



Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association

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Turnrow Talk

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President's Column

*Fred Collins, Ph.D.
AgCrop Consulting*

A farm customer told me recently that he had seen three growing seasons in 40 plus years of farming in which good prices and good yields coincided like in 2012. They were 1976, 1996 and 2012 which are about 20 years apart. Several other growers commented that 2012 was their best year ever. After Gustav and a couple of droughty years, it was wonderful to have such economic success for much of Louisiana's farm community. However, we dare not let our guard down, because we never know when the next hurricane or drought will be upon us. Thus, it is imperative that consultants and farmers alike keep updated on the latest production information.

The program committee has put together an informative program for the upcoming meeting. The pre-conference event on Wednesday morning will be a soils workshop lead by Beatrix Haggard. Both "hands on" lab type demonstrations, as well as, theoretical discussion on soils and plant nutrition will be covered. Later in multi-crop sessions, John Kruse and Josh Lofton will discuss N, P and K, as well as lime needs in corn and soybeans, respectively. The program will delve into discussions of fertility requirements for rice as well. Timely rains in 2012 demonstrated how yields respond to ample moisture when good genetics, pest management and good fertilizer levels are all present. Many bean fields resulted in 50 to 60 bushel yields and some were reported to be near 100 bushels. It is important that consultants encourage their clients to lime and fertilize fields to maximize economic returns so that high yields are produced when conditions allow.

Fertilizer costs appear to be flat or slightly lower than last year, but are still about 25-33% of the total costs on many farming operations. Many growers are using EC (electro-conductivity) data to zone sample soils for fertilizer needs. Zone sampling has been particularly effective for placement of lime. Many times in the past a ton of lime per acre was applied to entire fields, when only certain areas were deficient. In our area Red River soils have a propensity to be strong in P levels. Zone sampling is allowing growers to fine tune their fertility needs and save money by applying nutrients where required. Potash needs are harder to establish. Ample levels of K improve respiration during hot and dry periods, as well as help promote disease resistance by improving the plants ability to defend itself against attacking pathogens. Potash being water soluble and mobile in the soil means that available levels will fluctuate based on rains, soil type (CEC), season of application and placement. My recommendation this fall on K rates was to build soil level on a profitable year and cut back to rates recommended for maintenance on a bad or less profitable year. Regardless, zone sampling enables one to place nutrients where needed most.

As a kid in the 60's, I recall going to a cotton field with my Dad where the cotton was seven feet tall. Good soils with ample rain plus a previous corn crop with high resi-

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dual N resulted in huge cotton plants. We saw similar results with the introduction of DPL 90 following corn crops in the 80's. Pix came onto the scene shortly before these new GMO varieties and allowed for better height control once rates increased and timing was improved. Still today we push cotton with N rates to maximize yields, yet use multiple mepiquat applications to contain plant size. Mepiquat timing and rates is still considered by some to be more "art" than science, and therefore, a panel of consultants will discuss different approaches at the spring meeting this year.

Be sure to mark your calendars for February 13th thru 15th for the annual LACA spring meeting. Every year the program highlights current research results that will influence successful crop production practices. This information is essential for improving yields and profitability. This is an exciting time in agriculture with strong demand and good prices. Don't be left behind.

It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve as your association President during this past year...I wish everyone a Happy, Safe, and Prosperous New Year. May we see commodity prices continue to rise or at least remain constant, have favorable weather when we need it, and enjoy good health!

It's a Great Day in Louisiana Agriculture, Forestry, and Aquaculture

Never before have we had such great opportunities in agriculture as we have today. In the past two years, the value of agricultural production in Louisiana has grown by more than 27 percent.

For the most part, commodity prices are strong and are projected to remain so for the foreseeable future. We expect excellent prices for winter wheat and very strong prices for spring corn and beans.

I believe we will see a significantly smaller cotton crop in Louisiana and Texas due to lower prices resulting from the long term effects of the drought and significant competition for corn and soybean acres. With January rice futures at \$14.90 for rough rice, you may see fewer acres especially without direct payments.

Worldwide trade continues to grow. Since 2009, the total value of U.S. agriculture exports has grown more than 50 percent. The American farmer is 1.5 percent of the American population and represents only 5 percent of the world population. The miracle of modern agriculture allows us to not only feed ourselves, but also much of the world. The USDA forecasts exports upwards of \$136.5 billion next year, with significant growth in proteins, vegetable oils and processed foods.

We are challenged with increasing food to the table by 25 percent in the next eight years. Currently, there is only 17 percent more arable land left worldwide, much of which is located in this hemisphere. We currently use 70 percent of the world's available fresh water with almost 80 percent of that going to agricultural production.

Demand is going to increase in a steady and predictable manner. More than 70 percent of the increased productivity will come from scientific and individual innovations. We must embrace and seek new technologies, and demand public and private investment in agricultural research.

For every public dollar we invest in agricultural research, more than ten dollars is returned to the economy. On average, the effect of this research is evident for 5 to 17 years in the future.

The middle class outside the United States will double by 2020 to more than one billion households, markedly increasing demand for food and energy. It is imperative that we pass a Farm Bill that enhances and protects the largest industry in America. Failure to pass a Farm Bill will cause instability in the marketplace with resulting imbalances in supply and demand. The end result will be lower overall profitability for our farmers and higher costs to the consuming public.

It is further critical that we immediately address our waterway infrastructure. As great as our opportunities to access domestic and foreign markets are, we will be unable to do so if we do not properly maintain our inland waterways, control structures and export facilities. Here in Louisiana we have seen firsthand what happens when barges and ships cannot dock and be loaded with grain and other export commodities.

We must continue to move forward on labor and environmental issues as they pertain to our industries. We must work collectively using sound logic and science to open and maintain dialogue.

These challenges are great, but our opportunities are far greater. I truly thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mike Strain DVM



Ray and Dorothy Young Endowed Assistantship

Tax-deductible contributions to the *Ray and Dorothy Young Endowed Assistantship in Louisiana Row Crop IPM* are encouraged and appreciated. Checks must be made payable to LSU Foundation with memo indicating "Young Endowed Assistantship". Please mail checks to:

Denise Wright, Executive Director
Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association
P.O. Box 104
Morrow, LA 71356

Not only is this a tribute to two outstanding leaders, it's a very worthwhile investment in agriculture's future...Please consider sending your contribution today!

Welcome New Members!!!

Steven Schutz joined the LACA as a Voting Member. Welcome, Steve!!!

Bayer CropScience Biologics recently joined as a Gold Sustaining Member and will be bringing their mobile lab to our annual meeting as an exhibitor. We welcome them and appreciate their generous support!!!

Tips for Professional Agricultural Consultants

Roger Carter

When my career began in 1964 as a cotton insect scout, I never imagined that I would be in the business of agricultural consulting for 47 more years, but knew that, in some way, I would be involved in agriculture. My father was a farmer who was stripped of his dreams by Hurricane Audrey in June of 1957. I was raised milking cows, picking cotton, mowing pastures, cutting wood, and all the other things that I now savor as great memories.

Dr. Sam Dale got three young high school students, including myself, jobs with Brooking Farm Service located in Ferriday, LA, scouting cotton during the summers. Dr. Dale, our ag teacher at Sicily Island High School, made us study cotton insects for months so that we would know the biology, etc of any insect found in a cotton field. The only problem with this was that there was no cotton growing at that time of year for us to observe in an actual field situation nor the insects, nor the damage cotton insects created so we would be more proficient when Cecil Brooking, our boss, tossed us out in that first cotton field and said, "make a loop and take counts". We were as lost as to what we were seeing in the real cotton field as President Obama is in how to run a country. But we learned quickly by bringing damage and insects back to the truck and learning from Mr. Brooking. I was with Mr. Brooking for 14 straight summers while working my way through high school and then LSU where I received a B.S. in Entomology followed by a M.S. in Plant Pathology. Dr. Dale was very supportive of all of his ag students and even took me to Baton Rouge to visit Dr. Dale Newsom, entomologist with the Department of Entomology at L.S.U. It was after touring L.S.U. that I decided to major in Entomology and to attend L.S.U. Dr. Dale was also very influential in helping me obtain multiple scholarships that helped pay the way for the venture.

Now, I have often been asked to write down what it takes to be a good agricultural consultant. I don't know that I was good or successful, but, in spite of me and my recommendations, many of the client friends I worked with prospered and succeeded as farmers. I often looked across the turn row at the crops that other consultants were working and thought their crops often looked better, but I think that many consultants feel the same way about the neighbor's crops.

If I were asked what one thing separates the good from the generic consultants or "bug checkers". I think that one word would be passion..... passion for agriculture, for friendship, and for life. It is a word not often used in agriculture, but one that I feel is the key to being successful at most anything.

I have often been one to speak my mind and cut no corners with words, often being described as rude or crude...,call it what you may. I refused to take the time to be politically correct when dealing with situations in an ag environment. I was fair, but firm - very firm. Be truthful, be fair, but be firm. I felt it was of

more importance to be in the fields making the correct decisions and transferring those decisions to my farmer friends than stumbling around trying to find all the right words at the right time for fear of being called rude or crude.

Friends and friendships are also essential elements to becoming successful as an ag consultant. They can help you out in a jam when you need it, and, believe me, no matter how good you are, a professional agricultural consultant will get into a jam once in a while. I was once told to keep your business associates and clients away from friendships as much as possible, but I don't believe that. I never worked with many farmers or reps or specialists or associates that I could not call friends, close friends. And, I hoped they considered me more than just a "bug checker". You are what you make of yourself. Some folks are still just "bug checkers" while others are professional agricultural consultants.

It is important that farmers know the difference and that you portray yourself as professional. A consultant once told me that he was considered as no more than a tractor driver on his clients' farms. Duh, it may be the image he portrayed. Act as if you are more than just a hired hand on a farm. If not, then you will always be considered as nothing more. I strongly encourage any agricultural consultant to not work for someone who has that opinion of you if you act as a professional.

The successful professional agricultural consultant also networks often with consultants not just in their area, but throughout the United States, Canada, and even across the oceans. Even though those contacts with which I networked may not have worked the crops in question there are still business principles and principles from which I gained insight from consultants from other locations. A "bug checker" can get very near-sighted by just gleaning information from local sources or even area or regional sources. Those sources can be important, but should not be the only sources a successful professional agricultural consultant would use. Do not become "inbred" by limiting your resources to only those within a state or region. It is also important to learn what not to do. I have learned many do's and don'ts from my contacts via the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC). Especially, more recently, with precision agriculture and with NRCS programs. Without our contacts with consultants in North Carolina, Illinois, and Minnesota, we would have been less educated about many aspects of precision agriculture.

It takes time and money to become and remain good in your field of expertise, and this holds for all successful professional agricultural consultants. I would spend 10-20% of our annual budget on attending meetings such as the NAICC Annual Meeting, the Beltwide Cotton Conference, the Conservation Tillage Conferences, and LACA's Louisiana Agricultural Technology and Management Conference in addition to state association meetings in other states.

I always felt that to offer my farmer friends superior service that a multi-consultant organization was necessary for several reasons. It helps to have “back-up” both in personnel and in judgment when consulting. Illnesses, personal situations, and other issues that might prevent a one man operation from completing the service for the farmer friend could be handled by other individuals within the same company when those situations developed.

It also helps to have someone who understands both the farmer and the area to talk with when making decisions. I felt that having an associate or partner who is equally or more responsible, talented, friendly, and knowledgeable than myself is essential to giving farmer friends the service they deserve.

It is also imperative to have a great working relationship with company reps and dealers who furnish the tools the successful professional consultant recommends to the farmers. Keeping the dealers informed as to what is happening in the field allows them to stock the pantry with the pesticides and fertilizers necessary for farmer use. Dealers and reps also are vital for information in regard to shortages that may be about to occur so that the consultant can make the necessary changes in recommendations based on current supplies. This should not be limited to fertilizer and pesticide dealers, but should include equipment and specialty dealers also. Consultants should have a working knowledge of the farm equipment on their farmer friends’ farms and help them improve on the tools necessary for them to farm, including equipment. An application made by an out-dated sprayer or tillage done by less than adequate equipment will affect how the consultant manages crops on a farm.

Relationships with the commercial applicators, both aerial and ground, should be maintained so that communications can be established to help the consultant determine conditions at and after the time of application. This will aid the consultant in determining why a certain application may have given less than or better than anticipated results. Certain farmers will often ask the consultant to do a turnkey application where the consultant is required to contact the applicator and direct him or her to make necessary applications. When this happens, your responsibilities increase dramatically. It is another step that indicates how much faith the farmer friend has in the consultant, but requires that the consultant also have faith in the applicator with whom he or she is working.

Education - always. A scientific background is not necessary to become a good consultant, but it helps one understand many of the principles behind the science. And the education should never end. It should be ongoing. As precision agriculture and biotechnology become more important, consultants will need to be trained or re-trained to understand all that is available to their farmer friends.

Stay active in state and national organizations. It is imperative, not just for networking, but for

interests of the profession that each consultant dedicate so much time per day, week, month, or year to support of their state organization or organizations and to their national consultant organization. The only active national organization that I know exists is the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC). If you are not going to support your profession, then get out of that profession and ride someone else’s pony. Otherwise, roll up your sleeves and get active. We are so few in agriculture that each one of us matters more. So, get active or get out. If that is too obnoxious for you, then quit reading.

Sure, you can be successful without offering your talents to any organization, but is that morally right to your profession and for those who follow you and support you? I have heard every excuse in the world as to why a consultant did not want to be active in a state consultant organization or NAICC, and, frankly, they are all another way of saying I’m too interested in hunting or some other hobby to be bothered with that. Shame on you. Quit reading and, do us all a favor, and get out of agriculture and into whatever other “interest” you might have including hunting or laziness. Most times it is selfishness that is the issue.

Dedication - God, Family, and then profession. I did not necessarily do it that way, putting my profession before my family many times. May my family forgive me for that, but I have a very understanding partner in life and she did a great job of raising our son. Lise’, my partner in life, once said, “I am not going to have any more children if you are not going to take the time to help raise them. I got the message; and continued working. I, now, wish I had spent more time with my son when he was growing up, but he has turned out great, and, perhaps, better, without me. He has learned from my errors and is a dedicated family man. He spends much time with his kids and is a loving and caring husband and father.

I list passion, being fair, but firm, friendliness, maintaining a professional attitude and stature, networking (not just within a state or area, but possibly even internationally), continued working relationships with reps, dealers, and applicators, continued education, having someone to cover your back, being active in state and national professional organizations, and dedication to ideas that will help one become and maintain a person who wants to be a professional agricultural consultant. There are other ideas that may help, but these are a few that I consider most important. I keep going back to one or two words and those are “passion” and “dedication”. If you do not have that for the agricultural consulting profession, then move on. And do not get into or stay in agricultural consulting for the money, because it “ain’t” there. Unless you cut corners and do not offer the type of service your farmer friend deserves, there will be little to no profit for a retirement. You will just be plowed under like last year’s stubble.

Control of Soybean Rust with Single R1 Applications of a Triazole Fungicide

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We previously showed that plants become infected with the CLB pathogen at first flower (R1) or earlier even though symptoms may not appear until early to mid-R6. This period between the time that plants become infected and when symptoms are seen is referred to as the latent period. We reasoned that we should be able to improve fungicide efficacy if we could reduce the amount of infection during the latent period. We conducted several years of field trials in which we applied different fungicides during this period and then monitored infection and ultimately disease severity. Results from these efficacy studies showed that triazole fungicides, e.g. Topguard and Domark, were very effective in suppressing CLB when applied at the R1 growth stage. At the LACA Annual Meeting in 2012, I reported that a single application of the fungicide Topguard (flutriafol) to soybeans at 7 oz product/A at the R1 growth stage resulted in virtually complete control of Cercospora leaf blight (CBL). Following that meeting, several consultants suggested that we expand our studies to include other fungicide chemistries in order to evaluate their efficacy when applied during early reproductive growth stages. We followed up on these and other field protocols during the 2012 season in which we evaluated several fungicides, including numbered compounds, in various combinations and times of application.

In our work with CLB, we generally plant a late Maturity Group V during mid-June in order to increase our chances of getting a severe disease outbreak. This has generally worked well for us in our plots in Baton Rouge, and we employed this strategy in 2012. But Mother Nature had other plans for us. Rather than Cercospora leaf blight, which was present in negligible amounts, our plots were clobbered with soybean rust (see figure). This unexpected development provided us with an opportunity to assess how our CLB protocols would function against rust. We intend to repeat and expand these tests in 2013, but we will plant earlier in an attempt to escape rust so that we can confirm our earlier findings with CLB. Nevertheless, it is instructive to review our 2012 results in order to determine if newly developed CLB protocols will also be effective against rust. Presented here are just a few of the treatments that were included in our field trials. Because of our previous work with Topguard, which was highly effective against CLB following a single R1 application, we tested numerous protocols with this material. Other fungicides were tested as well, and a full report will be made available on the AgCenter website. Results from our field trials are unambiguous (see table). An early application (R1) of Topguard at either

7 or 10.5 ounces/A provided almost complete control of soybean rust. Similar early applications with strobilurin fungicides (Quadris and Headline) were not as effective, and Topsin M, which is still used to manage frogeye leaf spot and CLB, was completely ineffective against rust. This confirms reports by others with this fungicide. While single applications of strobilurins were not as effective as triazoles in controlling rust, we included late season applications of these materials in order to determine if grain quality could be improved. We have not yet completed our analyses of the harvested grain. These findings will be presented at a later date. Yield gains in the treated plots as compared to the untreated control ranged from 16% to 49%.

Table. Effects of rates and times of application of selected fungicides on soybean rust and yield.

Fungicide	Rate (oz/A)	Time of application	Disease severity (% leaf area)	Yield (bu/A)
Topsin M 70WP	14	R1		
Topsin M 70WP	14	R5		
Quadris	6	R5	78	39.6
Topsin M 70WP	14	R1		
Topsin M 70WP	14	R5	84	36.8
Topguard	7	R1	4	44.5
Topguard	10.5	R1	13	49.1
Quadris	6	R1		
Quadris	6	R5	70	42.8
Topguard	10.5	R1		
Quadris	6	R1	13	49.6
Topguard	7	R1		
Quadris	6	R5.5	0	47.4
Topguard	7	R1		
Headline	7	R5.5	1	50.1
Headline	7	R5.5	4	39
Untreated control	-	-	100	33.7
LSD	-	-	14	7.8

Figure. Left panel: Soybean plot treated with Topguard at 7 oz/A at R1. Right panel: Untreated control. Plants have been defoliated by the soybean rust pathogen. Photos taken at mid-R6.



A Few Highlights of the 2013 Annual Meeting

We'll start off pre-conference on Wednesday morning with a soil fertility workshop at no cost to you! This will be a laid-back hands-on educational symposium led by Dr. Beatrix Haggard of the LSU AgCenter.

Commissioner Strain will join us on Wednesday afternoon to recap 2012 agriculture and make predictions for 2013, followed by Chancellor Richardson to update us on the status of our AgCenter.

We will again have two Emerging Technologies sessions, one on Wednesday afternoon preceding the Social Networking Reception sponsored by **Bayer CropScience**, and one on Thursday morning following the Soybean and Feed Grains Session and preceding our traditional Crop Production and Protection Quiz sponsored by **FMC Corporation**.

An array of agronomic topics and speakers will be offered on Thursday afternoon and Friday morning to keep you informed of current best management practices, as well as product specific product updates in the rice and sugarcane breakout sessions. You'll also be hearing from our 2013 NAICC President, James Todd of Todd Ag Consulting, LLC in Plainview, TX and Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne.

Sincere Thanks to All Our Sponsors!!!

A successful meeting could not be pulled off without the very generous support of our ag industry sponsors. From sponsorship of meals to scholarships awarded to final program printing, and more, our sustaining members always come through to ensure we have one of the best conferences held anywhere. Sponsoring our annual meeting this year are Albaugh, Amvac, BASF, Bayer, Cheminova, Dow, Dupont, FMC, Koch, Louisiana Land Bank, Monsanto, Pioneer, RiceTec, Syngenta, Terral Seed, Valent, and Young & Young Consultants...

A Special THANKS also to LSU AgCenter personnel who give of their time and resources to provide us with audio/visual equipment and expertise!!!



For information on membership in NAICC
go to www.naicc.org or
contact Allison Jones at JonesNAICC@aol.com
or Denise Wright at glpbues@bellsouth.net

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Calendar of Events

Beltwide Cotton Conference
Marriott Rivercenter and Marriott Riverwalk
San Antonio, TX
January 7-10, 2013

National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants
Annual Meeting
Hyatt Jacksonville
Jacksonville, FL
January 23-26, 2013

Southern Weed Science Society
Annual Meeting
Royal Sonesta Hotel, Houston, TX
January 28-30, 2013

National Conservation Systems Cotton & Rice Conference
Crown Plaza, Baton Rouge, LA
January 31-February 1, 2013

Weed Science Society of America
Annual Meeting
Hilton Baltimore, Baltimore, MD
February 4-7, 2013

Louisiana Ag Industry Association (LAIA)
Annual Meeting
Paragon Casino Resort, Marksville, LA
February 5-6, 2013

**Louisiana Agricultural Technology &
Management Conference
(Consultants' Annual Meeting)**
Paragon Casino Resort
Marksville, LA
February 13-15, 2013



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