a given volume of product is moved. They owe allegiance to no company, approach to farming or scientific methodology. They are free to sample what works, to seek help and technical information from all sources, and to question experts from government, manufacturers and dealers or cooperatives.

Consultant members of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants and state-affiliate organizations are recognized professionals, bound by a code of ethics that encompasses business practices, interactions with clients and neighbors, and responsibility to society as a whole. NAICC's code of ethics, continually revised since the organization's birth in 1978, lives up to the challenge facing all professionals.

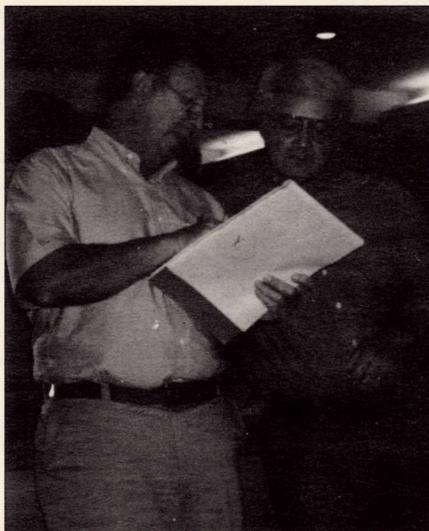
NAICC also certifies the credentials of crop consultants presently through the Registry of Environmental and Agricultural Professionals Institute (REAP). To be REAP-certified as an independent professional crop consultant, applicants must have a four-year degree in agriculture or related field, four years' experience, and meet the requirement of NAICC that he or she receive no compensation or financial benefit from a client's purchase of products. Continuing education requirements are also rigorous.

Professionalism is also about accountability. Consultants are applied

natural resource managers, cutting client production costs by using fewer inputs and managing pests through integrated systems. Their successes translate directly to lessened environmental burdens.

The Consulting Business

Consultants are, for the most part, independent small business practitioners who sell information and management-based services targeting individual



Conferring. Crop consultants and contract researchers in NAICC are information specialists. Former NAICC president Dan Bradshaw of El Campo, Texas, left, and NAICC Executive Board member Clyde Sartor Jr. of Vicksburg, Miss., exchange views at an NAICC meeting.

growers fields, usually on a per-acre basis. Most contracts cover soil fertility and pest control recommendations; others include soil and water conservation practices, irrigation management, animal feed testing and formulation, manure management, monitoring chemical residue levels in soil or water, helping document compliance with rules, or maintaining records needed for financial accountability.

In helping clients meet both day-to-day and long-run challenges, consultants collect data and integrate it into concrete strategies. The goals shared by all consultants are to make clients more efficient in the near-term and, through resource stewardship, more productive and profitable over

time. Achieving these interrelated goals rests upon the effective integration of information and analytical skills. Academic training broadens the consultant's vision and sharpens diagnostic abilities. Experience provides ground-truth.

Even though a mere 2 percent of the U.S. population is now working on farms, agriculture touches more American lives than any other means of livelihood. Farmers produce the food Americans eat, the fiber for much of the clothes Americans wear and have a major impact on the quality of air and water in this country.

Independent crop consultants are dedicated to helping this important 2 percent meet society's changing needs and expectations by giving them the greatest management tool: timely, accurate and specific information.

New Members

Voting

Ron Seward, Ph.D. (Entomology)
MACA, MEA

Seward Agri Consulting
410 Laura Ann
Collierville, TN 38017
Home: (901) 853-8791

Crops: Cotton, corn.

Services: Entomology, soil fertility, soil sampling.

John (Jay) M. Welch, Jr., B.S.
(Entomology) LACA

Welch Ag Consulting Service
121 Simonton Lane
Vidalia, LA 71373
Office: (318) 336-8197
Home: (318) 336-8197

Crops: Cotton, soybeans, rice, wheat, milo, corn.

Services: Entomology, weed control, soil fertility, product demonstration.

Calendar of Events

January 27-29—"Professionalism in Agriculture" NAICC Annual Meeting—The Peabody Hotel, Memphis, Tenn. Contact NAICC headquarters at (901) 683-9466.