ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS
by Lorie Heath, Managing Editor

As many of us know, one of the greatest benefits of NAICC membership is the facts, fun, and fellowship delivered by attendance at the annual meeting. Those who participate more often than not return home relaxed, refreshed, full of information, and eager to begin a new year.

Whether you’re a crop consultant, contract researcher, professor, ag journalist, or some other type of agricultural professional, you have much to gain from the 1996 annual meeting program.

We have high hopes that the Keynote Speaker will be Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, who has been invited to speak during Friday morning’s Plenary Session.

Other highlights include a computer technology session, a first for the NAICC convention. Various consultants will conduct brief presentations on software applications currently being used in the agriculture industry. Afterward, attendees will be invited to participate in hands-on demonstrations. This session offers a prime opportunity to experiment with equipment that can increase the efficiency of your operation. If you are interested in presenting, please contact Allison Jones in the Memphis office.

One of the primary functions of the annual meeting is providing information. This year, researchers will come away with valuable updates on trial loss, pricing methods, the current status of NELAP, research qualifications, EPA inspections, and field techniques and equipment.

Information sessions planned specifically for consultants will include an ethics workshop and a GIS technology update presented by a panel of speakers from various areas of agriculture.

National and global issues will be examined and explored throughout the convention, beginning with a look at Integrated Pest Management by USDA IPM Coordinator Barry Jacobsen and the International Food Policy Institute’s David Nygaard, who plans to discuss the effect of IPM on the world food shortage.

Events planned for Friday include a survey of the first year of WPS, with discussion of problems encountered by the EPA, by producers, and by consultants, with viewpoints offered by a representative from each group. To follow will be a presentation on employers’ risk of workers’ compensation claims due to multiple chemical sensitivity syndrome. The scheduled speaker is attorney Brian Bolton of Langston, Hess, and Bolton in Maitland, Fla.

Although all these educational sessions are carefully planned to provide the knowledge members need and desire, they are certainly not the only source of information at the annual meeting. Members can learn a great deal and make valuable contacts by networking with other attendees, mingling during receptions and breaks, and making mealtime chit-chat.

(Continued on page 3)

INSIDE THE NEWS

Seeking a Superior August 2-3
Each One Reach One 3
Annual Meeting Highlights (cont.) 3
Keeping the Books: Grow Your Own or Farm it Out 4
Alliance Continues to Grow 5
Happenings on the Hill 5
Answers to the Four Most Often Asked Questions 5-7
Honor Your Peers 6
New Members 7
Calendar Of Events 8
I've never really understood what "dog days of summer," means, but my impression is that the term is not complimentary. If that's the case, I'm pretty sure we're in the midst of 'em here in South Louisiana as I write this column.

This has been the kind of summer to make a crop consultant long for a desk job in town. We began the season with temperatures too cool to plant, then moved almost immediately into days so hot as to be health threatening. Rainfall patterns fluctuated with dizzying speed from drought to floods. It has also been a record-busting year for insects. It's tough to go face my growers and tell them that their yield potential is declining but they still need to spend the money to protect the crop or there won't be anything to pick at the end.

With all that going on, I have to keep reminding myself that August can't possibly last forever. In fact, by the time you read this, the awful month will be over and we'll be in the middle of harvest. That's a pleasant thought.

I've been having a lot of pleasant thoughts recently. They help make the long, hot days go by faster. A lot of my daydreams center around January 24-28 when my family and I will be in Orlando for the NAICC annual meeting. I'm looking forward to that on many levels:

- Personally because time in the sun will probably sound good again by January, and the program committee has actually built in R&R time this year.
- Professionally because I learn so much. I go to the Beltwide Cotton Conference to pick up the latest technology in cotton production, but this is a very different kind of experience.

At the NAICC meeting I learn about national and international happenings that affect my clients, my profession, and my business. In fact, it is the only national seminar I am aware of that is designed specifically for crop consultants and contract researchers by crop consultants and contract researchers.

Topics such as "How to Run a Small Business," "Dealing with Employee Turnover," "Pros' Advice on the Business of Consulting," "Putting a Price Tag on Service, and "The Employer's Risk of Claims Due to Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Syndrome," will be addressed by experts in those areas. We'll get updates from the powers that be in Washington on what's going to happen in the next year that will affect us and our clients. We'll get some very specific instruction on various types of computer software. I'm quite sure that attending these sessions will make me a more successful business person and a more knowledgeable crop consultant in 1996.

Just as important is the information transfer that takes place outside the meeting room. "Information transfer" sounds pretty stodgy, but some people are tired of hearing about "networking." What I'm really talking about are the chance encounters during coffee breaks and social occasions when you meet someone from another part of the country and discover how much you have in common. Then you end up staying in touch through the year and swapping tips and techniques that make you both better at what you do. I'm aware of several incidences of consultants and researchers in one area visiting another to learn about someone's special field of expertise, and in fact I'm going myself later this fall to visit two NAICC members in Illinois to learn more about precision agriculture. How do you place a value on that?

Learning is fun at NAICC meetings. I still get a chuckle when I think of Mike Brubaker's and Billy McLawhorn's breakfast presentations that had us all rolling in the aisles, and B.B. Singh's dramatic entrance that had the audience chanting, "B.B., B.B., B.B." Then he mounted the podium and gave a very scholarly presentation on, of all things, insect resistance management.

I think of Secretary of Agriculture Rominger standing at the podium for an hour, answering all the questions we could throw at him, and of Dr. Pete Goodell packing more digestible information on the Internet into thirty minutes than I had been able to glean from a year of reading.

This year there will be some very special learning opportunities: a farm tour will give us an up-close-and-personal look at high tech vegetable production, Florida style. Behind-the-scenes tours of the Disney facilities will show us how they pull off the miracle of Disney World and Epcot.
New social opportunities include the first annual NAICC Golf Tournament, a talent show that will allow our members in all categories to strut their stuff, and a Saturday night family-style Aladdin theme party with characters from the movie to entertain. Then, around nine o'clock we'll rub the lamp, the genie will whisk the children away, and adults will continue the traditional last-night activities.

Registration for the meeting is $145, plus an additional $200 meals and entertainment fee that includes two receptions, three breakfasts, two lunches, two dinners, and four coffee breaks. When you consider the value of the information, contacts, and fun you'll have, and the fact that the former will serve you well for months, and perhaps years, (and that on top of everything else you'll rack up CEU credits for several programs including CPCC and CCA) that price looks like a pretty good deal.

I just finished reading an article by Tom Smidt, President of the Iowa Independent Crop Consultants Association, in the IICCA Newsletter. Tom points out that as professionals it is our responsibility to our clients to provide the best advice and technology available, a task that can be somewhat difficult for an individual practitioner without access to the resources of larger companies. “We must have our own personal training programs for ourselves and our employees,” he says. “We must stay on top of new developments in crop production techniques.” Which is one of the reasons the state and national consultants’ associations were formed. And, since the bulk of that training takes place at the annual meetings of these groups, a case can be made that members don’t get the full value from their membership if they miss those opportunities.

One thing is for sure: I hope to go to a meeting somewhere this winter that will make next August better than this one was!

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**Each One Reach One**

*by Paul Groneberg*

There used to be a sign that hung in many people's kitchens, offices, and service stations. It said, “If you want something done right, do it yourself.” In these days of networking and interdependence, that sign has gone out of style. Still, there may be some truth to it.

NAICC membership has grown by an astounding 53 percent in the last two years, primarily because there has been concentrated effort focused on recruiting at state meetings and on raising awareness of the Alliance throughout the agricultural community. Needless to say, we are very pleased by such a gratifying response.

I can't help but wonder, though, what would happen if everyone got involved in the effort and asked just one non-member to join. We have always known that this one-on-one recruiting is by far the most effective. The benefits to individual consultants as well as the crop consulting and contract research professions will only increase as the NAICC membership increases.

This line of reasoning leads me to thoughts such as—

- As successful as we have been in Washington in the last few years, (i.e., the consultants' exemption from WPS) it's difficult to imagine the impact of twice the members and more financial resources to bring to bear. We would certainly have a better chance of being in on the ground floor rather than fighting brush fires after they're already blazing.

- Our staff could spend more time on media relations, and the visibility of our profession would continue to rise, both within agriculture and among the general public.

- We could begin to provide more of the superb educational opportunities that now occur only once a year at the annual meeting. And we might be able to make them more affordable by providing them on a regional basis.

- We could promote our certification program so extensively that CPCC would become a household word.

Those are pretty exciting dreams, and there's no reason they can't come true. If each of our current members will recruit just one friend or associate (or even competitor!) to join us, we'll be well on our way. How about it, NAICC members?!

Paul Groneberg, Centrol Inc. Co., of Donnelly, Minn., is a voting member of NAICC and currently serves as Chairman of the Membership Recruitment and Rules Committee.

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NAICC's membership now totals 443. What does this mean? We need just seven members to reach 450, and just 57 members to reach 500!! Are you doing your part to help the Alliance grow?

(“Annual Meeting Highlights” continued from page 1)

Whether you are a first timer or a seasoned meeting-goer, you'll be glad to be a part of "Today's Vision for Tomorrow's Agriculture." Don't be left behind. Join us January 24-28 in Orlando, Fla.

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Get those annual meeting registrations in!! You must register by Dec. 1 to receive a permanent name badge.

3
Keeping the Books: Grow Your Own or Farm it Out?

by David Willis

Whether you hire a bookkeeper or keep your own books depends on a lot of factors. Not the least of these is how much control you wish to relinquish over your financial records. How you view the process of bookkeeping also plays a role. Is it a chore you dread, or is it part of an integrated business management system you use to monitor your business health?

My first year in business, I kept my books in my head. Maybe my first two years. In any case, there were no accounts receivable or payable records. Cash flow management consisted of a day spent hunting down clients who had their checkbook handy. I did try to throw all pertinent records into manila folders on a monthly basis. At the end of the season, I sat down with all the accumulated, and long forgotten, “documents.” With the aid of a PC general ledger program, I painfully reconstructed the entire year in chronological order. Two weeks. It took two weeks around New Year’s Day to do this. There began my search for a better way.

If your company has several employees, or more, it probably isn’t practical to keep your own books. By its nature, bookkeeping expands exponentially with the number of employees. Still, if you are in this position, you should design the bookkeeping structure and define the frequency and type of reports available from the bookkeeper. Even better is if all information is kept current and on-line. That way you can access needed reports at will.

The importance of keeping books is control. I keep my own books for the feeling of control it gives me over my business. If you have several employ-ees, it also provides accountability. Your checkbook is a barometer of your success. When it’s full, you’re on top of the world. But if it runs dry, your relationship with the rest of society rapidly deteriorates. Tracking the proper information allows you to have cash on hand when needed or to make informed decisions about borrowing money if needed. It also provides the raw data for my favorite pastime, making sure that on April 15, I haven’t contributed excessively to others’ excesses.

Assuming you are not piloting a company which, by its size, requires a full or part time bookkeeper, how do you decide whether or not to do your own? I wanted control, contemporaneous report availability on a variety of subjects, and quick generation of information required by my accountant to prepare tax forms. All of this is now quick and easy using any one of a number of PC accounting software packages. If you can write a check and can type the information into a PC, you can keep your own books. I use Quickbooks for Windows version 3.0, because it was developed with the checkbook at its center. And what goes in, and out, of the checkbook is what matters most to me. There are several other good accounting packages on the market as well.

It takes me about four hours a month to keep my books. Most of the year it amounts to recording deposits and checks written. In the winter I spend some time updating depreciation amounts and other maintenance chores. Every year I also seem to change just what kind of information is recorded and how it’s done. But no longer does it take two weeks out of my prime winter relaxation time.

In my opinion, if you are a one or two person operation, it will benefit you to keep your own books. It simply becomes part of making deposits and paying bills. If you like, the computer will print your checks. At any time you like, you can punch up your sales by acre, crop, client, or any combination. Complete client profiles and accounts receivable are instantly available. The software will print any statements you may send out. It will track any loans outstanding and interest paid. Just about anything you want to follow, you can. And, you can do it with minimal input time. If data entry is too demanding (after all we are crop consultants first) it’s time to delegate some duties.

A few final words about some potential perils of keeping your own books. The hardest part of keeping books is setting them up in the first place. I started by maintaining records which would provide me complete information to piece together my federal tax return. Probably the best way is for you to make a list of what you think is important and give it to your accountant. Ask him or her to make any additions or changes to the list and start there. It’s easy to start out trying to track too many things. If you find yourself trying to add up gallons of gasoline used by each vehicle, you’re probably working with too much detail. There are some transactions that are mind twisters. As an example, trade a pickup on a new one, put some cash down along with the trade-in and set up a loan for the balance. These are things I usually work out at a slower time of year. If you’re just starting out keeping your own books, don’t get overly detailed. What you want is useful information, not trivia. I didn’t worry about lost pennies for a few years. After all, the nearest dollar is good enough for Uncle Sam.

Not that I think we should follow his lead in accounting, but be realistic. As you get used to the software you are using, you will naturally keep greater and greater detail with less effort. If you ever have to meet with your friendly IRS auditor, you will find your bookkeeping skills will be as important as your skills in the field!

David Willis of Agassiz Crop Management, Inc., in Thief River Falls, Minn., is a voting member of NAICC.
Alliance Continues to Grow

Recently, NAICC welcomed two valuable new members to its rapidly growing group. Agri Business Group (ABG), a sustaining member, is a 16-year-old business performance company based in Indianapolis, Ind. ABG works exclusively with agribusiness organizations, providing technical training, management and sales training, project management, quality assurance, market research, and public relations, as well as operating a speakers network.

So many areas of expertise allow ABG to lend professionalism and efficiency to its client organizations. The company’s primary specialty, however, is project management. ABG works with a network of research organizations to render to both domestic and multinational companies such services as protocol design, study monitoring, facility and site selection, budgeting, and interim and final reporting.

Another addition to the Alliance is The Irrigation Association (IA), the newest cooperative member. Born in 1977 from a marriage of the Sprinkler Irrigation Association and the International Drip Irrigation Association, IA today has approximately 1,000 members consisting of irrigation equipment manufacturers, distributors, and dealers, professional consultants, and contractors.

IA is a multi-purpose organization, striving to shape legislative and regulatory policies affecting the irrigation industry, setting industry standards, designing certification programs, and providing education programs. The group’s mission includes serving as the core of all irrigation-related communication, and toward this end, they sell various technical, historical, and training materials as well as a self-published subscription magazine, Irrigation Business and Technology.

Both of these new members can be found in the Membership Directory Supplement, released in August.

Answers to the Four Most Often Asked Questions

by Daney Kepple
Executive Vice President
Excerpted from a speech to the U.S. Publications Cotton Seminar

NAICC is the only national professional society that represents independent crop consultants. In that capacity, our staff gets a lot of phone calls and questions from people who are interested in marketing to our members. The questions that come up most often are:

- Are crop consultants really a significant influence on agricultural purchasing decisions? If so, how important are they?
- How many crop consultants are there?
- What is a crop consultant anyway?
- Is the industry/profession changing? If so, how, and what can we expect from the future?

Those are the questions I’ll try to answer for you.

Are Crop Consultants Important?

Two years ago NAICC contracted with Doane Agricultural Services to do a market research project to put some numbers to this question. The results showed that farmers seek the advice of a crop consultant on 21 percent of the corn, 13 percent of the soybeans, nine percent of the wheat, 53 percent of the cotton and vegetables, and 42 percent of the rice grown in this country.

Another way to put that is: one in every six acres of land under cultivation in the U.S. benefits from the services of a crop consultant.

Another point to consider when thinking of the influence of crop consultants is this: NAICC members and other independent consultants typically work for the most progressive growers in each area. So what usually happens is, a crop consultant makes a recommendation, the client follows it, and most of the guys in the coffee shop hear about and implement it as well.
The Cyanamid Consultant of the Year Program will be bestowing six regional awards on crop consultants. The Cyanamid program, in its third year, allows recipients to designate a $2,000 grant to the professional association of their choice. The ranks of both programs are heavily weighted with NAICC members who have frequently chosen the Alliance to receive their grants.

NAICC Hall of Fame members include Bob Ascheman of Ascheman Associates in Des Moines, Iowa; Dan Bradshaw of Crop Aid in El Campo, Tex.; Dewey Chandler of Dewey Chandler Pest Management Consultants in Cheneyville, La.; R.S. Cox of Cashiers, N.C.; Dave Harms of Crop Pro-Tech in Naperville, Ill.; Dick Jensen of Jensen Agricultural Consultants in Washington, La.; John Kimbrough of Pro-Tech-Ag in Lexington, Miss.; Dick Kinzer of Winter Garden Ag Consulting Service in Uvalde, Tex.; Madeline Melling of Glades Crop Care in Jupiter, Fla.; Stan Nemec of Nemec Agriservices in Snoop, Tex.; Earle Raun of Pest Management Company in Lincoln, Neb.; Mills Rogers of Rogers Consultants, Inc., in Boyle, Miss.; Clyde Sartor of Sartor Agri-Science in Vicksburg, Miss.; Stan Viator of Viator’s Ag Advisory Service in Ruston, La.; and Ray Young of Ray Young Insect Control in Wisner, La.

Alliance members who have been named Consultant of the Year include Maggie Alms of Blue Earth Consulting in Lake Crystal, Minn.; Mike Brubaker of Brubaker Agronomic Consulting Service in Ephraim, Pa.; Brad Buchanan of Crop Tech Services in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Dave Harms; John Kimbrough; Stan Nemec; B.B. Singh of Scientific Crop Advisory in Hastings, Neb.; Bill Tarter of Alvey Laboratories in Carlyle, Ill.; Bill Peele of Peele Agricultural Consulting in Washington, N.C.; and Dale Stukenholtz of Stukenholtz Laboratory in Twin Falls, Idaho.

To submit a nomination for the Crop Professionals Hall of Fame, contact Judy Ferguson by phone at 216/942-2000 or fax at 216/942-0662. The deadline is November 27.

Pat Robinson is the contact for the Cyanamid Consultant of the Year Program. He can be reached by phone at 317/844-4952 or fax at 317/844-0500. The deadline is October 15.

("Answers to the Four Most Often Asked Questions" continued from page 5)

How Many Crop Consultants Are There?
In 1993, when Doane undertook to do the survey mentioned earlier, one of the toughest aspects of the assignment was defining the universe. They made a lot of phone calls, and we did, too—toward State Extension and regulatory personnel, USDA agencies, individuals we knew to be knowledgeable in certain areas. The result of all that was definitive evidence of what we had suspected all along: nobody knows how many crop consultants there are.

So then we went at it from another direction. We gathered all the lists we could get our hands on, and Doane surveyed that group. This exercise reduced the total by 43 percent, which represented all the people who responded that they were not actively involved in crop consulting. Of the remaining total, 70 percent reported themselves to be independent crop consultants. Applying those factors, Doane economists derived an estimated universe of 3,500 independent crop consultants in the U.S. That seems like a good number to us. However, with the explosion of cotton acreage, there seem to be a lot of new people entering the business. That growth is reflected in the swelling of NAICC membership rolls which have increased by 53 percent in the last two years.

So far, we've just been talking about independent crop consultants, which, as the name implies, is the group that has historically comprised the NAICC membership. The Doane economists' model indicates that there are another 5,300 people providing crop production advice who are affiliated with product suppliers.

What Is a Crop Consultant?
Some states have stringent laws and regulatory systems relating to crop consultants. Anyone in those states who wants to supply production advice for a fee must pass an examination, attend yearly training sessions, keep records of their recommendations—the same sorts of regulations required of other professionals. Other states don't have such laws on the books.

By 1978 there were enough practitioners scattered around the country that a need for standardization began to be recognized, and NAICC was formed. This is what it takes to be a voting member: a bachelor's degree, four years of experience in the field, recommendations from clients and peers, compliance with the code of ethics, and independence from product sales.
That issue of independence is one that crop consultant professionals have struggled with from the beginning. NAICC has struggled with it as well.

As I said, the “I” in NAICC refers to independence from product sales. The implications there leak over into ethical issues and all sorts of other murky waters, and it’s an area that has caused the profession to do a lot of collective soul searching through the years. To put it into perspective, let’s look at the human health care industry. There was once a time when physicians dispensed medications as well as prescribing them. As that profession developed, the job became too large for one person to perform, so the pharmaceutical profession arose and eventually the government got involved. I don’t mean to imply that agriculture is anywhere close to accomplishing, or perhaps even needing that type of evolution, but the issues are similar.

As we have worked through the questions surrounding independence and its implications to our members’ relationships with their grower clients, they are beginning to acknowledge that independence is only one aspect of their credentials. They are understanding more completely that their education, experience, standing with clients and peers, efforts at continuing education, respect for the code of ethics—in short, the other aspects of professionalism—are every bit as important as the source of their income. And as those attitudes change, the doors of NAICC are swinging open to the other sector of crop advisors.

**Status of the Industry/Profession**

Now for the crystal ball portion of this article. What should be expected from this group in the short and long term?

The first thing is growth. The complexity of agriculture, the continuing breakthroughs in technology, the growth in the size of farm units all underline the need for professionals to advise growers in the technology of crop production.

The jury is still out on where the growth will occur. As margins get tighter in the product distribution industry, managers of these businesses gaze more longingly at providing service as a profit center. They are having varying degrees of success in doing that. My guess is that professionalism among service providers in both sectors will continue to increase. Independents will continue to tout their independence as a market advantage, and there will be some growers who agree. Others will be willing to accept advice from the same individual who sells products, particularly if those individuals are highly qualified in terms of education, experience, and professionalism.

It’s dangerous to overlook the impact of politics on all this. There are some loud voices in Washington, particularly among the environmental sector, who would like to regulate against dealers and distributors providing advice to farmers. Their reasoning is that those who make their living from selling products are much more prone to recommend chemical treatments when other types of solutions might do as well or better. There are those among our membership who agree with that reasoning, but NAICC does not support that logic. Our position is that farmers should have the right to choose the source of their advice, and all of our efforts in Washington are aimed in that direction.

**NEW MEMBERS**

**VOTING:**

Fred L. Collins, Ph.D., (Entomology) LACA
Agricrop Consulting, Inc.
2225 Crepe Myrtle
Pineville, LA 71360
Office: 318/563-8223
Home: 318/448-4167
Fax: 318/448-4167
Crops: Cotton, corn, soybeans, milo, sugarcane, vegetables.
Services: Variety selection; soil sampling; fertility and herbicide recommendations; insect and disease control; contract research.

Rodney Leon Lucas, B.S. (Horticulture)
Glades Crop Care, Inc.
870 Geneva Street
Lehigh Acres, FL 33939
Office: 407/746-3740
Home: 941/369-3244
Fax: 407/746-3775
Crops: Tomatoes, peppers, and cucurbits.
Services: Integrated Pest Management.

Mick Qualls, M.S. (Agronomy) ASA, WSWA, WSSA, WSWS, CPAg
Qualls Agricultural Laboratory
3759 Dodson Road
Ephrata, WA 98823
Office: 509/787-4210
Home: 509/787-2834
Fax: 509/787-4966
Mobile: 509/750-1193
Services: Contract research: GLP, pesticides only.

**JUST A REMINDER: WE’VE MOVED!**

**NAICC**
752 E. Brookhaven Circle
Suite 240
Memphis, TN 38117
Phone and fax numbers are the same:
Phone: (901) 683-9466
Fax: (901) 761-3692
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>OCT. 25-26, 1995</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Natural Resources Workshop, Privatization of Technology and Information Transfer in U.S. Agriculture: Policy and Research Implications. For more information, contact: Steven Wolf, 608/262-6049.</td>
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<td>OCT. 29-NOV. 3, 1995</td>
<td>American Society of Agronomy Convention, St. Louis, Mo. For more information call: 608/273-8080.</td>
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<td>DEC. 1-2, 1995</td>
<td>Ag Retailers Association Convention, St. Louis, Mo. For more information call: 314/567-6655.</td>
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<td>DEC. 6-8, 1995</td>
<td>Nebraska Independent Crop Consultant Association Annual Meeting, Ramada Hotel and Convention Center, Lincoln, Neb. For more information contact: Mike Gauthier, 308/995-5197.</td>
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<td>DEC. 7, 1995</td>
<td>California Department of Food and Agriculture’s Fertilizer Research and Education Program Conference, Kearney Agricultural Center, University of California, Parlier, Calif. For more information contact: Debbie Scott or Casey Walsh-Cady, 916/653-5340.</td>
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<td>JAN. 8-12, 1996</td>
<td>Beltwide Cotton Conference, Opryland Hotel, Nashville, Tenn. For more information call: 901/274-9030.</td>
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<td>JAN. 24-28, 1996</td>
<td>NAICC Annual Meeting, Grosvenor Resort at Walt Disney World Village, Orlando, Fla. For more information call: 901/683-9466.</td>
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