



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT CROP CONSULTANTS

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



By
Tim Case
NAICC
President

You Might Be a Consultant If...

Well, here we are again, another summer slipping away from us and another growing season coming to an end. With my abundance of newfound free time, I decided to identify some of the things that will help identify consultants or potential consultants around you. You'll notice this looks very similar to what Jeff Foxworthy might say.

1. When at the coffee shop you notice non-farmers discussing the quality of this years' crop and you just have to jump in and educate them. You might be a crop consultant.

2. When a fellow parent mentions their child has been bitten by a bug and you ask for a physical description so you can identify the species. You might be a crop consultant.
3. If you send your spouse flowers, but then check them for insects. You might be a crop consultant.
4. If your child needs an insect collection for school that requires 10 insects, but they end up turning in 116. One of the parents is definitely a crop consultant.
5. If you drive past an agricultural field and fail to appreciate the beauty of nature because you are wondering what management program was used. You might be a crop consultant.
6. If you need to spray insects or weeds at your home and you read the ingredients portion of the label on the homeowner product from Wal-Mart before the name. You might be a crop consultant.
7. If you use the word insect all the time instead of bug. You might be a crop consultant.
8. If you consistently refer to dirt as soil. You might be a crop consultant.

And I would hate to leave out the research consultants, so here it goes.

1. When you notice a spelling error on your child's homework and insist that he/she mark through it with one line, initial, date and give a reason. You might be a research consultant.
2. If you wake up at 2:30 a.m. in a cold sweat wondering if you made the final corn application to a trial. You might be a research consultant.
3. If you see a person working and wonder if they have a standard operating procedure for their process. You might be a research consultant.
4. If you know what GLP stands for. You might be a research consultant.
5. If you care what GLP stands for. You might be a research consultant.

And finally, if you take pride in helping the American farmer feed the world, you may definitely be a crop consultant or research consultant.

In closing, I would like to ask everyone to remember the victims of Hurricane Katrina. It's hard times such as these that show the true mettle of the United States people. God bless and everyone take care.

I'll See You in Tucson!

By Denise Wright

The 2006 NAICC Annual Convention will be held in Tucson, AZ, at the Marriott Starr Pass Resort, January 18-21. I am so looking forward to seeing my NAICC family, as well as greeting and meeting new members and first-timers.

The Annual Meeting Coordination Committee (chair: Donna Landis), the Consultant Education Committee (chair: Ron O'Hanlon) and the Research Education Committee (chair: Roger Musick) have worked extremely hard since the '05 Annual Meeting to line up exceptional topics and speakers for your benefit and enjoyment. In this article, I'll tell you why you need to be at the NAICC Annual Meeting every year,

no matter where it's held!

Attendance was somewhat down in Los Angeles this year – I believe this was largely due to the fact that some thought L.A. was a bit out of the way and/or "way-out". However, the '05 convention was one of the best yet, boasting a successfully

restructured program. Those of you who missed it cannot afford to miss what



Mission San Xavier del Bac by James Randklev/Tucson Convention & Visitors Bureau

promises to be another exceptional program in another beautiful location.

NAICC administration (a.k.a. Allison Jones) has again secured very affordable rates at a new resort in Tucson, a city that blends the cultures of the U.S. and Mexico. Tucson has a long history of settlement by ancient Native American peoples, Spanish explorers and Anglo frontiersmen.

The weather is mild nearly year-round, making it ideal for all kinds of outdoor activities: golfing, hiking, bird watching, cycling, camping, horseback riding and cave exploring. The city's geography is a postcard image of cactus forests, rolling hills and craggy mountains with national and state parks and forests surrounding the city.

And while the location will surely be enriching for all who attend the Annual Meeting, it's the information-packed agenda that we really can't afford to miss, given the demands our industry faces now and in the months to come. The meeting's presentations are geared to give us an edge as consultants, ensuring we stay abreast of the latest in technology and information.

Keynote speaker Bureson Smith of the USDA will address our group during the Plenary Session with the latest on Asian soybean rust. The FEAE will again sponsor the Richard L. Jensen Memorial presentation this year, this time featuring the Doctor of Plant Medicine Program and the overwhelming progress it's made.

A huge hit in Los Angeles, the concurrent sessions for crop consultants will again be featured. The sessions will focus on crop-specific information and encourage more audience participation. The researchers will also continue to have



Petroglyphs at Signal Hill by James Randle/Tucson Convention & Visitors Bureau

excellent sessions featuring speakers from sponsor companies, USDA, EPA and from our own talented members.

NAICC and its Foundation for Environmental Agriculture Education (FEAE) will hold the group's annual raffle to benefit the Richard L. Jensen Memorial Scholarship, which provides a \$1,000 award to an undergraduate student in an agriculture-related field. You won't want to miss the valuable items that are put up for raffle by our individual and Sustaining Members!

There are many NAICC members who would not miss the Annual Meeting (a.k.a. family reunion) for any reason short of their own death! I am proud to be counted among them. I have not missed a meeting since my first one as a "non-member first-timer" in Washington, D.C., in 1998. I immediately realized the awesome opportunities afforded by the meeting and since then I've been hooked!

I personally can't understand why anyone who attends a NAICC meeting doesn't feel the same way. Friends, there are so many avenues of enrichment, both professionally and personally, to be gained from being at the Meeting each year!

The NAICC Executive Board, various committees and the FEAE are working behind the scenes to ensure that topics and

speakers for the Annual Meeting program will benefit and entertain all of us.

My "#1" reason for attending every year is that this is the premier opportunity to network with fellow consultants and researchers. I personally get rejuvenated at the Annual Meeting. After a long, hot summer in the field and endless hours of wrapping up the year's trials, it is a stress reliever and a breath of fresh air to attend

and relax in the company of fellow consultants, researchers and other ag friends. At the same time, I gain the knowledge I need to help make my next year more fulfilling than the last.

As it turns out, I'm not the only one who views networking as my number one reason for attending the Annual Meeting. I polled some of my NAICC brethren to see what their top reasons for attending are - and they also ranked networking number one! WE HAVE SO MUCH TO OFFER EACH OTHER!!! Let's take advantage of this once-a-year opportunity to get together, to get a fresh perspective on our businesses, to give something back to agriculture by working on committees...I could go on and on and on.

If you're considering not attending the NAICC Annual Meeting in Tucson in '06, I ask that you go back a few newsletter issues and re-read the article submitted by Bruce Niederhauser. In it, he laments his decision not to attend the meeting in L.A. His regrets were apparent and I'll be willing to bet he won't miss another one! I implore you to make attending our Annual Meeting an annual priority. You will not find what you can gain - professionally and personally - anywhere other than at the NAICC Annual Meeting. I'll see you there!

NAICC MEETING TO BE HELD AT NEW DESERT RESORT

Mark Your Calendars! The 2006 NAICC Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 18-21 at the fabulous Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa in Tucson, AZ. Program, registration and exhibit information will be available in October by mail and at www.naicc.org.

ABOUT STARR PASS RESORT

The site of the '06 Annual Meeting is sure to impress, as the new Starr Pass Resort is commonly called a "sanctuary." After following a scenic, mile-long road to the resort, guests find relaxing Starr Pass nestled beside Tucson Mountain Park.

Dramatic three-story windows in the

resort's lobby offer stunning views of the Tucson Valley. From natural stone flooring to ceilings created from the spine of Saguaro cacti, the resort's décor draws on the Mexican, Spanish and Native American heritage of the Tucson area and captures the beauty of its natural surroundings.

Each of the 575 guest rooms and suites features a private balcony or patio - many with seating - to take advantage of the views. The rooms offer a spacious work desk, high-speed internet access, two-line telephones, iron and ironing board, hair dryer, in-room coffee, refreshment bar and safe.

Guests can enjoy a host of on-property amenities, including three swimming pools,

outdoor chimeneas/fireplaces, a concierge service, a children's activity center, a Starbucks Café and 24-hour room service. In keeping with JW Marriott's renowned service, the resort also features state-of-the-art technology, including wireless internet access and a business center located steps from the meeting rooms.

Inside, the hotel boasts a large ballroom (20,000 square feet), as well as a second ballroom of 15,000 square feet. Expansive foyers, 22-foot ceilings and outdoor catering patios with spectacular city and mountain views are among the facility's features.

Inspired by the healing properties of the Sonoran Desert and named for its revered Saguaro cacti (hashani is the Native



American word for Saguaro), Hashani Spa at Starr Pass features treatments incorporating elements of the spa's surroundings and

combines the latest beauty and health technologies with ancient healing techniques.

Outside, the Sonoran Desert and its majestic Saguaro cacti invite adventures in mountain biking, horseback riding and hiking with trailheads conveniently located on the property. The luxury resort even features a newly redesigned Arnold Palmer Signature Golf Course with expansive views of Tucson National Park.

Starr Pass Resort is minutes from Tucson International Airport and most of the city's

major attractions. With unheard of pre-opening rates of \$135 per night, you won't want to miss the 2006 NAICC Annual Meeting at the Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa! See for yourself at www.starrpassmarriott.com.



Annual Meeting Is Perfect Venue for Introducing New/Emerging Technology!

NAICC's Voting and Sustaining Members: take advantage of the opportunity to present new and emerging technologies to the audience that regularly adopts and introduces these advancements to the growing community at large!

At the Alliance's upcoming Annual Meeting, you'll have the opportunity to provide brief synopses of new products/technologies through a special Emerging Technology Papers session.

Scheduled for Thursday, January 19, 2006, five-minute speaking opportunities will be available for product/technology overviews, and presenters will have the

option of using three to five PowerPoint slides.

All presenters will also receive complimentary space in the improved Poster Session, so they can provide further details on their technology. (Additional space in the Exhibit Hall is available for rental.)

To participate in both activities, abstracts must be submitted to NAICC headquarters by Friday, September 30, 2005. (Abstracts are required to be 100 words or less and may contain supporting documentation.

Presentations should represent technologies not previously presented at NAICC meetings, and topics must have broad

appeal to research and crop consultants and industry representatives. Only submissions made by Sustaining or Voting NAICC Members will be accepted.

All parties submitting papers for consideration will be notified by November 18, 2005. Those chosen to present their technologies will be required to submit their PowerPoint and poster presentations to NAICC headquarters no later than December 9, 2005. This will ensure inclusion of slides in the session and posters in the official proceedings.

INDUSTRY UPDATE

New Biotech Corn Hybrids Make "Yield Drag" a Thing of the Past

By Brad Bremer, Connecticut-based agricultural writer for Syngenta

Since the introduction of biotech crops in the 1990s, their global market has exploded despite lingering concerns regarding biotech traits and yield performance. In 2003 the National Corn Growers Association reported that 40 percent of all corn acres in the U.S. contained at least one genetically modified biotech trait and four percent contained at least two.

According to Jack Bernens, Syngenta Seeds Business Unit Head, Agrisure Traits, one obstacle to the adoption of new biotech corn seed has been the perception among growers that they might have to choose between the traits they want (such as glyphosate tolerance and insect control) vs. the yield performance they need. This concern isn't related to the traits themselves but to the relative quality of the hybrids to which they were introduced.

Germplasm: The Foundation of All Corn Hybrids

"Germplasm quality determines many of the agronomic characteristics that contribute to yield, including emergence,

seedling growth, stalk strength, root strength, greensnap, drought tolerance, drydown and ear retention," Bernens says.

"New Agrisure TM corn traits from Syngenta provide growers with exceptional built-in herbicide tolerance and insect control – and elite germplasm. Agrisure corn traits will be available in elite hybrids from Garst Seed Company, Golden Harvest, Inc. and Syngenta's NK Brand, as well as from more than 50 independent seed companies."

Syngenta was the first company to bring biotechnology to corn with the launch of Bt seed in 1996. By adding a further selection of traits, Syngenta is helping provide growers more agronomic choices. In the future, Syngenta plans to offer corn rootworm control and broad lepidopteron pest control traits, including unique stacks to meet corn growers' evolving needs.

Herbicide Tolerance Is Taking Weed Management to a Whole New Level

Weed control and weed management differ quite significantly. As opposed to just

eradicating weeds, weed management focuses on managing weed competition to deliver maximum economic crop yield. Herbicide tolerance offers growers a broader array of weed management choices and helps deliver more of each hybrid's genetic potential by minimizing stress and competition caused by weeds.

"Agrisure GT contains in-plant tolerance to glyphosate-based herbicides," Bernens says.

"This expands the weed management alternatives available to growers by allowing for in-crop applications of glyphosate-based herbicides with excellent crop safety and full-yield potential. With Agrisure GT, glyphosate can be used alone (or as a tank mix) in a post-emergent-only program or as a post-emergent application in combination with a selective pre-emergent herbicide."

Growers who purchase elite hybrids with Agrisure GT are eligible for industry-leading AgriEdge assurances, which provide added protection from unexpected pests and crop loss. The AgriEdge program features flexible

insect control and innovative weed management options that protect yield potential, control costs and help guard against glyphosate-resistant weeds.

The technology behind Agrisure GT – the GA21 event – was developed in the late-1980s through the mid-1990s and was first marketed in 1998 as Roundup Ready® corn. Bernens adds that the Agrisure GT event has now been converted into a number of elite genetic lines using Syngenta's proven conversion process. Syngenta field studies show no statistical yield drag when comparing identical hybrids with and without Agrisure GT.

European Corn Borer – The \$1 Billion Pest

European Corn Borer is the most damaging corn pest in the United States and Canada, with annual losses exceeding an estimated \$1 billion. Research shows that even very low levels of infestation – one European corn borer per plant – can reduce yields by six percent.

Since their introduction, seed traits have become an important tool for managing insect infestations. Agrisure™ CB from Syngenta – a new alternative for corn insect control – delivers whole-plant, full-season

protection against European corn borer, Southwestern corn borer and Southern cornstalk borer.

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Some Personal Reflections On Why Our Independent Crop Consulting Profession Should Support The DPM Program

By Don Jameson

For several months, I have served on the FEAE Board. During this time I have become more aware about what a strong DPM program operating at several universities could mean for consultants as well as our clients.

In discussions with other NAICC members, I've brought up the topic of the DPM program, which we can understand as being a fully rounded, integrated program of curricula and studies.

This program prepares a person in the various disciplines of Soils, Plant Nutrition, Entomology, Plant Pathology, Physiology and cultural practices to apply technology and knowledge for a wholly integrated approach to crop management.

Most of us have come into this profession with a certain set of skills and a very narrow discipline, such as Entomology, Plant Pathology, Agronomy or Soils. We have had to learn a tremendous amount about the other disciplines through "on-the-job-training".

To quickly evaluate whether this DPM concept deserves our big push, just think for a moment: what advantages to your own job would you have had if you'd come with a fuller scope of training? I for one could tell you of several mistakes that I might not have made and of better decisions that I could have made. A more rounded education would provide less stress and greater fulfillment.

I am aware that some of you at mid-point in your career may have an attitude a little like "pull up the draw bridge and let's not let anyone else into this camp, keeping all the business and secrets of the trade to ourselves."

This might work out fine if we were able to clone ourselves and fully extend into new service opportunities or new geographical areas. But most of us become increasingly constrained by the seven-day week and the

limitations of a 24-hour day.

Others have asked, "how can we have this kind of broad-based training at different universities when we have such a diversity of needs throughout the country?" After all, it isn't a profession like dentistry, where you could train and practice in any state of the union and be prepared for what your clients need.

Not only do we have different crops regionally, but we also have different crop management approaches and needs. Varying climates, soil conditions, etc., dictate vast changes in management approach. Nonetheless, a student entering the Crop Consulting profession would be well served with training in a variety of disciplines and a new framework of reference, even in a locale different than his or her primary training.

For instance, if you understood the physiology of corn production, sensitivity to weed pressure, planting populations and spacing, etc. through training at a Mid-western university, you certainly would be well prepared to gain knowledge of irrigated agriculture to provide a very well rounded, competent corn consulting program in the Northwest.

Perhaps as another illustration, a student well-trained in weather and crop disease modeling of horticulture or pomology crops in the northeast would have an extremely strong base to support career development in the northwest, where we also deal with diseases heavily influenced by weather, humidity, precipitation, etc.

A question of who else benefits may come to mind. If NAICC commits its moral and economic support and time allocations to the development of DPM programs at several more universities, who will reap the benefit of those new highly trained graduates? Will it be us or will it be a competitor

dealership organization?

I submit that a larger benefit will be reaped by our nation, our society and those who realize that stewardship of land resources and production techniques are important to our culture and our posterity. This is similar to the wisdom and broad-based view taken by those who first established the land grant universities.

But more to the point of self-interest, I think crop consultants stand to benefit from graduates of a DPM program. Yes, many may choose to work with a dealership or a competitor. But others might choose to work for some of us individually and even see the opportunity to learn within our practice and stand in line to become well qualified to purchase our businesses, improve them, grow them - maybe even provide a better consulting resource to the clientele we've established!

Perhaps one of the best legacies a crop consultant can provide his clients is not only good advice and profitable management expertise today but the building of a competent organization prepared to address the production challenges of the future.

As the soybean rust problem (or any other new regional insect or disease problem) illustrates, every decade will come with new challenges and new technical demands, requiring people to provide competent crop management advice and leadership.

In the good ole days of the early '80s, our company could expect to go to Washington State University with two interviewers or recruiters and expect to have eight to ten students from the agronomy, entomology or horticulture departments for each of us to interview.

Out of this group of 15 to 20 students we would usually be able to hire some of the

very best students in agronomy, horticulture or the IPM program for the five to eight slots we sought to fill.

This is no longer the case. In fact, on my last trip a number of years ago, I had two or three students at WSU and none at the University of Idaho! Further, many who will eventually express interest are not currently enrolled in the basic sciences of ag production such as agronomy, horticulture, entomology or plant pathology. More likely they are ag business or ag education majors or are enrolled in a biology program.

Some of these people have been excellent employees, fine workers with a good work ethic, but not trained in the agronomic issues we seek. I know this is the case with many others who've found it necessary to employ summer help from out of the country. Many sectors of American industry have a labor shortage and with the general atti-

tude prevalent toward agriculture, our industry might even be more extreme.

In particular, there is a high demand for what I would call the mid-management levels of technical expertise. The expertise that we previously relied upon from university research and extension scientists or county agent extension people and even manufacturing reps is smaller. That pool of resources is shrinking due to retirement, consolidation and fewer people attending the traditional crop management disciplines of agronomy, entomology, plant pathology and horticulture.

As Dr. Ken Bader, Lynn Henderson and others have talked to university people, they've raised questions about whether there would be a demand from industry for such a graduate should the University commit to developing a DPM program. I think that they would receive wholehearted

enthusiasm from the industry!

The successful agricultural representative in the next five to ten years will increasingly be required to understand a lot more about weed control, biology, physiology, nematology, the basics of nutrition and soil moisture management and the effects upon the plant. Throw in a few other modern concepts such as variable rate fertilization, spraying, planting, seed selection, stacked genetics and resistance management, and you have the makings of a complex system similar to what modern physicians and veterinarians need to comprehend to treat the human body or the animal realm.

I believe the time has come for our membership to seek and support wholeheartedly the professional level of training and preparation that is needed for our profession. We should embrace it, working eagerly with universities and colleges and their graduates.

Research Humor

The Defeat of the All-Mighty Ladybugs!!!

By Maggie Richards, Lab Tech at CalAg Research

Have you ever been sitting around the office wondering... "Hmm, how would I get 2000 ladybugs to stay still long enough for me to catch them, count them and cage them?" What about this one, "What would it be like to suck up a lot of ladybugs using a little self-powered vacuum?"

Even if you haven't, these are the predicaments that we were faced with a few weeks ago.

When we received this study we knew it would be difficult. It was something we had never before attempted. We didn't have any of the necessary equipment or tools to pull this off correctly and we didn't really have anyone to consult about it either. Even with the knowledge that this would be difficult we had no idea of the problems that would arise.

To start off, it wasn't just a matter of catching the ladybugs. We had to create cages that would work and devise a means of delivering food to them so we could feed them while minimizing the chances of escape. On these issues we had countless brainstorming sessions:

Do we cage them in plastic cups or do we make cages from window screens? Do we deliver the food from the top of the cage, from the side or from the bottom? What material will we use to deliver the food? How on earth are we going to get the food we mix to them in a way that doesn't allow them to escape?

Thankfully, all this at least, we didn't have to go out and actually catch ladybugs, although that would have been its own joy.

Now to clarify, this has been, while more challenging than expected, one of the most enjoyable studies I've coordinated. Going into this with no idea what to do, figuring out how to make the study work and how to do it right was an exercise in patience and ingenuity. The whole study became one concentrated team effort. Ideas on how to make the study work were raised by all members of the company, from the owner to the field hands.

Finally the day came. We had our cages done, we worked out how to feed the bugs, but we were missing one key thing...how do we get them in the cages? When it came to figuring out how to cage these insects, I have to say that my boss and I were totally defeated by them for quite some time. Once again the brainstorming and how-to discussions revived.

Finally it was decided. We were to aspirate them and then dump them into the cages. To aspirate a ladybug, you take a long rubber hose attached to a little plastic cup that has a short metal tube on it and you literally suck them into the cup. Doesn't sound too hard, does it? Have you ever seen how fast ladybugs move and scatter? Then there's the whole flying thing. The scales in this battle were totally one-sided.

We couldn't knock them out with CO₂,

but we had to slow them down. After more brainstorming, we decided to put them in plastic cups and put these on blocks of blue ice in hopes that the cold would slow them down. Well, we were foiled again as the little buggers crawled to the top of the cups for warmth. So we decided to live life to its fullest and dump them directly on to the blue ice. As we dumped them, my boss and I started sucking them up as fast as we could. It felt like a bad fear factor stunt. (As we sucked them up we could taste them, and that's a special kind of gross.)

We dove all over the place, trying to catch the escapees, trying to count and desperately trying not to wet ourselves because we couldn't stop laughing at just how ridiculous the other person looked — red in the face, dizzy and unable to breathe because of how desperately we were trying to get them all. The poor QA could barely stay in his seat from laughing so hard!

In the end we caught them all, we got about twice the minimum number per cage, we were sore, out of breath and giggling like a bunch of kids. With them finally defeated, we limped down to the office to congratulate ourselves on our brilliance in outwitting a bunch of ladybugs and to call it a day. While one of the more tiring days at work, it was definitely one of the more enjoyable.



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