

# Portrait of a Potato Consultant

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Agri-Business Consultants, Inc.

# Background

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- Michigan State University
- University of Texas - Tyler
- Early Career in Oklahoma
- Currently work with potatoes in Michigan
  - Approx. 45,000 acres statewide
  - ABC, Inc. looks at about 1/3 of the acres



# Topics of Discussion

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- Consultants Role and ABC, Inc. Services
- 33 year-old Business in Transition
- Insects, Late Blight and resistance

# Agri-Business Consultants, Inc.

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- Incorporated in 1983 to Bring Science and Service to Michigan Agriculture
- Our Primary Mission is to Provide Integrated Agronomic and Pest Management Services to our clients
- We are Applied Ecologists, We help Our Clients Make Resource Management Decisions
- We sell our Clients on Making Us Part of their Management Team

# Services Overview

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- Improve yields, increase client profitability and protect the environment
- Provide IPM advice and solutions
- Crops: Primarily Potatoes.
  - Corn, wheat, soybeans and cover crops
- Weekly potato scouting and recommendations during growing season
- Soil Sampling – fertility and nematodes



# A Unique Service

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- Potatoes in Michigan require weekly assessment (at least)
- Clients have a unique need for our advice
  - Make disease risk predictions – multiple factors
    - While carefully prioritizing our time
  - Effectiveness of pesticides, Nitrogen Leaching
  - Understanding different varieties and tolerance to pests
  - Soil Health, Environmental Concerns around pesticide and fertilizer use

# Business Transition

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- Young consultant in a long established business
  - Much different than leaving a career to build a new business
- We are in a transitional period
  - Rebuilding Staff
    - Lost 2 consultants in last couple of years only replaced one so far
  - Need to Replace two Owners in next 3-? years

# Hiring Team Members

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- Isn't the right job for a lot of people
  - Independent learner and mentoring from longer term consultants
- Need to bring the right people on board
- Consultant Training Models
  - A: B.S., Scout, earn a Master's degree while Consultant Trainees
  - B: M.S., Scout and Consultant Training
  - C: B.S., Scout and Consultant Training



# Colorado Potato Beetle Challenges

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- Significant pressure from nearby field
- Temik solution until 1990
  - Resistance issues 1988
  - Major increase from \$60/acre to \$250/acre for many fields
- Seed treatments every acre, foliar as needed
- 1995 Neonics came on for use
- Current threats to using Neonics

# Late Blight

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- **Genotypes** are more aggressive now over a wider range of conditions vs. pre 1993
- Stem lesions more common now than before
  - Used to be leaves would fall off and less spreading occurred
- Ridomil resistance (mefenoxam or metalaxyl)
  - Ridomil used to really suppress Late Blight
  - If the LB type is US8 it is resistant to Ridomil US23 sensitive US22 intermediate