

NAICC Leadership Program: New Experiences

By Leadership Participant Randall Landry

Time to hit the road! During August and September, I had the opportunity to visit some fellow NAICC members in California and Wisconsin as part of the NAICC Leadership Program Module III Networking Visits. These visits allow the participant to experience agriculture inside and outside their areas of expertise. Eurofins Research for Hire and InDepth Agronomy were kind enough to invite me to their facilities, introduce me to their staff, and share with me as much as possible about agriculture in their part of the country. For the last fourteen years, my primary focus has been on row crops (corn, cotton, soybean, wheat, and rice). My desire was to learn more about tree fruits and nuts.

Eurofins Research for Hire is situated in Tulare County near the town of Porterville, California. Tulare County is one of the top agricultural producing counties in the United States with estimated gross values of \$7-8 Billion USD in production on over 200+ commodities. Tulare County is one of the leading producers of oranges, tangerines, lemons, nectarines, pistachios and almonds. John Corkins and his team showed me around their research farm and explained in detail their capabilities as a contract research organization (CRO). Their work is comprised mainly of Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) residue programs with the rest of their time focused on efficacy studies. While visiting I was able to see oranges, pistachios, almonds, olives, vegetables, and many other crops. The diversity of crops concentrated in a small area was mind numbing.

During our short time, I was able to ascertain a wealth of knowledge from John and his team. I am grateful for their willingness to stop daily activities in order to tour me around and answering all my inquiries with enthusiasm. This experience has expanded my knowledge of production agriculture in California, and I hope to use this experience to make informed decisions that benefit agriculture now and in the future.

My next visit was to InDepth Agronomy located in Manitowoc, Wisconsin where I met Steve, Michelle, and Ted Hoffman who run a consulting business dealing primarily with dairies and some grain production. Wisconsin dairy industry contributes \$45.5 billion USD to the state's economy each year. Dairies offer a unique challenge to consultants as the crop they help produce is not the end goal but rather production of milk and milk products. Wisconsin leads the nation in total acres harvested for corn silage. Corn silage is vital to dairy farmers across the state to supplement cow nutrition when grazing is not optimal. Digestibility is a large factor for farmers when selecting silage varieties. Brown midrib corn (BMR), as the name suggests, has a distinctive brown rib running down the middle of the plant where most corn varieties have a white midrib. These varieties are lower in lignin, thus higher digestibility, and have been shown to increase milk production. On the other hand, these varieties are very susceptible to environmental extremes and can be cantankerous to grow.

InDepth Agronomy offers nutrition programs, planter checks, soil sampling, and GIS/GPS as well as other services. Working with dairy farms is a year-round endeavor with very few breaks. It was great to see crops in which I am familiar be utilized in a slightly different way. I learned a lot

about Wisconsin dairies in my short time there. I am very thankful to Steve, Michelle, and Ted and their team for taking the time out of their busy year to show me around and answer my every question. Of course, Steve would not let me leave without a sampling of Wisconsin butter and string cheese to take home to the kids! Great experience!



young pistachios



olive tree



almonds



silage



chopped silage



Wisconsin butter!