



Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association

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Turnrow Talk

May, 2012

President's Column

*Fred Collins, Ph.D.
AgCrop Consulting*

Here we go again! If there is one thing that is less predictable than the markets, it is the weather. A half inch of rain, five days of drying, two days of field work, then repeat. At least we are getting rain, in contrast to the last two springs. "Crazy weather" is a common remark you hear these days. Forecasters for a change are calling for a nice week and the soil moisture level is good. All will be in high gear with planting and fertilizing progressing full tilt. With workloads doubling up for both farmers and consultants during planting season, a few concerns we should consider briefly as we gear up for our busy schedules.

Throughout the state more and more producers are finding benefits from using Veris records to implement variable rate technologies for better management of fertility and pH problems. Several independent consultants, as well as chemical companies are providing Veris services and writing prescriptions for accurate placement of soil amendments and responsive rates of growth regulators and herbicides. Help support the independent consultants when possible, but regardless of the source of the information, growers are benefiting from these services when helped by qualified providers. See the article by Dennis Burns relating to Veris work in this newsletter. With fertilizer costs increasing by 30% this month alone, there is a great impetus for producers to maximize the benefits of fertilizer usage, and variable rate applications are an important way to reduce costs and decrease fertilizer runoff which will become more and more a concern with increasing regulations. We can help growers understand and use this technology even if we are not directly involved with providing the Veris data. Keep up with the development of this technology or get left behind.

The LSU AgCenter recently won a major grant for developing biofuels. Agricultural feed stocks will be converted into biofuels from energy cane, sweet sorghum and woody crops. A pilot plant is being built in St. Gabriel at the experiment station to study and develop this process. In a recent survey reported by Mike Blazier of the AgCenter in which 732 farmers participated, 56% strongly agree that viable technologies exist for converting biomass to bioenergy. Of the respondents, 51% were willing to participate in bioenergy feed stock production. This means more business for you and I. We must continue to participate in educational programs such as the LATMC to keep up with these developing technologies. This will insure we can help guide our customers with production concerns of a new enterprise.

Recently in areas of the state a number of land own-

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ers and many farmers are finding that there is an interest by oil companies in leasing land for gas and oil exploration. Kudos to those able to get their land leased. This will help to fill in some financial "holes" that many realized after a couple of record dry and hot years. Some believe that with new fracking technologies we may have enough natural gas for 100 years. This is great news considering we are in the infancy of developing alternative sources of energy. Biofuels are getting more attention even though ethanol is considered an inefficient source of alternate energy. Consultants will be involved with production of biofuels as we already are in the Midwest where the bulk of ethanol is made. Sugarcane and sorghum uses as biofuels are not far from reality in our state. The fact is that traditional energy from oil and gas are limited. Fortunately, we will not run out soon, but the world will run out. The next generation of producers and consultants must learn how best to position our business to be prepared for this eventuality. This all leads to our need to be good stewards of our land and water and be prepared to adopt the development of biofuel production in Louisiana.

At a recent consultants meeting several of us attended, there was a guest speaker that talked at length

about the need to decrease regulations by government and let the markets determine the direction of development of biofuels and other concerns. He said that soon wind turbines would become “yard ornaments” because they were only profitable due to government subsidies. He may be right, but I submit that we need to develop alternate sources because there is increasing CO2 levels. With increasing populations and the demand by a larger middle class in India, China and South America for electricity, autos and more animal protein, energy consumption and demand is exploding. This will only increase CO2 levels in the future and make potential weather fluctuation more severe. I contend that as consultants we are in the position to influence the direction of biofuel production in our state and thus minimize negative results from over-use of fossil fuels. Be involved with developing technologies because things are “a-changin’”. Good luck with your business this season.

New Website Hosting

The LACA website has a new host, AgRenaissance Software, LLC under the direction of David Krueger and can be accessed at www.laca1.org.

The 2012 LATMC presentations have been posted on the website for your review, and for those of you who weren’t fortunate enough to join us at the annual consultants’ conference this year, you can still take advantage of the information presented there. The Crop Protection and Production Quiz with answers is also available on the website.

Please visit the 2012 Sustaining Members’ page where you can link to our sponsors’ websites and get up-to-the-minute product news.

Coming soon will be the 2012 LACA Committees, scholarship recipients, and more...

Member contact information can be accessed on the website directory and can be queried by member name and/or by crops consulted.

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!

2012 Crop Protection and Production Quiz Winners

Shown from left, Harold Lambert, 2nd place, Richard Costello, 1st place, Hank Jones, 5th place, and Stuart Gautheir, 3rd place. Not shown is Dwayne Coulon, 4th place. Congratulations, Gentlemen!!!



Interest by our consultants in learning the latest in agriculture innovation is evident in the below photos taken by past president, Blaine Viator. Harold Lambert, past president (and resident attorney) and Roger Carter, past president and our current Executive Board Secretary (top pic) and Richard Costello and Hank Jones, both past presidents in the foreground (bottom pic). This association is our membership and what an exemplary group of professionals!!!



Record Breaking Attendance at LATMC 2012!

If you did not attend the 2012 Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference, you missed out! In addition to the great line-up of timely topics and informed speakers, the networking that occurred due to all who attended being able to relax and visit without having to leave the site was a real plus. The new venue was very accommodating and well-received according to the survey conducted following the meeting. I am very pleased to report that we decreased annual conference expenses by approximately \$5,600.00 this year over what we would have had to pay in Alexandria in 2012. This is significant! We also had record attendance at 330+.

I want to personally thank again our sustaining members who every year come through for our consultants in helping to shape a truly successful annual conference. We had more new sustaining members join this year than ever before, or at least since I've been involved with the consultants' association. Nine new sustaining members are listed on page 4 of this newsletter.

Below are the 2012 LATMC survey results summarized for your information. All the survey responses were anonymous, and a lot of good information was derived from them...thanks to all who took the time to complete the survey, and especially to those who added comments as well. These are invaluable in knowing what is going well and what needs improvement.

- ◆ The survey asked, "How satisfied were you with the 2012 LATMC new venue?"
 - * Extremely satisfied 54.1%
 - * Somewhat satisfied 29.6%
 - * No opinion 4.1%
 - * Somewhat dissatisfied 7.1%
 - * Extremely dissatisfied 5.1%
- ◆ The survey asked, "If you could choose a venue for 2013..."
 - * Would you return to Paragon Casino Resort, Marksville? 66.0%
 - * Return to SAI Convention Center, Alexandria? 11.3%
 - * New venue in Pineville 7.2%, Lafayette 6.2%, or Baton Rouge 9.3%

Pre-conference interactive workshops are a hit. Shown below, David Hydrick of Hydrick's Crop Consulting, Inc., presents information on the use of FieldRecon™ and FieldRx™, software used for crop consulting.



- ◆ The survey asked, "How would you rate the food at Paragon Casino Resort compared to other venues in the past?"
 - * Very good 23.5%
 - * Better than most 51.0%
 - * No opinion 20.4%
 - * Not as good as others 4.1%
 - * Not good at all 1%
- ◆ The survey asked, "How would you rate the accommodations (hotel) at Paragon Casino Resort?"
 - * Excellent 30.9%
 - * Good 42.6%
 - * No opinion 19.0%
 - * Poor 4.3%
 - * Would not stay there again 3.2%
- ◆ The survey asked, "How would you rate the meeting space (convention center) at Paragon Casino Resort?"
 - * Spacious, and exactly what we need for our meeting 64.6%
 - * Okay, but room for improvement 28.1%
 - * No opinion 6.3%
 - * Not that great 1%
 - * Not accommodating for our meeting at all 0%
- ◆ The survey asked, "What changes would most improve our meeting?"
 - * New location 8.9%
 - * Different meeting format 9.5%
 - * Paid speakers 4.5%
 - * Different presentation content 6.8%
 - * Extend meeting (3 full days) 8.1%
 - * Shorten meeting (2 full days) 62.2%
- ◆ The survey asked, "What type presentations would you like to see in the future?"
 - * More agronomics 56.6%
 - * More technology 11.0%
 - * More business-related (i.e., recordkeeping, marketing) 6.9%
 - * More industry-related (product news) 9.3%
 - * More entertaining (i.e., hunting, wildlife) 16.2%
- ◆ The survey asked, "Please indicate your preference(s) for meeting location."
 - * Marksville 61.6%
 - * Alexandria 17.0%
 - * Lafayette 10.1%
 - * Baton Rouge 4.1%
 - * Monroe 7.2%
- ◆ The survey asked, "Would you say the 2012 meeting was (in regard to meeting fees, hotel expense, on your own food expense)..."
 - * Very expensive 1.1%
 - * Somewhat expensive 20.4%
 - * Worth the expense for the information obtained 68.8%
 - * Somewhat expensive 6.5%
 - * Very inexpensive 3.2%

Tentative dates for the 2013 LATMC have been penciled in for February 6-8, 2013 at Paragon Casino Resort.



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

*Mike Strain, DVM
Commissioner, LDAF*

According to LSU AgCenter economist, Dr John Westra, agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture generated over \$10.7 billion in our state's economy, an increase of 7% over last year and 27% over the last two years. These gains were led predominately by row crops including feed grains, sugarcane, cotton, wheat, and soybeans; accounting for over \$700 million in additional income.

Westra said commodities such as corn, sorghum, and soybeans had reductions in yields, but total acreage was up. Sugarcane and rice saw record-setting yields and cotton production was up.

In addition, feed grain prices were up 50 percent, soybeans 23 percent, sugarcane 21 percent, wheat 31 percent, and cotton eight percent. Rice saw a significant decline of over 120,000 acres which resulted in a \$59 million dollar decline in value; these declines were as a result of saltwater intrusion primarily in southwest Louisiana and planting alternative crops in northeast and central Louisiana.

Sweet potatoes continue to be strong with a total value of over \$142 million and strong potential for future demands and growth.

Nursery stock and ornamentals are valued at over \$146 million; we expect an increased demand when the housing market improves and the overall economy strengthens.

Fisheries saw a slight decline to \$959 million in value according to the latest numbers reported to Wildlife and Fisheries. Aquaculture increased by 16% to \$442 million even though fin fish and shrimp were down 10% and oyster harvests down 50%. These numbers reflect the oil spill disaster and we expect significant recovery over time.

Animal production, including beef, dairy and poultry remained relatively unchanged at \$2.65 billion. Poultry was down approximately 1% to \$1.6 billion. Protein demands are increasing worldwide; we expect stable and higher values. In addition, these demands will drive other sectors such as for hay and grains to new heights. Hay which has become a major commodity is now a \$145 million industry.

Fruit crops and greenhouse vegetables are growing at \$39 million.

Forestry was relatively unchanged with a total value of \$3 billion. Current economic indicators show

an increased value to timber beginning in 2013 and progressing through 2014 and 2015 as housing recovers and markets improve.

Add together home gardens, peanuts, pecans, sod, vegetable production and many other crops, our total production is over \$10.6 billion. It is impressive that our sector continues to thrive and grow in spite of the recession.

Additionally, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in agribusiness and agroindustrial facilities combined with major improvements in rail, ports, and waterways.

Industrially we are blessed by the largest natural gas finds in this hemisphere located in Louisiana, further strengthening our economic base and bringing low cost energy to our major industries. Nationally, Louisiana is the number one producer of crude oil, the number two petroleum refiner, and the number three producer of natural gas.

We will see continued increased demand for our products due to worldwide expansion. Food production must grow 25% within the next eight years and double by the year 2030. In addition, there will be a doubling of the middle class outside of the United States with real spending capacity of over \$22k US by 2020. In the last year, we increased exports by over 18 percent. Five of the top fourteen ports in the country are in Louisiana. More agricultural products are exported through our ports than any other ports in the nation.

The greater demands for renewable fuels and competition for lands for food/fuel/fibre will result in higher commodity prices across all sectors and greater values in land, technologies, and expertise as there is minimal arable land and water that is currently not utilized.

Here and abroad, the challenges ahead and the opportunities they bring are clear. According to Professor John Beddington, one of the UK's Chief Scientists, the demand for food and energy will rise 50% by 2030 and fresh water by 30% as the population tops 8.3 billion. Further, the United Nations Environmental Programme predicts widespread water shortages across Africa, Europe and Asia by 2025. At present, worldwide 30 - 40 % of all crops are lost due to pest and disease before they are harvested.

Science, research, and development of more pest and disease resistant, salt and drought tolerant varieties are essential. Intense application of advanced practices and technologies will lead Agriculture forward.

(Continued on page 5...)

In order to meet these growing demands we must markedly increase the rate of growth in total factor productivity by utilizing all available natural resources and technologies in an ever increasing model of efficiency and sustainability.

Last year, the American farmer had a net profit of over \$100 billion dollars, the highest ever in the history of our nation. Never before has the future looked so bright. Never before have we seen such value in production and agribusiness. It is truly Louisiana's Golden Age of Agriculture, Forestry, and Aquaculture.



Precision Ag - Variable Rate Applications

*Dennis Burns, LSU AgCenter
ANR Agent Tensas Parish*

Recently I was talking to a producer who wanted to learn about making variable rate applications of nitrogen. The first question he asked was: "How much am I going to save by making the application variable rate?" My response was not what he expected. I said "Don't look at it as saving money, but as making money." By matching the optimum nitrogen rate to the corresponding soil/production zone, crop use efficiency is highest and the potential profit from the nitrogen application is maximized.

To make a variable rate nitrogen application, a producer has to define the application zones. This can be based on soil types, Veris Ec soil zones, yield maps, producer knowledge or a combination. The producer's knowledge of the field along with a yield goal helps determine the nitrogen rate assigned to each zone. The total amount applied to a field with a variable rate application may not be much different than if a producer had gone with a single rate, but by putting the correct rate in the right area the field doesn't have areas with over or under applications of nutrients.

Soil Sampling is an essential part of variable rate applications, whether it is grid sampling or zone sampling. Each method would benefit from the addition of yield map data to the analysis. Yield maps over several crops and several years can help define the potential yield and profitability of a field. It can also assist with the definition of productivity zones for a field. This is especially obvious when a cropping history is developed over several years.

Variable rate applications of lime, P, K, and other essential nutrients need to be applied in areas defined by the sampling pattern (grid or zone). Variable rate applications of other nutrients is the most cost effective and efficient method for supplying crop

needs. Variable rate also allows a producer to match fertility needs to the current crop's needs. Supplying/maintaining fertility levels enhances the nitrogen efficiency and use by the crop.

The most useful piece of precision ag equipment a producer can own is a yield monitor. A yield monitor gathers the information from the field with which a producer can evaluate how well fertilizers, varieties, etc. performed. Verification strips of a nutrient, nitrogen rate, or another input can be used as a comparison for the rest of the field. Analyzing the results as whole strips and soil/production zones allows a producer to determine the most productive and economical practices to use on their farm.

Precision agriculture, its use, the results, and the incorporation of the practices into a farming operation is a long term process which can enhance the productivity of a farm. For more information or assistance with precision ag applications or yield data on your farm, contact Dennis Burns at 318-267-6709 or R.L. Frazier at 318-267-6714.

Welcome New Members!!!

Clay Brignac of Brignac Crop Consulting joined the LACA as a voting member just recently.

Joining the LACA as Sustaining Members in 2012 are AgRenaissance Software, LLC, AgrowPlow, Bayer Bioscience, INTX Microbials, Jimmy Sanders, Inc., Kincaid Equipment, Mar-rone Bio Innovations, SRES, and Young and Young Consultants. We welcome you and appreciate your support!!!



Shown from left, 2011 LACA President, Hank Jones, Matthew VanWeelden, graduate scholarship recipient accepting the \$2,000 check from sponsor, Dow AgroScience's Brooks Blanche, Cullen Minter of RiceTec, co-sponsor for the undergraduate scholarship, Matthew Foster, undergraduate scholarship recipient accepting his \$2,000 check from co-sponsor, Ray Young of Young and Young Consultants. THANKS to our scholarship sponsors for their generous contributions to the future of agriculture and congratulations to the winners!!! See page 6 for more on scholarship winners...

2012 LACA Scholarship Winners

Matthew "Matt" Foster LACA Undergraduate Scholarship Recipient

Mr. Foster graduated from Vidalia High School and attended Copiah Lincoln Community College before enrolling at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

He is currently pursuing a Bachelors of Science degree in Plant and Soil Systems with a concentration in Pest Management. Upon completion of his degree, Matt plans to work toward a masters with a concentration in weed science.

He has a GPA of 3.5 and has earned both a Tops and Dean Lee Scholarship.

Matt is a member of the Entomological Society; an AgMagic Volunteer; a Concordia Parish 4-H judge; a Display Event Volunteer; and a field crop training volunteer for producers in Concordia/Catahoula Parishes. He has worked as an intern for the LSU Cooperative Extension Service and has participated in numerous ag related activities. In addition, he was employed as a field scout from 2004-2007.

Matt's previous supervisors have included Mr. Glen Daniels (County Agent), Mr. Cecil Parker (Consultant), & Dr. Joshua Temple (formerly at LSU and currently Field Development Rep for Dupont). Matt currently works at LSU as a student employee who helps maintain the insect rearing facility in the Cotton Entomology Lab and also assists many masters and doctoral students with their research projects under the supervision of Ms. Jessica Parker and Dr. Rogers Leonard.

During the last two summers, Matt volunteered to scout an elderly/disabled farmer's crops. He helped this farmer with his in-season crop IPM strategies.

In a letter of recommendation, the author stated, "Matt is an honest, hardworking, and dependable person. His basic knowledge of agriculture, positive attitude, and overall work ethic has made him a valuable asset. Matt's future is bright and he will be a valuable asset to Louisiana agriculture when he completes his studies.

Mattherw "Matt" VanWeelden LACA Graduate Scholarship Recipient

Mr. VanWeelden was born in Troy, Ohio and graduated from Warren Central High School. He earned both a bachelors and a masters degree in entomology from Purdue University with GPAs of 3.5. At the present time, he is pursuing a doctorate in entomology at LSU under the direction of Dr. Gene Reagan. His current GPA is 3.7.

Matt's initial interest was in urban IPM but he has chosen to broaden his knowledge and experience by pursuing his doctorate in entomology & field crop IPM. His current focus is on the development of cultural practices to mitigate problems with the invasive Mexican rice borer in sugarcane, bio energy crops, and rice. His research studies include the potential use of arthropod predators for inhibiting rice borer infestations and the implementation of energy cane varieties versus those used in a conventional cropping system.

Matt has earned the A.M. Frishman Scholarship; the G.F. Gould Scholarship; and the J.J. Davis Scholarship.

He is a member of the LSU Entomology Club having served as Vice President in 2011. Matt is currently serving as the club president. In 2011, he was the captain of the Louisiana State University Debate Team for the national competition sponsored by the Entomological Society of America. Matt was chairman of the graduate student entomology symposium at Purdue. In addition, he served on the Student Affairs Committee of the Southeast Branch of the Entomological Society of America.

Matt's professional experience includes working as an entomology lab tech at Purdue. He was an instructor and grading coordinator for a pest management correspondence course. Matt also served as the Support Coordinator for several pest management conferences. In 2008, he served as an intern for the National Pest Management Association in Washington, D.C.

Matt is author and co-author of three publications and has made several presentations on his research at regional and national professional meetings.

2013 Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference Paragon Casino Resort, Marksville, LA February 6-8, 2013



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