Like any wise consumer, a farmer in the market for advisory services is going to have questions. Heading the list are usually, “How much is it going to cost?” and “What will I get for my money?”

The answer to “How much?” should be, “If I can’t make you more money than I cost you - significantly more - you should fire me on the spot.” In other words, engaging the services of a professional crop consultant should be regarded as an investment in future profitability.

Rates vary widely, depending upon the extent of the service provided and the value of the crop. Fees can range from a low of about $5 per acre for a streamlined service up to around $30 per acre for extensive consultation on a high-value crop.

Members of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) are in the business of providing advisory services to growers and other clients for a fee. Those fees are their primary source of income, and they are not affiliated with the sale of any product. The most successful among them have learned that the best way to stay in business long-term is to make money for their clients.

As for what you get for your money - besides more money and an objective set of eyes - the services provided by crop consultants vary by crop and geographic region. In areas where pest infestations are major limiting factors to production, pest management advice is a hot commodity. In other areas, where the primary tool for increasing profits is fertility management, some crop consultants specialize in this area. However, it’s important to understand that whatever areas of specialization a professional crop advisor may offer, most are generalists who offer expertise in every phase of production. The best way to get maximum return on your investment is to include your crop consultant in every phase of managing your operation, from planning what to plant where, to keeping field records.

Once the decision is made that retaining professional advisory services is a good investment, the next logical question becomes, “How do I choose the right source of advice?”

There are basically three sources: the Extension Service, someone affiliated with a farm-supply dealer or distributor, and the independent crop consultant. Each has a place, and they are not mutually exclusive.

As Extension budgets shrink, the public sector is finding it difficult to advise farmers on an individual basis. Each county may have several thousand growers, and only one or two agents on staff to serve them all. Increasingly, the Extension service is providing information to crop consultants who help transfer the technology to farmer clients.

Farm-supply dealers and distributors are also in the information business. Some function like the local pharmacist, who willingly offers advice on headache remedies, but who does not conduct in-depth diagnostic examinations. Others offer full-blown consulting services for a fee. Sometimes these fees are lower than those charged by independent consultants because they are subsidized by product sales. Some require that all production inputs be purchased from the dealership as a way to support the consulting service. These are all questions the farmer will want to explore.

There should be questions for the independent consultants too.

(Continued on page 2)
Even if you barely flip through the pages of the News when it arrives each month, you surely can’t help but notice all the activity NAICC is involved in lately. Just in the last couple of months, NAICC representatives were invited to participate in the Third Annual IPM Symposium in April; our Certification program was recommended by EPA for WPS exemption; and the Executive Board met with government officials to discuss the Alliance’s objectives with regard to such issues as professional liability insurance for consultants recommending IPM methods.

It’s obvious that we have captured the ear of Washington policy makers. But that’s not all; we are receiving quite a bit of media attention, as well. We must be making an impact—just take a look at page 6 of this issue and see for yourself how many members have made the news recently!

The ball has only begun to roll, but we are gaining momentum daily.

With rapid technology changes and specialization, the contract research and crop consulting professions are growing nearly too quickly to keep track of, and we have organizations like the state consulting associations, NAICC, and similar groups to thank for that.

Who will carry the torch? Today’s agriculture students. The summer scouts we hire. These individuals are the future of both NAICC and the crop consulting and contract research professions. The time is ripe to reach out to these future professionals, to groom them, be mentors to them, and help them to develop into the agricultural leaders of tomorrow. They will carry on the relationships that we have established with media, farmers, the public, government leaders, and others. They must be prepared.

There is an increasing need for the development of a professional curricula for future practitioners. NAICC representatives recently had the opportunity to present these concerns to university faculty and department heads. We were well-received, and it seemed as though these university personnel were not only in agreement, but that the need had already been recognized in many cases. There seems to be, in fact, a heightened awareness among educators of the need to make available multi-disciplined programs to prepare these future stewards of our agricultural resources.

NAICC’s Foundation for Environmental Agriculture Education was set up to do this and more. In addition to providing funding for education through scholarships, one of the goals of the Foundation is to help develop innovative, more clinically based education and training for future and current crop management professionals. In fact, Foundation Board members are currently working with two universities in Texas to develop professional crop consulting curricula.

Let’s not forget—we all need to keep up. We all need continuing education in order to be competitive and to provide the best possible service to our clients. Certification offers an additional incentive to pursue extra knowledge and skills. Opportunities abound with university courses, convention workshops, state association meetings, etc.

The future of crop consulting and contract research, as well as the future of NAICC, depends on the present. The future lies in the hands of those who will carry the torch—our students. Take the time to familiarize your summer employees with NAICC. Better yet, sign them up as student members. The cost is only $10, but the value is monumental. Invite them to, and encourage them to attend, the annual meeting next January in San Antonio. We have to continue to remember that our survival depends on following through with what we are now laying the groundwork for, and that requires a focus on preparing those who are to come.

(“What to Expect from a Crop Consultant” continued from page 1)

For example:
1. How long have you been consulting in this area?
2. Who are some of your other clients?
3. What type of information do you base your decisions on, i.e. sampling and collecting data or some other method?
4. How in-depth are your data collecting techniques?
5. What qualifies you to be a consultant?

That last question should be probed carefully, and there are some short cuts to finding an answer. For example, if the individual is a member of NAICC, he or she must have at least a bachelor’s degree in an agricultural discipline and a minimum of two years’ experience. You should also ask whether your prospective advisor is certified.

There are two programs that certify the credentials of agricultural practitioners. The Certified Professional Crop Consultant (CPCC) must have a B.S. degree, and a minimum of four years’ experience in the field. Successful candidates for this program must also pass an examination, write an essay to demonstrate ability to integrate various types of technology to solve growers’ problems, receive pesticide safety training, and acquire 36 continuing education units (CEUs) each year. It is also possible under this program to have independence from product sales certified. That designation is CPCC-I.

The other certification program is called the Certified Crop Adviser, or CCA. Holders of this distinction must have a high school diploma or it’s equivalent, have two years’ experience, pass an exam, and acquire 20 CEUs each year.

Perhaps the most important credential your crop consultant should have is an ability to relate to you and your management style. Be sure to pick a
person you trust and feel comfortable with. Talk to other farmers who use the individual’s service. And prepare to talk over all decisions with the new member of your management team. Life should be simpler and more profitable as a result.

**CONTRACT RESEARCH REPORT**

On June 1, the Executive Board met to discuss the Contract Research Ad Hoc Committee’s recommendations and goals (see cover story, May News). The Board recognized the unique needs of contract researchers as a group and agreed that they should be appropriately integrated into the Alliance whenever possible. The Board’s response to specific “action steps” suggested by the Committee are as follows:

- A membership application is being created to meet the needs of contract researchers; once it is complete and approved for use, an applicant who wishes to be listed in both sections of the membership directory (see below) may submit both forms with two processing fees and one dues payment.
- A new membership category will not be necessary for contract researchers, as these individuals will fit into one of the existing categories.
- It was agreed that the NAICC relationship with EPA should be broadened with officials who regulate contract research issues. In addition, the Liaison Committee has been asked to pursue cooperative memberships with the Society for Quality Assurance and the American Crop Protection Association.
- The staff will assist in compiling and managing a prospect list for contract research memberships.
- The annual meeting registration fee is being reviewed by the Annual Meeting Coordination Committee and staff to consider a potential fee differential allowing registrants provisional membership for a year.
- It was proposed that the membership directory index be divided into two sections: 1) consultants by state; and 2) contract researchers by state. The Committee also requested that efforts be made to publish articles in the in-house publications of sponsoring companies, and that these companies be placed on the newsletter mailing list; both of these tasks are currently being performed by the NAICC staff.

**UPDATE...UPDATE...UPDATE... UPDATE...UPDATE...UPDATE...**

We have recently received reports from the following states with regard to whether they will accept the CPCC program for WPS exemption:

- **ALABAMA** Will accept CPCC.
- **IOWA** Will accept CPCC.
- **INDIANA** Will accept CPCC.
- **NEBRASKA** Will accept CPCC.
- **NEVADA** Will accept CPCC.
- **OREGON** Will accept CPCC.
- **OKLAHOMA** Will only accept OK Pesticide Application licenses.

**HAPPENINGS ON THE HILL**

by Allison Jones, Executive Director

Appropriation Measure Passes House Committee

The House Appropriations Committee approved the FY97 agricultural appropriations bill only after restoring $98 million to farm program payments. Previously $900 million was slashed from the FY 97 budget by the Agricultural Appropriation Subcommittee. The full committee was able to restore the money after they were allowed to increase total spending authority for agriculture by $70 million; $20 million was given to the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. The Senate is expected to mark up its version of the bill sometime in July.

**Senate Holds Food Safety Hearing**

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry held a hearing on June 12 to discuss S. 1166, the Food Quality Protection Act. If passed, the bill will allow the EPA greater ability to evaluate the acceptable risk in determining residue levels for both raw and processed foods. It will also update regulations for the “minor use” pesticides that are generally used on specialized crops and problems.

H.R. 1627, the House version of the bill, passed on June 1. It was originally considered by the Agriculture Committee last year, but was not reported by the committee due to several outstanding issues, most notably chemical reregistration fees. The bill extends the EPA’s authority to collect $76 million in reregistration fees from the chemical industry through the year 2001. In addition, suspension and cancellation proceedings are delinked in the bill so that EPA has greater authority and flexibility to remove from the market pesticides that pose an imminent hazard.

With the exception of minor changes, other provisions of H.R. 1627 are the same as when the bill was originally considered by the committee last year. It includes the following provisions: Focus on Children’s Health; Provide Regulatory Relief for Minor Use and Public Health Pesticides, which streamlines regulatory procedures for pesticides used in the production of smaller-acreage crops and those used to control pests and diseases injurious to public health; and Promote Safe Crop Protection Products, which expedites registration of reduced-risk pesticides. This legislation is part of the effort to reform the 1950s-era Delaney Clause of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. Unless Delaney is reformed, new products coming to market that are known to be safer than those currently in use will be banned simply because they can be shown to be carcinogenic at extremely high doses, according to the committee.
NAICC Comments on IPM/Crop Insurance Initiative

Recently Jim Cubie, Minority Staff Council, and Rob Hedberg of the Senate Agriculture Committee called a meeting in Washington to investigate the need for crop insurance for growers who implement IPM programs. Various agricultural groups, insurance and land grant university representatives, and NAICC staff were present to hear FCIC and Senate Ag’s views on this issue. No agreement was reached among participants, and NAICC has submitted a letter to the Senate Agriculture Committee and to USDA officials requesting clarification on some issues of concern regarding implementation of this program.

Farm Bill Authorizes Streamlining of Advisory Committees

Recently NAICC received a request from Secretary Glickman to nominate a crop consultant to represent a “national organization directly concerned with agricultural research, education, and extension” on the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, & Economic Advisory Board. This advisory board replaced three existing committees, the National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board, the Agriculture Science and Technology Review Board, and the Joint Council on Food and Agricultural Sciences. Other advisory panels established that are of interest to the crop consulting profession are the National Natural Resources Foundation and the Joint Council on Food and Agricultural Sciences. If anyone is interested in serving on one of these national committees, please notify the Memphis office.

Regulatory Fair Warning Act Introduced in House

Congressman George Gekas (R-PA) introduced H.R. 3307, the Regulatory Fair Warning Act, to “discourage agencies from imposing punitive sanctions where the regulated public was not given fair warning of what the regulation requires or prohibits.” Language similar to Gekas’ bill passed the Senate late last year as an amendment to the Senate’s regulatory reform bill. However, reports indicate that the Justice Department feels H.R. 3307 is too broad and will allow defendants to avoid prosecution.

The bill was referred to the Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law, which held a hearing last month where testimony was heard about abuse and intimidation of federal agencies.

House Subcommittee to Hold Hearing on Extension Activities

The House Subcommittee on Resource Conservation, Research, and Forestry will hold a hearing the week of July 15 to review the Extension Service’s activities provided to the public. We will update you on the outcome of this hearing in the next newsletter.

Information Update to all NAICC Members

by Don Jameson, President

The shingle over the door is changing for Daney and her staff, but names and faces at work remain the same.

As some of you may now have read or heard, Daney Kepple has taken an opportunity to merge her public relations business and talents with the long-standing Memphis firm of Chandler, Ehrlich & Company, Inc. As of July 1, she and Tabitha are working out of that office. Still the same is Allison continuing as Executive Director, within the remaining corporate structure of Great Lines, in the near term. We will also continue to receive the Executive Vice President services from Daney. On January 1, our contractual arrangement for services of executive staff will be written directly to Allison Jones, while she in turn will contract Daney’s services from Chandler Ehrlich.

Then at the Annual Meeting, the NAICC Administrative Services and Evaluation Committee, as per policy, will conduct an annual performance review with their recommendations to the Board. At this time of the year, your Board makes decisions on staff support services, sets priorities, and negotiates contract terms.

As your President, I am happy to report that this change will have virtually no effect on the NAICC structure and procedures. At the May 31-June 2 Executive Board Meeting, the Board reviewed the situations and options. In June the Administrative Services and Evaluation Committee worked through several re-arranging options and presented a recommendation to the Board that was adopted on July 2 and is as outlined above.

As always, if our members in all categories have questions, you may direct them at any time to your representative on the Board. We believe the same goals in service, work, and dedicated involvement will continue. With the broader resources now at Daney’s disposal, we can foresee other advantages and growth opportunities in the future that will benefit our organization.

In short, these individuals you have come to know and see—Daney, Allison, and Tabitha—will continue to be enthusiastically involved and working yet with their special skills to promote and advance the mission of NAICC, to serve its members’ needs.
**DOANE SURVEY**

Doane Marketing Research’s recent survey of farmers’ use of crop consultants revealed that in 1995, more than 11 percent of U.S. farmers relied upon the advice of consultants. Consultants were most popular in states where farmers were producing the widest variety of crops. The top 10 states with regard to the use of consultants were as follows: California, Washington, Louisiana, Idaho, Arkansas, Mississippi, New York, Wisconsin, Florida, and Michigan. California was the number one state in the use of crop consultants, with 50 percent of farmers utilizing consultants’ advice. For more information about this survey, contact Marypat Corbett at Doane Marketing Research Inc., St. Louis, Mo., 314/878-7707.

**OPINION:**

In the May *News*, we printed a commentary from Earle Raun in which he mentioned the ‘purchase’ of the *Ag Consultant* publication by the CCA program.” In response to this comment, we received a letter from *Ag Consultant* editor James Sulecki, which is excerpted below:

“Earle’s point is well taken: All editors-as well as the readers they serve-must constantly weigh ‘objective’ information against commercial messages. Yet it must also be noted that commercial support of communications efforts is often a financial reality in today’s business climate.

“I was particularly disappointed to see in Earle’s commentary a reference to the ‘purchase’ of *Ag Consultant* Magazine by the Certified Crop Adviser program. A point of clarification needs to be made here, and I have also written to Earle to convey this information: in no way has the magazine been ‘purchased’ by the CCA program. *Ag Consultant* continues as an independent publication, privately owned by Meister Publishing. The eight-page ‘CCA Insider’ section is indeed a joint communications effort between Meister Publishing and the American Society of Agronomy; however, final responsibility for its content - as with the content of the entire magazine as a whole - rests, and continues to rest, with our editorial department.

“Our goal here at Meister is to continue publishing a healthy, thriving, sustainable magazine for everyone in the crop consulting industry - independent or commercial. We feel there’s room for everyone in our ‘tent,’ and we look forward to continuing our in-depth coverage of NAICC members and activities, as we always have.

“Hope this clears up any potential misconceptions about *Ag Consultant*.”

Since the receipt of this letter at the Memphis office, Sulecki and Raun have been in contact regarding the issue, and the misunderstanding has been resolved in a good-natured manner. Both deserve an ‘Atta Boy’ for attempting and achieving true communication.

**CONTRACT RESEARCH ROUNDTABLE**

Factors in Selecting a Cooperator

by Phil Robinson, Agri Business Group

Have you ever asked the question, “Why didn’t I get that project? I know I had a competitive bid!” The answer is that sponsors and research project management firms look at more than just price when choosing a research cooperater. In many cases, a company’s future is riding on how well research is done-getting it done right is critical. While every sponsor has slightly different criteria, the following concepts are important:

- **Attitude**
- **Technical competence**
- **Willingness to communicate with the sponsor or project management firm**
- **Focus**
- **Adequate equipment and personnel**

**Attitude:** This is the top factor in choosing a research cooperater. Attitude includes two factors — attitude toward the customer, and attitude toward conducting research. Many cooperators project the attitude that they are doing a sponsor a favor by conducting research for them (whether or not this is what they mean to portray).

- **Yeah, we’ll get you a bid - next month.**
- **Sure we can conduct that study, but it is really going to be a pain.**
- **Why do you want us to do that?**

Some cooperators must have enough business, or little enough competition, that these attitudes seem appropriate. From a sponsor’s standpoint, a cooperater who acts like they are doing you a favor by giving them business is frustrating. And frustration not lead to repeat business.

The second attitude issue is the cooperater’s attitude toward GLP (Good Laboratory Practices). In the early 1990s, many cooperators said that GLP were a major hassle and made no sense. Fortunately, most of these cooperators are no longer conducting research. Many research projects today demand GLP. We want cooperators who are willing to conduct reasonable GLP research. Cooperators who complain and whine about GLP – or who don’t follow them after promising to – don’t get the opportunity to submit a bid.

**Technical Competence:** This factor includes knowledge about the crop that needs to be grown, and how to conduct the study. Most cooperators who are in business today are pretty good at growing crops in their area. However, they run into trouble when they try to grow a crop that shows up in their EPA region, but is not grown within several hundred miles of their site or they have no experience. A “can do” attitude is great, but we appreciate honesty in cooperators’ evaluation of their research skills. Honesty now translates into more projects in the future.

**Willingness to Communicate:** This factor includes everything from timely return of phone calls to telling the sponsor when things are happening. For example, some sponsors ask for key pages of a study book to be faxed within 24-48 hours. Many cooperators can’t or don’t follow this simple instruction, which may cause problems long-term for the study. Researchers are very busy people, with multiple responsibilities. However, so are sponsors-and they have hired the cooperater to do the job right. It is frustrating for everyone to have a deviation in a study caused by poor communication.
Focus: Today, most cooperators conduct research as their primary business. However, some cooperators are energetic entrepreneurs who choose to conduct more research than they can handle or operate several different businesses. Ideally, the cooperator has a reasonable workload that allows them to conduct quality research in a timely manner. Trouble occurs when researchers try to do too much and as a result do nothing well.

Personnel and Equipment: It’s basic—the cooperator has to have the right equipment and adequate personnel to conduct the requested research. The researcher doesn’t need to have everyimaginable piece of equipment, but the right equipment. This ranges from cooperators who have invested millions into equipment to those that have only a minimal investment—as long as they’ve made the right investment for the project.

Good employees are as important as good equipment. Although not all of these employees need to be trained in GLP, they do need to understand the concepts of doing good research. This means they are conscientious and understand the big picture of what the research is trying to answer.

The one factor not on this list is price. Of course, a trial might go to the more reasonable bid if the competition’s price is significantly higher than the average value of the project. However, sponsors and project management firms will give a project to someone who is higher priced if they meet the base criteria and the competition does not. The bottom line? How you do the project is more important than the price you do it for.

WHAT'S UP IN YOUR AREA?

Please let us know anytime there is anything of interest happening in your area. The folks who spread the news, i.e., agricultural trade journal editors, need input from the folks who are involved in the news—that’s you! So give us the scoop, and we’ll pass it on. If you should have any interesting story ideas or know of events that deserve news coverage, please contact the Memphis office.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

IN THE MARCH AG CONSULTANT:

• Several NAICC members, including Mike Brubaker, Ron O’Hanlon, Madeline Mellinger, Dan Bradshaw, and Bruce Nowlin, were interviewed for an article about employee no-compete agreements.

• The NAICC convention in Orlando was reviewed. Dan Easton and Brad Buchanan were mentioned due to the new technologies they introduced. In addition, Harold Lambert was quoted; and B.B. Singh, Maggie Alms, Judy Ferguson, and Don Jameson, along with his wife, Cathy, appeared in a photograph snapped as Singh and Alms received plaques for their nomination into Ag Consultant’s Crop Professionals Hall of Fame.

• Ray Young was pictured and interviewed regarding the economics of Bt cotton.

• Dan Bradshaw, Grady Coburn, and Tucker Miller were featured in an article about switching from cotton to soybeans and other grains in the South. Bradshaw was pictured.

IN THE MAY AG CONSULTANT:

• With a letter questioning the enforcement of CCA ethics, Dan Roach kicked off a regular feature called “CCA Sound-Off.”

• John Gruber and Harold Lambert contributed their opinions on how the Farm Bill will affect crop consultants.

• Mike Brubaker was quoted in an article about drift management, in which he advised that consultants and producers should always know what crops are being grown in surrounding areas due to the potential for herbicide drift.

• Dennis Berglund, Roger Carter, Phil Cochran, Don Jameson, and Brad Buchanan each offered their insight as to what the future holds for consultants with regard to precision agriculture; for instance, whether consultants’ roles will change, challenges with and costs of precision ag; etc. Berglund, Carter, and Cochran were pictured.

• Tom Perlick contributed an article entitled, “Yield Monitor Field Tips,” which offered his advice on using yield monitors.

• Kirk Wesley, Toni Smith-Wade, and Pat Weddle were each photographed and interviewed as to their experiences using the Internet; each mentioned specific uses, including checking weather, e-mailing clients, and researching market prices.

IN FARM CHEMICALS:

• Phil Cochran was interviewed and photographed for a May article on geographical information systems. He offered his predictions on what GIS will be used for in the future.

• Cecil Parker was quoted in a recent article entitled, “Bt Cotton Takes the Field.”

IN CPM MAGAZINE:

• Articles by Tom Perlick and Shannon Gomes were featured in a recent issue; each wrote about herbicide options for corn in his particular region.

• B. B. Singh was featured in a recent article about underground secondary corn pests.

• Stan Schaaf contributed a recent article on nitrogen deficiencies in corn.

• Charlie Mellinger, Chuck Farr, Jay Johnson, and Dana Palmer were interviewed for an article on the relationships between insect problems and their weed hosts.

• Dave Mowers was mentioned in a recent article about corn damage due to rootworms.

IN OTHER NEWS:

• B.B. Singh was mentioned in the February issue of Agronomy News due to his ARCPACS affiliation.

(Continued on page 7)
**BE A BUDDY**

Volunteers are still needed for the New Member Buddy System. The purpose of this great new program is to pair up new members with NAICC buddies who will contact them three to four times a year to help orient them to the Alliance and encourage them to get involved. Our membership is growing by leaps and bounds monthly, and we need buddies! It's a great opportunity to contribute to NAICC. Thanks to those who have already agreed to participate; please encourage others to do the same. If you have received notification of your buddy’s name, please follow up by reporting to the Memphis office and by giving him or her a call. If you have not yet volunteered, please do so by contacting the Memphis office.

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**JULY 23-26, 1996**
Conservation Technology Information Center Board Meeting and Summer Tour, Holiday Inn O’Hare, Chicago, Ill. For more information contact Tammy Taylor at 317/494-9555.

**SEPTEMBER 1-7, 1996**
Society for Invertebrate Pathology 29th Annual Meeting and 3rd Colloquium on Bacillus thuringiensis, Cordoba, Spain. For more information contact Wendy Gelernter at 619/272-9897.

**OCTOBER 18-20, 1996**
NAICC Executive Board Meeting, Memphis, Tenn. For more information call 901/683-9466.

**JANUARY 22-26, 1997**
NAICC Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Tex. For more information call 901/683-9466.