



NAICC NEWS

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The Voice of the Professional Crop Consultant

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Some causes are more appealing than others, but to anyone involved in production agriculture, the Foundation for Environmental Agriculture Education (FEAE) should rank near the top.

Supporting the FEAE gives people the best of both worlds: they feel good while doing good.

~ This group of dedicated professional crop consultants took on the responsibility of rejuvenating the higher learning educational process to include more emphasis on the in-field practitioner — the field consultant. Stemming from a National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) committee appointed in 1988, FEAE claims some concrete and impressive results:

- The University of Florida is in its inaugural semester of offering agriculture's first graduate professional degree, The Doctor of Plant Medicine.
- Texas A&M and Texas Tech Universities offer Masters of Agriculture in integrated crop management.

Feel Good to Do Good:

Support the FEAE Auction

- Michigan State University offers a professional Masters degree in Integrated Pest Management.
- The very first Jensen Memorial Scholarship for \$1,000, awarded to Clint A. Dotterer of Fairbury, Illinois, in 2000.

As a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, the Foundation has focused its attention on the educational process and how it can be modified to recognize the multidisciplinary scope of in-field work. Initial goals included helping establish several advanced degree programs around the country for those who choose to utilize their skills in the field instead of the laboratory.

While the overall goal is the same, the target shifted a bit.

"This program is not just for crop consultants," says **Dan Bradshaw**, CPCC-I, a long-time proponent of a systems approach to problem solving. "It started off that way, but as we talked to more people, we realized that other professions - chemical and seed representatives, bankers, etc. - in the industry need the same type of broad base understanding."

HELPING HANDS

One way to help FEAE achieve its goals and have some fun in the process is to

support one of its primary fundraisers. Periodically, the Foundation teams with the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) to host an evening of serious fun and games.

During that evening, items donated by friends and neighbors throughout the country are auctioned off. There are fun items, useful items, gag items - items from the countryside and the city, some silly and some extremely practical.

Member consultants from different regions of the country compete for most useful or outrageous or just plain colorful auction item. The competition is keen as New England maple syrup takes on crawfish from Louisiana bayous. The more dollars they generate, the closer FEAE gets to setting up a nationwide system of practical education for professional crop doctors.

Industry members have been just as generous in the past, donating products and services to help meet FEAE's goals. Every dime collected at the auction stays with FEAE and is used in fulfilling its mission.

Donating is easy; just call NAICC executive vice president Allison Jones at 901/861-0511 or e-mail her at JonesNAICC@aol.com and tell her you want to do something good for production agriculture. She'll gladly register all donations for the auction, either silent or verbal, and make sure you get proper credit with both the FEAE and IRS. All donated items are fully deductible under current tax laws.

The auction is scheduled for Thursday night, January 18, in Orlando. Be a sport and help make it a night to remember. ■

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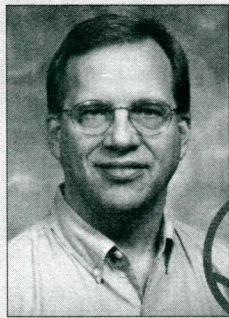
2001 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS ELECTED

One of the reasons NAICC has become such a strong voice for consultants is the quality of its leadership. This year we're proud to announce the following cadre of officers who will provide guidance to our growing membership throughout 2001.

President Elect: Al Averitt
Secretary: Bruce Niederhauser
Directors: Tim Case
Bill Cox
Chris Cole

We're also pleased to announce that more than 50% percent of NAICC's voting membership participated in electing these individuals. The officers will be inaugurated during NAICC's upcoming Annual Meeting. ■

MURPHY'S LAW



BY
DENNIS BERGLUND,
NAICC PRESIDENT



At NAICC's 2000 Annual meeting in Portland, President Roger Carter visited with us about Murphy's Law and associated sayings. The original Murphy's Law is "Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong", and there have been numerous other "corollaries and theorems" that have proven just as true (and humorous).

To follow up on Roger's idea, I visited with many NAICC members over the last 8 months and asked if they could give examples where Murphy's Law applies to crop consultants and research consultants. I have listed 20 of the best "Law's" below, so see if you can relate to them. If you can think of other examples, or have comments, please e-mail them to me at dennisb@tvutel.com, and I will use them in a future article.

Murphy's Law Applied to Crop and Research Consultants

1. If you receive lab results for 9 out of 10 "rush" fields, the 10th will be the field that the grower wants to fertilize.
2. Even the simplest research protocol will be worded in the most complicated way.
3. The grower most in need of sound advice is the grower that is least receptive to that advice.
4. Any on-line search for agronomic information will yield at least one "porno site".
5. You'll receive an important amendment to the research protocol just as you're prepared to make the application (which you've already mixed).
6. EVERYONE who hasn't set foot in the field will know exactly what the best recommendation should have been.
7. Dumb luck will always beat careful planning.

BERGLUND'S CONDENSED GUIDE TO CONSULTING

- If it's green or it wriggles, it's biology.
- If it stinks, it's chemistry.
- If it doesn't work, it's physics.
- If it's incomprehensible, it's mathematics.
- If it doesn't make sense, it's either economics or psychology.
- If it's all of the above, it's crop consulting!

8. The "constants" used in economic thresholds are really "variables".
9. If it's easy to admit that you were wrong, why is it so tough to admit it to your grower?
10. Just when you are certain that a specific recommendation will give predictable results, the targeted organism will do as it damn well pleases.
11. No matter what goes wrong, someone will remind you that they "knew it wouldn't work".
12. A consultant's ability is inversely proportional to his availability.
13. Any treatable pest infestation will start in the most inaccessible part of the field.
14. The client who pays the least usually complains the most.
15. The more urgent the recommendation, the harder the product is to find.
16. A consultant's garden is usually the weediest in the neighborhood.
17. The weediest fields will be close to well-traveled roads.
18. If there is only one source for a product, the price will be unreasonable.
19. The one time that you lean back in the pickup seat to give your eyes a rest from scouting is when your grower arrives and wakes you up.
20. An extra \$0.10 to \$1.00 /acre does not cause much grower concern when it comes to chemical or fertilizer costs, but it often seems like the end of the world when it comes to raising consulting fees.

See you in Orlando! ■

NICHE FARMING? BOY WHAT A NICHE!!

By Earle Raun

Last winter a seed producer, who farms on the east edge of Nebraska's High Plains contacted me. He asked if I would be willing to tackle a problem that has been "bugging" his seed production.

He is a niche farmer. It's hard to imagine how specialized! In 1935 his father started producing native grasses and flowers for seed. And their specialized seed farms have grown since then. Their native grasses include Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Switch Grass, Indian Grass, and Buffalo grass. They also produce seed of a number of wildflowers, such as Purple Cone Flower and False Sunflower. These are the plants that the

buffalo fed on and roamed through when these High Plains were first getting farmed.

His insect problem is known as the "big bluestem midge", a minute fly whose maggots feed in the florets of several of the prairie grasses. Seed production losses have been calculated as high as 50%. His question intrigued me, because the problem was nearly virgin research, in a plant group in which I had no experience. My entomological research and consulting career has primarily involved the insects that attack corn, soybeans, dry beans, alfalfa, wheat, sunflowers and potatoes. I explained to

him that I would love to tackle the problem, but first needed him to understand I was a neophyte in the crops he produces.

I'm no longer a neophyte, but I have much to learn. What a fascinating project! A once-a-week visit through the summer taught me a lot about prairie grasses. By necessity my library of prairie grass information has ballooned. If I am to help this producer I must learn the basics of his crop, in this case multiple crops.

The literature search produced many publications about a related fly that attacks sorghum (milo), the Sorghum midge. Only three research papers could I find about the Big Bluestem seed

midge. The life cycle of this minute fly had been worked out in the laboratory, and briefly followed in the field. Hosts were suggested, but not thoroughly worked out.

Through the summer we used 4 x 5 yellow sticky boards, changed weekly, to monitor the flying insect populations. Placed on stakes, and moved up as the grasses grew, an amazing variety of nearly microscopic insects were collected in this fashion. Only a few species could I recognize.



In late July we began to see a few of the Big Bluestem midge in the sticky traps. Seed heads

were beginning to form in the head high grass. At each week's visit, bouquets of 25 to 30 seed heads (panicles) were gathered, and taken to my office and enclosed in plastic bags. (See photo) Here,

morning and night, adult midges that had emerged could be collected. What a thrill the first emerging little, yellowish flies provided!!

The next thrill came when two or three weeks later I began to find minute Hymenoptera in the bags around the panicle's. They turned out to be a wasp parasitoid of midges. By mid September the panicle's were producing as many wasps as midges. This probably means about 50% reduction in midges by the parasitoid.

Although the literature reported one attempt to reduce the seed loss caused by the midge, the chemicals used in those mid-80s tests were unsuccessful. We elected to set out a three treatment (2 insecticides and one untreated), 5-replicate ground-applied chemical test. Application timing was mostly by guess.

Results of the chemical test have been measured by dissecting 300 to 400 florets from the three treatments, counting those bearing a seed and those seedless. It appears that between the summer's

drought and the midge, only about 20% of the untreated florets produced a seed. The best chemical treatment appears to have improved that to 50%.

What next? During the winter I'll try to break diapause of the maggots in the seed. And next summer, armed with a bit more knowledge about the crops and the insect pest we'll add to that knowledge, and try to fine tune control measures.

We'll also be looking at the economics of the situation. Will additional seed production reduce the value, and more than offset the costs of producing the additional seed? How do we factor into the economic picture the value of the parasitoid in the environment? We have a lot to learn about that parasitoid, too. And it has only been identified to genus. Never to species as far as we can determine.

Talk about Niche Farming? Meet a Niche Consultant. ■

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Because NAICC has recognized the value of colleagues coming together to share old and new experiences, specific networking lunches have been arranged during the 2001 Annual Meeting. Research and crop consultants from across the nation can share ideas and trends and help solve problems during the Networking Boxed lunches, scheduled Thursday, January 18, from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. in the Florida Exhibit Hall East.

If you have a topic, issue or new idea and want to hear what others have to say about it, we can help you orchestrate a Networking Lunch. If you're interested,

simply complete the following form and fax it to Allison Jones at NAICC headquarters. (You can also call or email the information.)

Updates on topics and coordinators' names will appear in this newsletter and on the NAICC homepage under "Miscellaneous Discussions." If you do not wish to lead a lunch but see a topic listed in the newsletter or on the Web site, contact Allison to be added to that particular list.

Topic participants and meeting sites will be posted at the registration desk at the Annual Meeting. Others can sign up upon arrival. ■

NETWORKING LUNCH SIGN-UP FORM

Name _____

Company _____

Phone _____

Topic: _____

Send in Your Nomination Now for Consultant of the Year

Please remember to send in your nomination for the NAICC/BASF Consultant of the Year Program. The deadline is November 24, and applications are available from NAICC headquarters.

We're seeking nominations for consul-

tant members with entrepreneurial spirit, innovation and creativity. The award also acknowledges consultants who, with their clients, accomplish the highest stewardship through environmental responsibility and actions that benefit their communities.

The Consultant of the Year will receive

a plaque and recognition during the BASF Consultant of the Year Alumni dinner (held in conjunction with the NAICC annual meeting) and during the NAICC's President's Lunch and Awards Ceremony. The winner will also receive editorial recognition in Crop Decisions magazine and in NAICC News. ■

KEEPING CLIENTS IN TOUGH TIMES

by Randy Darr, Soil-Right Consulting Services

I have always been a firm believer that in the tough times is when we as crop consultants are most needed. I've talked to colleagues who were consulting back in the '70's and they said that they about starved to death. In the '70's it almost didn't matter what the farmer did; he always made money. However, high interest rates came with the imperative to watch those expenses and only do what was absolutely vital to the continuance of the farm. Society as a whole has a "what have you done for me lately" mind set. Farmers, for good reason, have adopted much of this same philosophy and we must realize this fact and continue to tell our clients how valuable we are to them. I have a client that through the years has become a fairly close friend and he once told me that I would have many more clients except that he said I don't brag enough. I kind of chuckled a bit and later thought about what he said and decided to accept the philosophy of Dizzy Dean, Hall of Fame pitcher from the St. Louis Cardinals and member of the Gas House Gang, who said, "It ain't braggin' if it's true." I've developed a plan of attack to show my clients just how valuable I am to them. I didn't come up with these ideas on my own and they are not really anything profound. It just takes effort to put it together and use the information.

I always have something new to tell a client when I visit. Something pertinent to his farming operation. Once unknowingly I made a comment to three brothers who farmed together. I told them that they should slow down when shelling corn because the stalks were basically just leaning over and made it very difficult to get soil samples and actually did some damage to my four-wheeler. One brother left and this happened to be the brother who drove the combine. The other two brothers said that they had been trying to get him to slow down for years but had not been successful.

My next technique is what I call "shaking hands and kissing babies." Clients really don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. With this technique, it requires just stopping in and visiting with a client for no real reason other than to see how they are doing. You have to be careful in these situations. Sometimes you can find yourself becoming everything from psycho-therapist to marriage counselor. If you're not prepared it can become quite uncomfortable. This is also a time you reminisce about past successes and how they were accomplished.

When I was just starting in this business, I had some down time in the winter, so I would substitute teach at our local school. I was visiting with one of the

teachers and describing to him this exciting occupation that I had just started on and he came to the conclusion that our job is basically the same as any teacher's. That job is eliminating ignorance. With that in mind, I also try to teach my clients something when I see them. You will find yourself telling the same things over and over again for a while but that's okay. The more they learn, the more they will realize they need you.

Finally, the one that I have just started is writing down the dollar cost of your recommendations. You **would** be surprised at the number of clients who don't even know their cost of production. In some cases that is a little difficult to decipher. However, in most circumstances it isn't that difficult. After you give your recommendations for the year, sit down and figure out what those costs are. You may be surprised yourself just how good a job you are doing or visa versa.

I wouldn't claim that any of the techniques are brain surgery. They are just a couple of ideas that I have made work in an effort to help the people I work for and to show them that they mean more to you than just a pay check. In this tough agriculture period it may take that extra effort to keep some clients. However, if you do a good job and show them, you should be able to keep them satisfied. ■

Making Technology Work

By Jerry Gitchel

NAICC is pleased that Jerry Gitchel will be sharing his insight on using technology to manage your business — and your life — through this column in NAICC News. Jerry will also share his insight at the Annual Meeting in Orlando.

Depending on the kind of day you had yesterday, I'll bet you reacted to that headline in one of three ways:

1). Technology *doesn't* work. 2). I wish my technology would work. 3). Oh sure, you can make technology work, but what about me?

No matter how you reacted, there is something for everyone in this new column, "Making Technology Work." In each issue of NAICC News, Jerry Gitchel, The Technology Guy, will help you leverage the technology you already own, offer tips and tricks for evaluating new technology and provide answers on how to

make technology work for you and your company. Each month we'll focus on one of the following topics:

- **Leveraging Technology** - How to make the most of your existing technology investment.
- **Master of Your Domain** - Tips and tricks you can use to create and maintain a Web presence.
- **Customer Relationship Management** - How to use Contact Management software to build customer relationships.
- **The Changing Face of Technology** - Survival skills for anyone faced with adopting new technology.

Leveraging Technology: Seat and Mirrors

I love my pickup truck, but it's not the sort of vehicle I'd use to take clients to lunch. So when I borrow my wife's sedan, I'm faced with adjusting the seat and mirrors. She's just the cutest little thing,

so I don't mind squeezing in to reach the adjustment handle. Once I'm done, everything works fine.

This month we are going to talk about software configuration. It's a lot like adjusting the seat and mirrors in your vehicle. Configuration helps set up software to work the way you do, in much the same way adjusting mirrors helps you avoid obstacles when you hit the gas in reverse. Here are two common problems that can be solved with configuration.

Mousing Around

Let's say your mouse moves too fast or you can't quite get the hang of performing a double-click. If your PC uses Windows 95 or later, click Start | Settings | Control Panel, then double-click the Mouse Icon. Adjust the motion settings to slow the pointer as it crosses your

screen. Next, locate and adjust the double-click speed to make your mouse easier to use. Now that your mouse is under control, let's work on making your everyday software easier to use.

Word-processing

You just came in from the field and need to finish up a report you worked on last week. You click File | Open, then realize you saved it in the "Client Reports" folder instead of "My Documents." You find yourself once again switching to a different folder for the umpteenth time to find the right file.

Instead of opening the file, click Cancel so we can fix this problem once and for all. Start by clicking Tools | Options and selecting the File Locations tab. We want to adjust the selected file type: Documents. Click the Modify but-

ton, then navigate to the folder where you keep the bulk of your files. Click OK twice to complete the process. Now when you click File | Open the software will look in just the right spot!

Your Favorite Software

I'll bet your favorite software has an Options or Preferences menu. Investing 15 minutes adjusting your program's Seat and Mirrors will pay long-term dividends. If you are ready to leverage your technology investment, crank up your computer and let's get started. Here are some quick steps you can use to Make Technology Work.

Quick Steps

- Write down the name of the software program you use the most.
- Underneath the name, make a list of the tasks you perform that seem harder

than necessary.

- Launch your software and find the menu where you can make adjustments to Options or Preferences.
- Using the list you created above, find and adjust the setting that will solve the problem.

Technology Wishes

When you started reading this column, did you react with "I wish my technology would work?" Your wish could come true! I'll use reader input to write future articles, so visit www.jerrygitchel.com/naicc to submit your request. ■

Jerry Gitchel makes technology work for companies and individuals who want to maximize profits and productivity. Contact Jerry at (904) 403-0293 or info@jerrygitchel.com



HAPPENINGS ON THE HILL

Legislative advisory Committee Chair, Robin Spitko spent most of the week of October 9th in Washington representing NAICC at the Committee to Address Reassessment and Transition (CARAT) meeting and also at meetings with EPA/USDA top officials. NAICC has made good progress and gained substantial influence that exceeds our small size. However, despite this, it is important to remember that meeting a couple of times with pertinent officials is important to address issues of concern but to make progress on these issues requires constant and methodical follow-ups. NAICC needs to keep its face on the front lines of all issues important to the organization.

The Legislative Advisory Committee will continue to track progress of the WPS exemptions for research and crop consultants. EPA will hold a National Assessment of the Worker Protection Program - Workshop #2" in Sacramento, California, December 11-13, 2000. This is the second in a series of meetings and workshops that will continue the nationwide assessment of the agricultural worker protection program. NAICC will continue to address the concerns of crop and research consultants regarding WPS issues and the status of our exemption; hopefully this will be resolved in the upcoming months.

FQPA: As most persons affected by regulatory actions understand, FQPA broadened consideration of health risk factors from pesticide use while reducing consideration of benefits. The economic impact of regulatory actions is not a priority consideration, particularly when the health of sensitive populations, such as children, are involved. However, the economic effects of these actions are highly significant and have not yet been seen. Some sobering issues have surfaced:

- As of yet, no comprehensive independent assessment has yet been conducted to estimate the economic impact of the last 4 years of regulatory activity on crop production in the U.S.
- No studies have estimated how removal of entire chemical families (such as organophosphates) will affect U.S. crop production
- EPA expects agriculture to be well into transitional strategies and has stated clearly that it is not its job to consider economic impacts of regulatory actions. Are we ready to deploy transitional strategies at a commercial level? Are they economically feasible?
- Many "alternative" strategies such as pheromone-based mating disruption still rely on traditional pesticides to reduce pest populations to levels manageable by "softer" techniques.
- Why is economic analysis lacking or downplayed?
- Dietary risks are considered to play only a partial role in filling the "risk cup" for most pesticides yet they have

already impacted pesticide registrations significantly. As aggregate and cumulative risk factors are added, in addition to new toxicological test data including endocrine disruption and neurotoxicity screening, vast numbers of current registrations will be lost.

At the most recent CARAT meeting, The National Center For Food and Agricultural Policy presented some of their preliminary findings from their economic analyses of costs of regulatory actions to crop producers. Here are a few examples:

excerpted from Gianessi and Sivers, National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy, Washington, D.C., September, 2000

CASE STUDIES:

1. Peaches/methyl parathion/NC, SC, GA
 - losses of MP in one year have lead to 2.4 million dollars in increased insecticide costs
2. Strawberries/vinclozolin/iprodione/CA
 - vinclozolin canceled and iprodione limited to prebloom use
 - substitution of fenhexamid immediately costing >\$ 1 million in addition pesticide costs
3. Mint/monophos/OR
 - only registered control for garden symphytan, serious soil-borne pest
 - chlorpyrifos alternative; yields reduced 65%
 - in 2000 losses in mint alone \$7.1 million
4. Chili peppers/oxyfluorfen/NM
 - loss of only control of Wright ground cherry will result in 33% yield reduction

- initial losses \$1.3 million will increase as infestations increase
5. Sugar beets/TPTH/MN,ND
- current PHI is now 21 days but 5% of sugar beet crop is lost to *Cercospora* in this period; state requests for shorter PHI denied
 - pre-harvest losses to *Cercospora* this year: \$25 million

6. Cotton/many pesticides/MS
- beet armyworm losses exceeding \$10 million in MS alone
- It is essential for NAICC as an organization and NAICC members as individuals to keep telling our stories of the reality of crop production. No other group or organization has such comprehensive knowledge of the challenges being faced

by our agricultural sector. Our viewpoint may not be popular or what regulatory officials want to hear, but it is an unbiased assessment of how regulatory changes are directly affecting crop production. Speak up, NAICC members! Your voice is needed. ■

The Perfect Retirement Plan

By Matthew Tuttle, MBA

If you could design the perfect retirement plan for your business, wouldn't it contain the following features?

- No limit on contributions
- Fully tax deductible to the company
- You could implement the plan for one or more employees without including others
- You could put stiff vesting provisions in place to lock up key employees
- Retirement income would be withdrawn tax free
- It could be implemented in addition to or instead of a qualified plan (401k, profit sharing, etc.)
- No penalties for early withdrawal
- No mandatory distributions at any time
- A one time set-up fee and no ongoing administrative costs
- No reporting to the IRS
- The plan could provide for a substantial death benefit for your family.

Sound too good to be true? We assure you it's not. The plan is called the Personal Retirement Plan, and it may just be the perfect retirement planning tool.

We know that there are certain businesses whose owners do not do as well in a traditional retirement plan. You really need a meaningful plan for yourself, but the benefits accruing to you just don't seem to be worth the administrative

costs plus the cost for the other eligible employees. There are also those of you who would choose to, and could afford to do more to really accelerate the process, but you've been limited by strict Federal Government formulas.

The Personal Retirement Plan addresses these two problems. Maybe you also have one or two key employees — people you really can't afford to lose. This plan can be designed so employees will have to stay with you for 10 years to get the money you put away for them. The perfect set of "golden handcuffs".

Here is an example of how the plan works:

A 40-year old business owner elects to put \$50,000/yr into the plan. The \$50,000 is totally tax-deductible to the company. Personally, he will owe about \$9,500 in taxes (or about half of what he would owe if he took the \$50,000 as income). He contributes for 10 years, until age 50. Under the current plan interest rates, he will be able to begin withdrawing \$137,530 annually at age 65 until age 85, TAX FREE. Furthermore, if he were to die prematurely, his family would receive nearly \$2.5 million dollars free of income tax.

The plan is extremely flexible. The business owner in this case could take money out sooner or later, and he can determine the period for which he wants it. In the design phase, he may also specify the

benefit he wants and when he wants it to begin. The plan contribution would be calculated to achieve the desired results.

Traditional retirement plans have their place. They encourage business owners to put money away for their employees or employees to put their own money away when they might not otherwise have done so. The drawbacks, though, can sometimes outweigh the benefits: All eligible employees must be covered and there can be no discrimination; there are strict limits as to how much you can put in — making it harder for high income business owners to plan for retirement; there are ongoing administrative fees; and, in addition, the retirement income coming out of the plan is taxable.

The Personal Retirement Plan solves all of these problems and more.

Matthew Tuttle, MBA is President of Wealth Advisors, a financial planning firm with offices in Stamford, Conn., New York City and Long Island. He welcomes your comments and questions and can be reached at (203) 609-9077 or by email at tuttlem@earthlink.net. More information on the Personal Retirement Plan can be found on his website, www.wealthadvisors.bigstep.com or talk with Matt at the NAICC Annual Meeting where he will discuss How Consultants Can Get the Most Out of Tax reductions, Retirement Plans, and Employee Benefits. ■

NEW MEMBER PROFILE

Cathy A. Nord, Ph.D.
Diamond Ag Research, Inc.
Larned, Kansas

Cathy Nord received her B.S. degree in Agronomy from Washington State University, and her M.S. and Ph.D. in Agronomy/Weed Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She was a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Wisconsin and held the position of Postdoctoral Research Associate at North Dakota State University immediately

after completion of her Doctorate.

Cathy and her husband Doug, also a new member of the NAICC, own and operate Diamond Ag Research, a contract research company in central Kansas. In addition to pesticide and seed performance trials, they conduct GLP residue trials and are active in crop consulting for area producers.

Factors influencing her membership in the NAICC are the networking and educational opportunities available to

her as a member. She stated that the annual meetings are a great place to learn about and discuss important topics in agriculture.

When asked if she plans to become directly involved in the Alliance, she replied, "Yes, although that will be postponed briefly until my recently born son, Caleb, (September 22, 2000) is a little bigger." Congratulations, Cathy & Doug, on the new addition to your family.

On the matter of industry cutbacks and/or mergers, Cathy gave her opinion: Ultimately, the industry has undergone cutbacks and mergers due to tighter margins in production agriculture. We

are now in a very global economy, which has increased competition and moderated demand for many commodities. When asked where she thinks agriculture is headed over the next 10-20 years, she

stated the need for more specific use of all inputs: identity-preserved commodities and more contracted production. In short, greater complexity. ■

Farm Labor and its Effect on Consulting

By Roger Carter

Easy living, government welfare programs, complacency in America's workforce and low farm wages caused by low commodity prices have all led to a decrease in available labor for agricultural purposes. Even though more efficient equipment exists, technology has increased the need for trained and faithful farm employees. The labor pool has shrunk as unemployment rates have decreased, thereby causing farmers to hire just about anyone they can find. Decreased efficiency, increased damage to equipment and crops and more labor-related problems are the result.

What effect does this have on consultants? Why do we have to worry about farm labor? Each management decision we make for the farmer that may include the use of dependable farm labor will be affected — depending on the availability of good labor.

For example, if I make a recommendation for a field to be treated in two days with a product being used at 1/100 gal/ac in 15 GPA total volume, I expect that field to be treated as specified. If I know that the farmer does not have the labor capable of performing this simple procedure, I recommend that he use a commercial applicator with the capabilities of performing the task.

In my 37 years in the ag consulting profession, I've encountered this situation much more frequently in the past few years. Some clients are applying all insecticides and defolianters using commercial applicators - the basic reason being lack of adequate labor.

Planting and harvest, in particular, are the most labor-consuming operations on most farms. Each season usually lasts about 30 days. The part-time labor needed is even more difficult to find than full-time employees. And the quality of labor is often very poor. Again, the effects of not having enough good labor may require that a consultant's recommendations be augmented to reflect this lack.

There is always something to do on the farm. Daddy once said, "Anyone who wants to be sure he or she will never be unemployed should marry a farmer."

However, that statement may not be true anymore given the number of farmers who are calling it quits. He also said, "One thing that farmers aren't raising enough of is farmhands. But even if they were, boys and girls can't remain on the farm if prices are down."

Laborers can't be blamed for not wanting to work on the farm. The living is much faster-paced than 20-30 years ago. And the wages are barely above minimum while the cost of living is high. It's easier to work at McDonalds, Wendy's or Burger King — and almost as much money with less harsh working conditions. No mud, dust, dirt, sun, rain, wind, muck, bugs, etc. Sounds like a vacation compared to life on the farm.

And the oxymoron "faithful hands" has found its way to agriculture — the last holdout for hope that good is better than evil, trust is still a five-letter word, and allegiance is pledged to more than the flag. Farmers are the eternal optimists. People who believe that what goes down must

also come up are sometimes called farmers. That includes not only prices, but also the availability of dependable labor.

Consultants in the Cotton Belt rely on many of the farmhands while they are driving over the fields to help monitor fields for unusual situations. They also help us decide which fields have the best drainage or yield potential. Therefore, it is important that we stay close to the farm laborers to do our jobs.

Oh, I doubt there is anything that we can do as agricultural consultants to change the labor situation in farming, but our recommendations must reflect the actual situations that exist on the farm. We must be aware of labor quality — or lack thereof — along with all the rules and regulations (EPA, OSHA, INS) that affect farmers and their labor. After all, isn't our job to recommend what's in the farmer's best interest? Doing anything less would be an ethical break in our described job. ■

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 17-21, 2001

NAICC Annual Meeting, Hyatt Orlando, Orlando, Fla. Registration, exhibit and sponsorship information can be downloaded from www.naicc.org. For more information contact Allison Jones at (901) 861-0511, (901) 861-0512 (fax); or JonesNAICC@aol.com.

January 21-22, 2001

"Good Laboratory Practices for the Field," sponsored by the Southern Weed Science Society Endowment Foundation, Beau Rivage Hotel, Biloxi, Miss. For more information contact R.A. Schmidt, SWSS Business Manager, 1508 West University Avenue, Champaign, Ill. 61821-3133.

February 21-22, 2001

Agricultural Consultant's Association of Alabama (ACAA) and Georgia Association of Professional Agricultural Consultant's (GAPAC) joint Annual Meeting, Continuing Education Center, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. For more information, visit the GAPAC website at www.georgiacropconsultants.org.

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