



NAICC NEWS

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Secretary Hints at Regulatory Relief

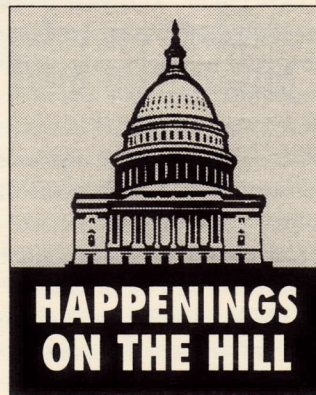
In the keynote speech at this year's annual meeting, Acting Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger discussed what he termed the "four major realities" that will permeate the farm bill debate.

- The new Congress that is urban and inexperienced. "The new members must be educated that USDA programs make major contributions to agriculture and agriculture makes major contributions to life in the United States," he said.
- The budget constraints necessary under the continuous effort to cut the deficit.
- Public concern over nutrition, food safety, and environmental issues.
- International trade agreements.

"We will work hard to ensure that those on the Hill acknowledge the progress farmers have already

made voluntarily and to ensure that when regulations are necessary, they are reasonable and don't inhibit farmers' progress," Rominger said.

"I think you will see more reasonableness in regulations," he added. "The White House and OMB (Office of Management and Budget) are doing everything they can to lessen the impact, but we have a long way to go. We have too many regulations now."



Comments Submitted on Worker Protection Standards

The deadline for submitting comments on the proposed rule for the Worker Protection Standard was February 10. Thanks to many of you, EPA has received numerous comments on how crop consultants and contract researchers will benefit if they are exempted from the requirements of WPS. Under the proposed rule, anyone performing crop consulting activities, and their direct employees, will be exempted through December 31, 1995. After January 1, 1996, anyone who is licensed or certified as a crop consultant

and their direct employees will be exempt, with the exception of pesticide safety training. In NAICC's official comments, EPA was urged to implement the exemption for crop consultants and encouraged to approve NAICC's certification program as one that is "approved by a state, federal, or tribal agency." (For more information on the NAICC certification program, see article on page 3). Also in the comments, explanation was given on how crop consultants and contract researchers protect their employees from exposure to hazardous pesticides. It will be several weeks before EPA makes its final report on the outcome of the proposed rule. Watch this space for updates.

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Acting Secretary of Agriculture takes time out for pictures and questions after speaking to the General Session.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"Teamwork: Can Do!"

by Harold Lambert

If you weren't there, by now you've heard about the outstanding success of the 17th annual meeting of NAICC in San Diego, Calif. "Best yet" was the comment I often heard, summing up the quality of the topics covered in crop consultant and contract research sessions. The highlight of the general sessions had to be the keynote speaker Richard Rominger, Acting Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, D. C. USDA Special Assistant for Pesticide Policy, Larry Elworth also imparted sage advice for the organization, which I will revisit at a later date.

The record attendance of 247 is more evidence of the quality of our meeting. But a lot of work goes into an annual meeting, and it is proven once again that teamwork and a "Can DO!" attitude on the part of so many people leads to great results. Heaps of "thank yous" are not enough for the dozens of sponsors and exhibitors. And the same goes for the legions of NAICC members who acted as hosts for speakers and other guests, moderated sessions, prepared presentations, ran audiovisual equipment, and helped the "atta girl"...er...Memphis staff keep things on track. As with so many meetings, I am grateful that the quality of the one-on-one discussions at meals and in the hallways was every bit as top-notch as that of the sessions.

The coming year promises to be challenging, but very fruitful for NAICC. We are fortunate to be well positioned for extensive contributions to upcoming 1995 Farm Bill discussions in Washington, D. C. Your thoughts along these lines would certainly be welcome. The re-engineering of our certification program is something you will hear more about. Soon the membership campaign will be underway. More examples of "can do" teamwork. And what about the 18th annual NAICC meeting (Jan. 24-28,

1996) in Orlando, Fla.? Plans for it are already in full swing. Later in the year this newsletter will keep you filled in. But oh, if you only knew all the special ideas and plans being considered for this meeting. It will be THE meeting to attend. Now, please be sure to send in your meeting evaluation forms for San Diego along with ideas for Orlando.

I will close by saying that I'm honored to serve NAICC in any capacity, as I have benefited and gained much more through the years than I have put in. This year is certain to be no different. Surely you know the job would be impossible without a great administrative staff and Executive Board, and, of course, committees. But, your help is the most important in another way. You should realize that your input, your suggestions, and your constructive criticism are so valuable to me, the staff, and the Executive Board. Please promise me that this year you will make at least one suggestion to us, and that you will make every effort to sign up at least one new member (more on this later). We want the organization to continue to move forward, to deliver even better "customer service," but your efforts are needed to help make this year as great as it can be.

This past year this space has been occupied by Past President Maggie Alms' column. Now there is a hard act to follow. I feel like Elizabeth Taylor's seventh husband: "I know what to do, but how do I make it more interesting and fulfilling?" Maggie's speech in San Diego, "A Seat at the Table," drew a well deserved standing ovation from the crowd. That speech and her year as President will not soon be forgotten. For me it invokes the memory of another good speech. In November of 1992 in Washington, D. C., when former NAICC President Bruce

Nowlin (ever notice that he is wearing neckties again?) poignantly told the audience to "do good work." So for the year ahead, with the teamwork we have demonstrated, let's get busy and "do good work" at our "seat at the table."

*("Happenings on the Hill"
continued from page 1)*

EPA Proposes Rule on Research Laboratories

Last month, EPA published yet another regulation that affects contract researchers. The National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) appeared in the Federal Register on December 2, 1994. The proposed rule includes provisions for a national laboratory accreditation program which would supplement the currently operated EPA Office of Enforcement Compliance Assurance FIFRA & TSCA GLP programs.

Not unlike WPS, contract researchers were not aware that this would adversely affect them until Mick Qualls, Qualls Laboratory in Ephrata, Wash., updated NAICC participants at the 1995 annual meeting in San Diego. NAICC is working closely with the Society of Quality Assurance (SQA) and others to monitor this ruling. SQA has prepared a position paper on this program they presented at a meeting in Washington on February 14-16. SQA has been given 10 minutes to give comments opposing the proposed rule at this meeting. David Dull with EPA's Office of Compliance will also have 10 minutes to give EPA's position. The remainder of the meeting will be for government officials only to formulate procedures for this proposed rule.

SQA is a not-for-profit organization based in Morrisville, N. C., that is dedicated to the advancement of quality concepts and methods in toxicological, environmental, pharmaceutical, biological, physical, and chemical sciences.

A summary of SQA's position paper includes:

1. The currently proposed NELAP program neither meets U. S. FIFRA/TSCA GLP requirements nor is it harmonized with internationally endorsed GLP programs.
2. While the proposed NELAP program may fill the needs of those laboratories and state operated programs,

including CAA, CWA, RCRA, NPDES, and CERCLA where standardized analytical methods are used, it does not and should not address the needs of federally operated, research oriented programs, including FIFRA and TSCA, that do not utilize standardized analytical testing methods.

3. The SQA has asked and repeats its request that a stand alone program to cover GLP regulated studies be developed by EPA, SQA, and other interested parties. This program should accommodate the structure and requirements of existing GLP programs, and not be added to a Quality Control oriented program that is being built to satisfy different needs.
4. The SQA strongly believes that if change must take place, that change must be implemented to harmonize with internationally accepted criteria. Any accreditation program developed for FIFRA and TSCA should be mandated and federally governed; it should encompass all GLP testing operations. One nation-wide fee structure must be established with a sliding scale based on business volume and mix of scientific disciplines.
5. If this is to be a voluntary program, stakeholders in the program must have equal voting rights.

If you have technical questions regarding the program, contact one of the following individuals:

Jeanne Hankins Mourrain

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Congress Passes Unfunded Mandates Bill

A bill introduced by Senator Dirk Kempthorne (R-ID), that would control the amount of unfunded federal mandates on state and local governments passed the Senate by a vote of 86-10. S.1 makes it more difficult for lawmakers to pass bills that contain mandates that are unfunded and exceed \$50 million.

The House passed a similar measure by a vote of 360-74. Congressman Wes Cooley (R-OR) introduced an amendment to the House bill that would have included existing environmental laws. The amendment was defeated. Opponents of the amendment claimed it would have jeopardized bills that deal with clean water, clean air, superfund, endangered species, and worker safety protection.

Regulatory Reform Act of 1995 Introduced

S. 291, a bill which would require federal agencies to review existing major regulations, and use a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis and science-based risk assessment was introduced by Senator William Roth of Delaware. By reviewing existing regulations, the federal agencies will have to decide whether the benefits justify the costs. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) would be required to compile an accounting of the costs, benefits, and impacts of all federal agencies every two years. Also, federal agencies that control environmental pollutants or govern existing natural resources would be required to operate through market-based mechanisms.

Registration Procedures Streamlined

EPA has issued an update on the Registration Division's progress on streamlining its activities. According to EPA, all activities take a "common sense" approach to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations and becoming more responsive. Activities include amendments by notification on water soluble packaging and rodenticide packaging.

Process improvements on acute toxicity studies and data, expedited registration, and the notification process were also made.

In streamlining label review, EPA has completed an extensive document to be used by EPA staff in reviewing and determining the acceptability of pesticide labels. The manual will be available to the public as soon as possible. Among other improvements announced by EPA, the agency will explore ways to make labeling clear, effective, and informative so that consumers can use products safely and make informed choices.

NAICC REVAMPS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Certification Board has announced changes in the NAICC certification program, including a name change, which are the culmination of a years work.

The Certified Professional Crop Consultant and Certified Professional Crop Consultant, Independent designations (formerly called the Certified Independent Crop Consultant) are the agricultural equivalent of the CPA designation for accountants and membership in the bar for attorneys. To gain the prestigious CPCC or CPCCI certificate, an applicant must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in an agricultural discipline and at least six years of experience in the field. A rigorous testing requirement, consisting of both a standardized exam and a case study narrative report, are also required. Finally, certified individuals must obtain 36 continuing education units (CEUs) each year.

"Our standards are rigorous and our members are enthusiastic about them," said **John Kimbrough** of Lexington, Miss., who chairs the NAICC Certification Board. "We figure that if we set

(Continued on page 4)

high standards for the people who advise farmers, that's a very effective way to send a message to Washington that increased regulations are not necessary. We are very dedicated to helping our clients design farming programs that are economically and environmentally sustainable, and we're willing to do what it takes to be sure we're up-to-date and well-informed on the technology necessary to do that."

NAICC Gains New Board Member

In accordance with the new Bylaws passed by the membership late last year, the NAICC Executive Board has increased in size by one director. **Lynn Henderson**, President of **Doane Agricultural Services Company** and publisher of *AgRetailer* and *AgriMarketing*, has been chosen by the Executive Board to be the first to fill this position.

"I'm pleased with the experience and broad perspective Lynn brings to the Board," said Harold Lambert, NAICC President. "His expertise in marketing, publishing, and research have been valuable assets to the Alliance through his work on the Allied Industry Committee, and we appreciate his willingness to become even more closely involved." Directors each serve a two year term.

U.S. Farmers Give High Marks to Crop Consultants

Farmers in the heartland of America are satisfied with their crop consultants and follow their advice most of the time, according to a survey conducted by Doane Agricultural Services with cooperation from **Argus Agronomics**. Of the 208 growers who currently use a crop consultant, 99 percent are satisfied with the service they receive, and 95 percent follow the consultant's advice all or most of the time. The study was commissioned by NAICC and the results reported by Doane President

Lynn Henderson at the annual meeting in San Diego.

A total of 1,400 questionnaires were mailed to large operators in the Midwest, West, Southwest, Delta, and Southeast, and the response rate was 35 percent. Of the Midwestern growers who responded, 32 percent reported that they currently use the services of a crop consultant on their corn, soybean, wheat, and sorghum acres. Demand for consulting services in other areas was highest on cotton (96 percent), followed by fruits and vegetables at 31 percent, wheat at 24 percent, corn at 19 percent, soybeans at 13 percent, and sorghum at 12 percent. In the Southeast, 38 percent use consulting services, with demand rates climbing in the west. Forty-three percent of Delta growers seek consulting advice, and 56 percent of the farmers in the Southwest and West count on a consultant when making production and management decisions.

Weed and insect control recommendations topped the list of the most popular services at 83 percent, closely followed by crop inspection/scouting (68 percent), fertilizer recommendations (54 percent), soil testing (51 percent), and integrated crop or pest management recommendations (50 percent). Twenty-three percent also sought irrigation management advice, and 21 percent asked for seed variety recommendations.

Sixty-seven percent of the growers surveyed reported that their main advisor was self-employed, while 17 percent were employed by a farm supply dealer, and 7 percent by a crop consulting firm. Four percent of the respondents relied on the Extension Service for advice, and 2 percent belonged to a pest management association.

For a copy of these results, members should contact the Memphis office.



Elworth, Ferguson Receive Service to Agriculture Award

The NAICC Service to Agriculture Award was presented to USDA Special Assistant for Pesticide Policy, Larry Elworth and Judy Ferguson of *Ag Consultant* magazine at this year's awards dinner.



Special Assistant for Pesticide Policy Elworth accepts Service to Agriculture award.

Elworth complimented the Alliance on their involvement in federal policy formulation in 1994. "It has been a real advantage to have you people involved in Washington," Elworth noted. "Acting Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger has placed major emphasis on making sure agriculture is represented in all debates, and you have given us a true grounding in how things actually work out in the field."

Elworth also spoke of the USDA emphasis on decentralization. "We're pushing decision making back down to the local level, to IPM teams made up of growers, consultants, researchers, and educators," he said. "It will be the teams' job to define what IPM is for each crop and region. We can't define that nationally or across the board. The teams will also establish base lines for where IPM is now, decide on area research and education priorities, and reach conclusions on how to measure progress.

"You are the people who have to help us decide what we need to do," he concluded. "There will be a direct connection between what you folks decide needs to be done and what is done."

Judy Ferguson, editor of *Willoughby*,



Judy Ferguson of *Ag Consultant* magazine accepts Service to Agriculture award at the Awards Banquet.

Ohio-based *Ag Consultant* magazine and longtime member of NAICC, also received the Service to Agriculture award for her coverage of the crop consulting/contract research profession. Said Ferguson, "I have been following the establishment of the crop consulting profession since 1974 when I returned to the agricultural publishing business. It has been truly fascinating to follow the development of a profession and the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants, which is the only national organization targeted to crop consultants and those in related fields.

"These plant health practitioners devote an enormous investment in time and energy to further their grower-client's interests while protecting the environment we all share. They lead clients step by step through new Integrated Crop Management techniques. They suffer economically when their clients' crops are flooded out or shriveled in the fields due to drought—and the clients are often at least covered partially by insurance. When our government decided to ban exports to a particular overseas market or limit planting, the crop practitioners suffered economic damage and emotional stress. Yet the majority of them have persevered and many have found the time to nurture this professional organization. It is a great satisfaction to me to know that NAICC feels I have contributed in some way to their many successes."

A Seat at the Table

by Maggie Alms

I named this article "A Seat at the Table" so I could talk about tables. The one we had back home was big, square, and oak. But there are other kinds of tables. I also named it that so I could talk about the food on those tables, especially pie. And so I could talk about the people who produce food. And about my mom who produces pie.

She used to take the pie out of the oven, steaming, smelling good. She'd put it in the center of the table. Then dad would slice it. He cut those pieces perfectly and equally. He had a special knack for that. If you told him to cut that pie into twelve equal slices, he would. You could say "four" or "twenty-three." The pieces were always equal.

I grew up with my pie cut fairly. At a peaceful table. It's served me well. Since that time I've learned life isn't always like that, fair I mean. Not every pie is cut evenly. Sometimes it's even difficult to get a place at the table.

Today let's imagine a table in this room, piled high with grain, fruit, vegetables, products of American agriculture. Let's sit around that table with the people who produced all that bounty. The thousands and thousands of them. The people we work for.

Those people come in all sizes, shapes, and colors. They're men and they're women. Some wear suits. Most do not. Some farm with computers and high technology equipment. Some do not.

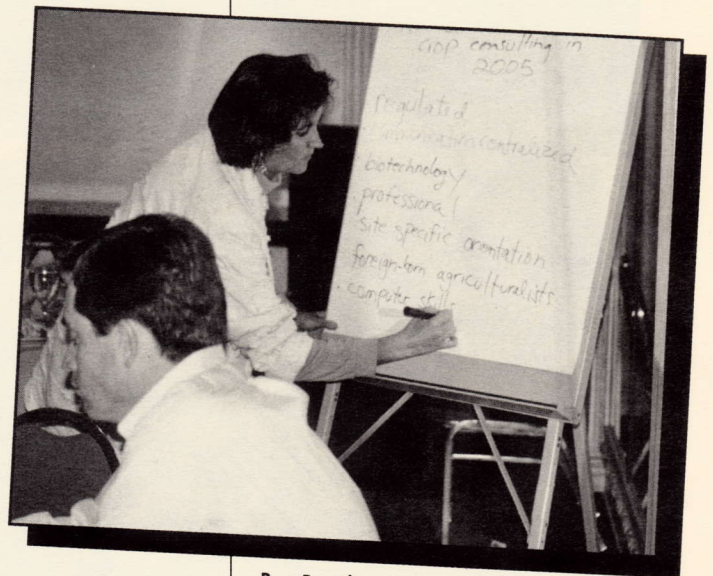
Think of them, how different they are. Every one unique, with individual challenges, styles, and philosophies. I could write a good book about the different personalities I've met on the farms of this country. Few generaliza-

tions can be made.

But I do have some. For one, farmers are determined. They're used to being their own boss. They like to make their own decisions. From California to Florida to Minnesota to Texas to New York, farmers like to make their own decisions.

Unfortunately, right now many decisions are being made for them. Some are good, many are not. I'm not going to get into a discussion of what farmers should or shouldn't have to do. But one thing I will say: I hope no one ever tries to tell them who to trust.

I know that sounds like a dumb statement. After all, there's no way you can legislate, or regulate, much less control, something as individual and personal as trust. It's impossible.



Past-President Maggie Alms brainstorms with the other Past-Presidents at a luncheon in their honor.

Try to tell me who to trust! No chance. I trust my accountant. I trust my car dealer. I trust my hairdresser. You can't tell me to change accountants because mine doesn't have the right kind of degree. You can't tell me not to trust my car dealer because he sells cars, or my hairdresser because she sells shampoo. She's the only one who understands my hair.

Relationships are built on trust.

(Continued on page 8)



President Harold Lambert and Pat Robinson of American Cyanamid chat with new member Chris Morgner at the New Members Reception.

Several members make donations to the Foundation during the Dinner/Dance.



Past-President Maggie Alms receives a well-deserved gift from the 1994 NAICC Board.



B.B. Singh (right) of Hastings, Neb., rehearses with Mike Brubaker of Ephrata, Penn., for his grand entrance at the Annual Meeting.

Annual Meeting Highlights



"Disco Daney" Kepple, Executive Vice-President, and B.B. Singh of Hastings, Neb., cut a rug at the Dinner/Dance.



President Harold Lambert passes the Leadership secrets of Attila the Hun to President-Elect Don Jameson.

Annual Meeting Highlights

(continued)

Rich Wildman of Rochester, N.Y. visits with an exhibitor during a break.



California attendees (left to right) Randy Hansen, Pat Weddle, and Larry Carmean show their support for the Chargers.

“A Seat at the Table” continued from page 5)

My accountant has searched high and low for answers to questions I’ve asked. My car dealer has sent me to another dealer when he didn’t have what I needed. My hairdresser has cut my hair at 6:30 AM when I had a busy schedule. I hire them because they care about me, they know me. I trust them.

It’s like our clients trust in us. They trust we will listen to them, find answers to their questions, and be there at 6:30 AM if necessary. They trust we will put on their shoes. And wear them.

We’re all good at that. Unfortunately

we do not have a corner on the market. We, the private sector independent crop consultant, can be beat on price. And we can be matched on education, experience, even independence.

We cannot stop the pie from being cut into more pieces. We cannot even guarantee that the pieces will be cut evenly. My dad’s way of cutting pie just isn’t the way life is.

We’re all being challenged with a rapidly changing agriculture. It’s a challenge to stay informed. It’s a challenge dealing with competition. But it might free us a bit to understand that our businesses are based on

trusting relationships we build with our clients. Oh no, we can’t build them without competence or confidence, but I’m assuming a high degree of those already exist in this group. The point is that all the technical knowledge, experience, and independence in the world won’t help us stay in business into the next century if we can’t gain people’s trust.

And it’s that gut level, impossible-to-explain process of someone deciding who to trust, that I don’t want messed up. By us, or by government.

If we start putting labels, “no good,” “better,” “best,” on each other, we only

damage ourselves. If government starts putting rigid restrictions on who farmers can hire, if, for example, they can only hire independent crop consultants, it's not going to make those farmers happy. That hurts us too.

And farmers need to trust more than one source of advice. They can, they do, and they should be able to continue trusting their dealer, their extension agent, and the consultant or advisor of their choice.

"Well neat," you say. "I agree. I don't want anyone required to hire me. I'm not afraid of a little competition. In fact, it keeps me on my toes. But this is not just a little competition. This is an avalanche. I'm just one person out here, busy trying to make a living. I don't have time or money to spare. You bet, I want farmers to be able to choose who they trust. But I want to at least be one of the choices. I might not be much longer."

"Just give me an equal seat at the table," you say. "All I want is a chance. I want a piece of the pie. But if I'm not at the table, there's no way."

And that is what NAICC does. That is the purpose of this organization. To keep you at the table. Once you're there, it's up to you. This organization certainly cannot ensure that you'll be able to build relationships or manage a business well enough to stay there.

But we can make sure you're one of the players. We can get you to the table.

One way we can do that is by teaching you a common language. We have one to teach you. It's a language based on certification programs. This certification language is based on the premise that farmers should be the ones making the choices. And they should have as many choices as possible. But they deserve to clearly understand what those choices are.

CCA is a certified crop advisor. CPCC is the certified professional crop consultant, who has a four year college degree, six years of experience as a crop consultant, who can pass a CCA or equivalent exam, write a case study narrative, meet ethical standards, and maintain 36 CEUs per year. The CPCC-Independent is a certified professional crop consultant who does not have a connection to product sales.

CCA, CPCC, CPCC-Independent. When a common language is used consistently and fairly by all players, everyone benefits. If that language begins to appear in all farm publications, all EPA regulations, and all USDA program plans, we are being included at the table. Yes, NAICC is in the language business. We're working to insert our terms where they need to be inserted, like the Worker Protection Standards document from the EPA.

We're seeking equal representation at all tables. Language is one way to do it.

We're also just plain sitting at tables. It's what I did for you all year. I sat at as many as I could, and when I couldn't we sent Dennis, or Harold, or Earle, or Daney, or Bruce, or Allison. We sat at lots of those tables for the first time in this organization's history. I have spent the year sitting next to people from USDA, EPA, environmental groups, farm groups, and industry groups. I made lots of friends personally, and I hope, friends for this organization and this profession.

We are an essential link in the chain which begins in the realm of research and ends in the farmer's field. The transfer of information needs to go both ways. We do it well. And we are being recognized, yes recognized, for the role we play in linking the chain to individual farmers in individual fields. We will be at even more tables next year.

We're not asking for special treatment. We're not asking for an extra large piece of pie. We are asking for a seat at the table.

NAICC can get you there. The rest is up to you.

(One of the tables mentioned above is the Keystone National Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Management Systems and the Environment. We will have further information in next month's newsletter on NAICC's involvement in the Keystone Farm Bill Paper.)

Nebraska Elects New Officers

Dan Steiner was elected president of the Nebraska Independent Crop Consultant Association at their annual meeting in Lincoln, Neb. Other officers

elected were vice-president, Charlie Hartwell; secretary-treasurer, Tom Essman. Newly elected board members include Steve Gottch, Joe Johnson, and Commercial Member Lee Barthelman. Mark Hinze, Roger Overleese, and Steve Keck are carryover board members from 1994.

CONGRATULATIONS

Dwain Reed of Clark and Reed Consulting Services, Inc. in Courtland, Ala. was chosen *Cotton Farming* magazine's Consultant of the year by cotton producers and consultants from throughout the Cotton Belt. The award is sponsored by **Zeneca Ag Products**.

The following NAICC members have been selected as **American Cyanamid's** Consultant of the Year:

**Bill Tarter, Jr. Dale Stukenholtz
Brad Buchanan John Kimbrough, III**

Stukenholtz and Kimbrough have designated their cash awards to NAICC, and Tarter is splitting his between NAICC and the Professional Crop Consultants of Illinois.

NAICC RECEIVES AWARD

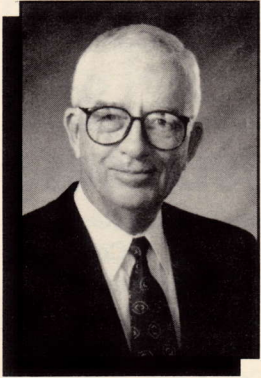
The NAICC has received the Best in Show Award from the Western Chapter of the National Agri-Marketing Association for a public relations campaign under \$30,000. This was largely accomplished by placement of articles in publications ranging from our old friends at **Ag Consultant** and **Agri Finance** to **Agweek** and the **Pork Report**. The Alliance was even written up in the *New York Times*.

Business Opportunities

After 19 years in business, contract researcher **Emil Moherek**, president of AM-MO Consulting, Inc is selling his research operation and facilities located in Groveland, Fla. For more information contact Dr. Moherek at 904/429-4782.

How Can a Small Business Survive?

by Henry Long



Earlier this year I sent a questionnaire to NAICC members soliciting data on the past and present size of their firms, sources of income, and

their opinions on optimum size of an ag consulting firm. Results from this survey suggest that consultants have found positive answers to the question posed above. A total of 160 NAICC consulting firms or consultants (hereafter called firms) returned the questionnaires.

Approximately 74 percent of these firms derive 90 percent or more of their income from serving farmers. Nearly 6 percent obtain as much as 90 percent of income from research. The remaining 20 percent derive significant income from both farmers and research. The average fraction of income derived from farmers by all firms is 84 percent.

These firms started in the consulting business from one to 45 years ago, and are, on the average, 13 years old. In the beginning, they annually employed an average of 3.6 persons compared to 10.3 presently. Firms which have been in business for 20 or more years (15 percent of respondents) annually employed an average 2.4 people at first and 13.4 presently. The average ratio of seasonal to year-round employees for all firms regardless of age is about 1:1. Therefore, it may be said that firms generally started with two to four employees, half of whom were seasonal, and have generally grown to a dozen employees, half of whom are seasonal. Of course averages fail to describe the unusual firms such as the one with 120 employees or the most common firm size with only 1-2 employees.

In view of these statistics, the reader might wonder how a small firm could fail to survive. Surely some do fail or

decide to go out of business and some have. Survival alone is a form of success. Success has been said to depend upon intelligence, hard work (including stubborn determination to achieve goals), and diplomacy. Most ag consultants are sufficiently endowed with the first two attributes, and either are born with or have developed an adequate degree of the latter.

Not surprisingly, a variety of opinions exists among consultants regarding the optimum size for ag consulting firms. A majority of respondents offered no estimate of the optimum number of employees for a consulting firm, while 38 percent suggested a number in the range of 1-50, with 61 percent of these favoring only 1-4 employees. Since there presently are good numbers of successful small firms with 1-4 employees as well as larger ones with several dozen or more and a considerable number in between, size does not appear to be a useful statistic for measuring or predicting success. The present situation may be compared to medical practice in which some physicians prefer to go it alone while others prefer to have partners or to practice in associated groups or clinics. Obviously there is need and room for all.

A variety of circumstances or factors were suggested which tend to limit firm size. Most common of these was a strong belief in the need for a good one-on-one relationship between the farmer and his consultant, and the associated idea that firms may become too large to maintain such relationships. In this regard, it was said that too many employees may result in too little direct control by the boss, too much personnel turnover, and too much associated liability due to inexperienced employees. Also that the ag community likes continuity.

Another concern expressed by several is that it is hard to find good people willing to work indefinitely only as field scouts. Being a good scout alone demands considerable ability and character. As good scouts gain experience they generally desire and often deserve a bigger share of the business. Therefore, the qualifications of a good field scout may lessen the distinction between management and employees, thereby reducing the

probability of successful firms having numerous relatively low-paid employees with only one or a few high paid ones.

Some consultants believe that the quality of service rendered must decrease at some point as firm size increases, after which competition between firms will tend to limit firm size. Also, narrowing profit margins in agriculture and ag consulting discourage some from the idea of having many managerial personnel on the payroll.

Factors which may affect firm size in either direction include size of the geographic area and acres of farm land serviced. The kinds of crops being serviced might also be relevant here. One opinion expressed was that a single employee should handle no more than 15,000 acres of row crops. For some row crops this could be reasonable; for others a single employee would be able to handle much less acreage. Some crops require more intensive scouting than others.

Other factors which could affect firm size in either direction might include the number and complexity of services offered and the personal goals of the owner. The services offered might suggest either the need for more people with special talents and abilities or for a few people who can deal satisfactorily with the big picture. The owner of the firm may have a personal preference for major involvement either with aspects of crop management or with personnel management.

A member of a larger than average firm suggested that firm size should be adequate to allow buying power to negotiate insurance, health care benefits, and vehicle leases, good cross-training among disciplines, and in-house sharing of experiences. Another opinion supporting larger than average firm size is that there should be a sufficient number of employees for backup in cases of sickness and resignations. An opposite point of view was: "It would be hard to beat the efficiency of my wife running the office and myself doing the consulting."

As agriculture and its needs change, the ag consulting profession has and will adapt to these changes.

(Continued on page 12)

NEW MEMBERS

VOTING:

Robert B. Atkins B.S. (Agriculture Education)

NCACA, WSSNC

Agricultural Management Services

8122 Whispering Pines Trail

Windsor, VA 23487

Office: 804/357-1770

Home: 804/357-1770

Crops: Cotton and peanuts.

Services: Scouting, soil sampling, and contract research.

Paul Clark

Clark & Reed Consulting Inc.

2747 County Rd. 387

Courtland, AL 35618

Office: 205/637-8575

Home: 205/353-2188

Fax: 205/637-8575

Crops: Cotton.

Services: Fertility, seed, and insect control advice.

Bob Griffin B.S. (Pest Management/Entomology)

AACA

Griffin Ag Consulting

P.O. Box 2297

West Helena, AR 72390

Office: 501/572-6120

Home: 501/572-6120

Fax: 501/572-1150

Crops: Cotton, wheat.

Brode "Hank" Harrell, Jr.

Roanoke-Chowan Agricultural Consulting and Research

P.O. Box 838

Jackson, NC 27845

Office: 919/534-6111

Home: 919/534-3741

Fax: 919/534-6111

Crops: Peanuts, cotton, soybeans, corn, tobacco.

Services: Insect, disease, and fertility management services; contract research; boll weevil trapping.

Paul Riddick Harrell

Roanoke-Chowan Agricultural Consulting and Research

P.O. Box 838

Jackson, NC 27845

Office: 919/534-6111

Home: 919/534-3741

Fax: 919/534-6111

Crops: Cotton and peanuts.

Services: Fertility, in-season weed, plant growth, disease, and insect management.

Bruce Karnatz B.S. (Agronomy)

NICCA

Bluestem Agronomics, Inc.

19 Plaza Blvd.

Kearney, NE 68847

Office: 308/237-2395

Fax: 308/237-2395

Crops: Corn, soybeans, alfalfa.

Services: Fertility recommendations, pest scouting, calibrations, irrigation scheduling, & crop records.

Paul Andrew Merry B.S.

(Ag Mechanization/Management)

WAPAC

Crop Care of Langlade County

N4137 Highway H

Antigo, WI 54409-8758

Office: 715/627-4630

Home: 715/627-4630

Crops: Potatoes, carrots, snap beans.

Services: Scouting for disease, insects and weeds, chemical recommendations.

Christopher A. Morgner

Agri-Valley Consulting

P.O. Box 3408

Merced, CA 95344

Office: 209/722-7665

Home: 209/722-9518

Fax: 209/722-4370

Crops: Cotton, alfalfa, almonds, corn, wheat, sugar beets, tomatoes, rice.

Services: Pest management, fertility, irrigation scheduling.

Stanley J. Winslow

Peele Agricultural Consulting

Rt. 1, Box 360B

Belvidere, NC 27919

Office: 919/331-1008

Home: 919/297-2827

Fax: 919/331-2001

Crops: Wheat, soybeans, cotton, peanuts, sorghum, corn, Irish potatoes, cabbage, broccoli, watermelon, snapbeans, greenhouse tomatoes.

Services: In-season management for insects, diseases, weeds, and nutrition; nutrient management planning; livestock waste management.

ASSOCIATE

Deborah L. Allan Ph.D.

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Antigo, WI 54404

Steven Okonek

Control Co-op of Menomonie

424 E. Main St.

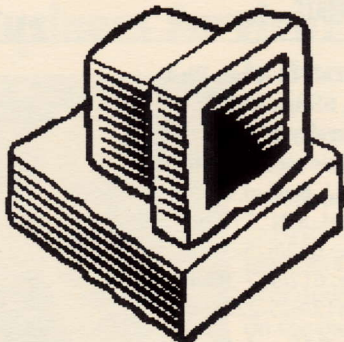
Arcadia, WI 54612

Dana Palmer

6102 Kenosha Dr.

Lubbock, TX 79413

*("How Can a Small Business Survive"
continued from page 10)*



For example, computerized record keeping is increasingly essential to firms of all sizes. I do not believe that it is presently possible to predict how these changes will affect the future size of ag consulting firms. I suppose that there will always be successful firms of many different sizes.

(Henry Long of Long Pest Management, Inc., in Thibodaux, La. is a voting member of NAICC)

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 16-18, 1995

Alabama/Georgia State Consultants Annual Meeting, Lake Point State Park, Eufaula, Ala. For more information contact:
Danny Bennett 912/934-4797.

MARCH 16-17, 1995

Iowa Independent Crop Consultants Association Annual Membership Meeting, University Inn, Ames, Iowa. For room reservations call:
515/232-0280

MARCH 20-23, 1995

Ag Council of America, Washington Building Museum, Washington, D.C.

APRIL 6-7, 1995

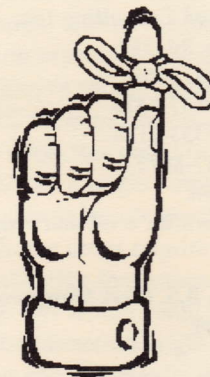
American Crop Protection Association Spring Conference, Crystal Gateway Marriott, Arlington, Va.

JULY 7-9, 1995

American Soybean Association, Convention Center, St. Louis, Mo. For more information contact:
(314) 576-1770.

JULY 17-19, 1995

North Central Branch ASA Annual Meeting, College Park Facility, Grand Island, Neb.



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