Forecasting Future Needs in Consulting

Recently the word “change” has become the most overused word in Agriculture, and rightfully so considering the events we’ve experienced. I expect everyone is now busy accommodating effects of the boom in Agriculture and the resulting impact on the consulting services we provide. Reacting to change is absolutely necessary to succeed as a consultant. Long-term success is best achieved by anticipating change and being prepared to accommodate the needs of the future.

Unfortunately, a fortune teller and crystal ball are not reliable sources to forecast the future direction of our complex industry. Like any effort to predict the future, the more information you have available, the greater the accuracy of the prediction. I have always felt the real value of NAICC membership is access to the education and expertise needed to be in the forefront of our profession.

In Seattle we discussed a number of contemporary issues that are certain to impact our businesses in the years to come. Crop Consultants heard about factors affecting soil fertility and the geopolitical factors affecting the cost of delivering optimal plant nutrition. Research and QA members traded ideas with Industry and EPA representatives to streamline data collection and reporting for regulatory studies. Another topic that provided much food for thought is potential change in traditional regulatory study procedures to accommodate international harmonization of the registration process. And scattered throughout the meeting was a wealth of information about biotechnology as we know it today and how it may look in the future.

These and other topics certainly have relevance to what we will do this summer. However, I believe those who step back and consider what was presented in Seattle in a broader sense will reap the real value: a vantage point on the future.

Adjusting the way we operate our businesses on a yearly basis is becoming a management style of the past. Ag consulting is an industry rapidly maturing under the forces of escalating input and crop values, consolidation and outsourcing. We cannot afford to view the knowledge gained in Seattle as guidance for the next 12 months, but rather as an addition to the information base needed to anticipate and prepare for 2009 and beyond. We can only be leaders in our industry if we can anticipate and prepare to confront future challenges rather than spontaneously react to the changes we are certain to face as time moves on.

Thirty years ago a small group of crop consultants met in Memphis to structure an organization that would allow them to collectively face future challenges and help prepare for changes and anticipated opportunities as agricultural consultants. Today members of NAICC benefit from these founders’ ability to create a vision of the future and their desire to share the knowledge and wisdom behind that vision.

As we honored our Past Presidents in Seattle, their efforts over the years to keep an eye to the future were evident. Now more than 500 strong, we all have access to the cumulative wisdom of those before us to add to our predictive information base. Having that resource within our midst places the valued talent to forecast and prepare for the future within the reach of every NAICC member.

Blue Skies in Seattle, Near Record Attendance - 2008 Annual Meeting a Great Success!

With 467 consultants, researchers, industry representatives, University, USDA and EPA personnel on hand, the 2008 Annual Meeting in Seattle, WA, was a huge success! According to NAICC Past President Bob Glodt, “We were thrilled with the meeting. The weather was great and our members proved our theory correct that we always have a good turnout when we go to a place where we’ve never held a meeting before. And it didn’t rain an inch when we were there!” He added that while attendance didn’t break the Orlando record of 470, it certainly came close.

Highlights of the meeting included insightful presentations covering a wide array of GMOs and topics such as email and litigation, QA scenarios, eco-labels and emerging technologies. “Designing Drought Trials,” “Creating Success and Opportunity in Your Business,” “Excellence through Stewardship,” “IPM in Pearadise” — even a “Research for Hire” YouTube presentation - marked just a few of the many presentations given throughout the week.

Ethanol and America’s ability to produce food, fiber and fuel were hot topics - in fact, this year’s keynote address centered on the former. Ron Lamberty, VicePresident/Market Development Director of the American Coalition for Ethanol, delivered “Fuel Up with Ethanol,” a review of ethanol production and anticipated growth in coming...
FEAE Making a Difference for Ag through Investments in Individuals, University Programs, Speakers

The Foundation for Environmental Agriculture Education was established by the NAICC in 1991 with the mission to catalyze innovative education and training for current and future professional crop management practitioners. As a 501(C) (3) foundation, the FEAЕ is able to conduct fund-raising activities and provide educational opportunities beyond the scope of the NAICC.

At the Seattle convention earlier this year, money was provided for speaker support and the Precision Ag workshop. Since 2000 the FEAЕ has furnished about $9,000 of scholarship money through the Jenson Memorial Scholarship. NAICC members are invited to contribute directly to this fund. Some variations to the application criteria are currently being developed and the revised rules will be published in April.

In recent years the FEAЕ has promoted and financially aided the Doctor of Plant Medicine program at the University of Florida and given some financial assistance to the University of Nebraska. In 2007 we provided a $2,000 scholarship to Carrisa Zenk of North Dakota. The Foundation also sponsored the Richard Jenson Memorial address speaker, Dr. Dan Bernardo, Dean of the College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resources Sciences at Washington State University.

The FEAЕ will continue goal setting and fund-raising planning at their meeting in Washington, D.C., April 2-3.
Dr. J. Artie Browning, a past Foundation Board member, has been a long time voice of support and man of action supporting the DPM concept. For this as well as many other achievements, Dr. Browning received the NAICC’s special Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award in January at the NAICC’s Awards Luncheon.

Dr. Browning’s career has spanned half a century. In 1991 he retired from the Texas A&M University as chairman of the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology. Prior to that he worked on crown rust control of oats at Iowa State University, where he worked for 28 years. Dr. Browning’s international agricultural teaching and research work included 18 months on a special assignment with the Rockefeller Foundation in Bogota, Colombia; two years in Israel; and one month at Cambridge in the United Kingdom. In 1990-91 he was on a Fulbright in Israel.

He says that, with Israeli joint projects, his major contribution to agriculture is controlling oat crown rust by emulating Israel’s indigenous ecosystem; all conditions favor the rust, yet epidemics are rare; the Colombian Coffee Federation emulated ISU and controlled coffee rust.

Dr. Browning has been a member of the American Phytopathology Society since 1950 and has been involved in many ways as a fellow of AAAS and APS. He has served in various council positions and was president of APS. He has written on the value of the DPM. Currently, he and the Board President are writing Directors of the International Agricultural Research Centers, of which there are 15 major Centers and many sub-units distributed globally.

For six years Dr. Browning served as a Board member with the NAICC Foundation for Environmental Agricultural Education (FEAE). He established the J. Artie and Arra Browning student travel fund with the APS Foundation to assist in the participation of two DPM candidates/year to attend APS’ Annual Meeting. This was initiated in 2005. Dr. Browning lives with his wife Arra; they have been married 62 years.

NAICC Honors Dr. J. Artie Browning with NAICC’s Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award

Dr. Browning with incoming and outgoing presidents Don Jameson and Billy McLawhorn

Many thanks to the Exhibitors and Sponsors of the 2008 AG PRO EXPO

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MARCH 2008
Contract Researchers, Independent Crop Consultants and the University — the Ingredients Needed to Sustain Agriculture

By James L. Griffin

During my 29 years in weed science research and extension with the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, I have interacted closely with crop consultants and growers. For the last 20 years I have also worked with a contract research firm as a QA officer. My involvement in these areas has contributed to a keen awareness of how we all contribute to making agriculture a viable entity.

For any new pesticide to be registered by EPA, extensive internal testing by the company and residue studies with contract researchers are required. The development of insect resistance to insecticides and weed resistance to herbicides — along with new diseases on the horizon — contribute to making management of pest problems a moving target. The need for development of novel technologies to address the important areas of weed, insect and disease management in crops will be even more important in the future.

The changes in pest management technology in the last 30 years have been phenomenal. When I started my weed science career I conducted research with the graminicides, which allowed for postemergence control of grass weeds in broadleaf crops. This was especially meaningful to me because I’d spent my early years on the family farm hoeing johnsongrass in cotton fields.

I was also able to be in the forefront of research with the sulfonylureas and imidazolinone herbicides which have become a mainstay in cotton, corn, soybean, peanut, wheat and rice weed control programs. Then came the Roundup Ready era; I was one of the first university scientists to evaluate what were then referred to as “glyphosate tolerant soybeans”.

In my experiences traveling through the major crop-producing areas in the South in the early 1990’s it was common to see cotton, soybean and corn fields infested with many grass and broadleaf weeds. In some cases, it was even difficult to see the crop for the weeds that were present! At that time, particularly in soybeans, the herbicides were so narrow in weed control spectrum that two or three herbicides applied together might be needed to control weeds in fields. Because commodity prices were low and herbicide costs were high, it was just not economical to control all weeds present in fields. Consequently, weeds thrived and caused significant yield loss.

Traveling through those same areas in recent years presents a starkly different picture. Fields are cleaner than they have ever been, which is directly attributed to advancements in weed management technologies through development of herbicide-resistant crops. As farmers were able to more effectively control weeds the need for tillage decreased. The shift toward reduced tillage systems has had a positive environmental impact by reducing soil and herbicide loss from fields.

These advancements did not occur by chance but were a joint effort, with agri-chemical companies, contract researchers, QA personnel and university researchers all contributing to market success. I make it a priority that my graduate students have an appreciation not only of weed science but also of other pest management disciplines. I also see that students have the opportunity to interact with agri-chemical representatives who call on me. Although our research is not conducted under GLP, students are made aware of EPA regulations concerning GLP and the important role of Quality Assurance. My close interaction with consultants keeps me abreast of the latest problems in the field and new innovations. I am then better able to plan my research and extension programs so that new problems are addressed in a timely manner.

As the 2008 growing season approaches, prices for many commodities are the best they have been in many years. The upbeat attitude of farmers at grower meetings has been refreshing. The reality, however, is that some of the currently used technologies may be short-lived.

Weeds resistant to glyphosate have created much concern primarily because alternative herbicides are not available and, for the most part, new herbicides are not in development. If farmers have to revert back to using cultivation or directed applications of herbicides, the positive environmental gains in soil conservation could be nullified. Without the initiative in discovery and development of new pesticides, contract research opportunities will decrease and independent crop consultants will be locked into recommending pesticide programs that may not sustain productivity.

However different we may perceive ourselves, university researchers, contract researchers and independent crop consultants are all working toward the same goal — to sustain agricultural production in the U.S. The fact is that without farmers there will be no need for any of us.

Along those same lines, we should take every opportunity to promote the value of what we do and the importance of agriculture and the role it plays in our national security. After all, who should be interested in agriculture? Well, anyone who wears clothes, lives in a house or eats food. That pretty much includes everyone. The recipe for success will continue to be interaction among agri-chemical companies, private contract researchers, public universities and crop consultants, all working together for the betterment of agriculture.

James L. “Jim” Griffin is the Lee F. Mason LSU Alumni Association Professor in the School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences at Louisiana State University. He has a joint research, extension and teaching responsibility in the area of weed ecology and weed management.

Clients Trust Independence

By Paul Groneberg, CPCC-I

The ONLY Independent Consulting Certification available through NAICC.

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Agricultural clients value independence because they know that independent contractors are not tied to product sales. Growers and clients can increase profits exceeding consulting fees by three to five times or more!

There are three categories for NAICC Certification:

1. CPCC is a general category for all Professional Crop Consultants.
2. CPCC-I are professional consultants independent of product sales; they derive income only from services or are employed by a firm that only sells services.

3. CPCC-R is our newest category for professionals who perform Contract Research. Researchers can certify as CPCC-R and/or CPCC-I.

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**Why Certify?**
- The CPCC certification program has been enthusiastically received by Washington, D.C., policymakers because of its rigorous standards and continuing education requirements.
- A certification professional is more marketable.

For more information and application forms go to NAICC.org or contact Allison Jones at 901-861-0511 or via email: JonesNAICC@aol.com

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**Spotlight on the States**

The Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association (LACA) annual meeting — the Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference — was held in Alexandria, La., February 6-8, 2008.

A highlight of the meeting was the induction of Calvin Viator, Ph.D. of Calvin Viator, Ph.D. & Associates, LLC, and Grady Coburn, Ph.D. of Pest Management Enterprises, Inc., into the Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Fame. We congratulate both Calvin and Grady on receiving this prestigious award, and thank them for their past and continuing service to agriculture.

Other conference agenda items included the election of new officers to the 2008 LACA Board of Directors:

- Rusty Elston, President
- Richard Costello, President-elect
- Chad Nelson, Past President
- Roger Carter, Secretary
- Fred Collins, Treasurer
- Robbie Gwin, Director
- Mark Smith, Director
- Denise Wright, Executive Director

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**NAICC Profiles More New Members!**

NAICC is proud to introduce two new members to our organization. The first is Matt Winslow, Director of Research for Tidewater Agronomics, Inc., based in North Carolina. He has a B.S. in Agronomy from North Carolina State University and is currently working on a Master's degree in Agronomy at Iowa State University.

Matt works in a wide variety of crops: cotton, soybeans, wheat, peanuts, potatoes, melons and cabbage. His services include agricultural consulting, nutrient management and contract research. Matt said he anticipates his future professional services will require more agricultural technology and varietal selection recommendations.

Our other new member welcome goes out to Kathleen “Kathy” Harris. Kathy is a Regulatory Technician for Great Lakes Agricultural Research Service, Inc., based in Delavan, WI. She earned a B.S. in Education from the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater.

Kathy and her organization provide contract research with GLP compliance on residue studies. Kathy has 18 years' experience in greenhouse production and maintenance. Regarding her future career, Kathy said she expects to be involved in more GMO trials to stay ahead of the current trend in global and U.S. agriculture.

NAICC is proud to welcome these new members and looks forward to sharing many more new member profiles in 2008!

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**Crop and Research Consulting — Never a Dull Moment**

Conduct of biotech and USDA/APHIS regulated research is playing an increasingly important role in the development of new products and traits in agriculture. With this comes a role for NAICC contract researchers in providing services in biotech trials, and at our very successful 2008 NAICC meeting in Seattle, many members indicated an interest in having more biotech topics on the 2009 meeting agenda. The NAICC Research Education Committee would like to hear from members with topic ideas in this area! Please send ideas to Coukell@icms-inc.com.

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**Biotech Topics Needed for 2009 REC Program**
NAICC member and exhibitor Ian Macleod, FAIM Peracto, Pty. Ltd, visits with Jim Hudson (left) at the Monsanto booth.

Terry Davidson, Chuck Cary, Leslie Kvasnicka and Lance Sandvik represented VALENT USA at this year’s AG PRO EXPO.

Brian Lennon (left) updates Bill Cox on new irrigation products that IRROMETER Company offers both consultants and researchers.

Luanne Anderson was on hand at the ICMS booth to answer questions about their research work across Canada.

Patrick Stephenson, with the Association of Independent Crop Consultants UK, demonstrates how they catch fish across the Big Pond.

Hope Jones (right) decides to let Ashley Wyatt catch the “slimy” fish.
Dorothy Young (aka Ms. Dorothy) and Rick Kesler of FMC show the audience their styles catching the fish.

QAs take advantage of the mock EPA audit that was set up in the Exhibit Hall.

Renee Daniel leads the QA group discussion on data and practical experience issues.

NAICC honored the Past President’s during the President’s Luncheon and Awards Ceremony.

NAICC’s President Jim Steffel and Past President Bob Glodt flank AICC Chairman Andrew Watson during the traditional peace pipe ceremony.