



# Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association

## Turn Row Talk

**Winter Issue 2016**

**Volume 23**

### **President's Column**

*Mark Smith*

*Crop Management Services of P.C.*

In the spring newsletter, one of the topics I wrote about was the excessive rain we received in March and April. It was a challenge getting our crops planted, and I was hoping to return to a more normal weather pattern. The weather did straighten up, and all crops were planted. The growing conditions in May, June, and July were very good, and our yield potential for all crops was excellent. I really thought it was going to be one of those years, and then August came. On August 11, a slow moving low pressure system developed and dumped record rains across south Louisiana. My area (Pointe Coupee) received 15-17 inches of rain in 48 hours. It's hard to describe the feeling I had when I went to my fields for the first time after the rain ended. Water was everywhere, and I knew we had significant crop damage. The early soybeans that were mature prior to the rain event ended up having severe quality damage (up to 50%) and very poor test weights. Corn and grain sorghum experienced quality issues, as well, along with seed sprouting, but thankfully, the majority of these crops were harvested before the rain event. The cotton crop had a higher incidence of diseases including hard lock, boll rot and target spot, which lowered yields considerably. As of this writing (December 6), the sugarcane harvest is still underway, but it appears yields (tons/acre) will be 10-20% lower due to lighter stalk weights. I did have some soybean and cotton fields that were a total loss due to water staying on the fields for an extended period of time. According to Dr. Kurt Guidry, of the LSU AgCenter, the economic impact to agriculture from the record rains and flooding in August 2016 was estimated at \$277 million. This includes yield losses and quality damage, increased production costs, and infrastructure damage.

We must keep this historic flooding event in perspective as we look at the many lives that have been affected. This rain event dumped three times as much rain on Louisiana as hurricane Katrina. Many areas exceeded 20 inches of rain in 48 hours. The highest total occurred in Watson which received 31.39 inches of rain in 15 hours. All rivers, bayous, canals, and ditches filled and overflowed causing record flooding. Thirteen

people lost their lives as a result of the flooding. The water rose so fast that 30,000 people had to be rescued from their homes. Over 110,000 homes and 7,000 businesses were damaged. Many schools were damaged and thousands of students were displaced. Eleven thousand people had to move into shelters. Twenty parishes were declared as federal disaster areas. It's hard to fathom, but some people lost everything including their homes, businesses, and vehicles and must start over. It will be months or even years before all the damage is repaired from this historic rain event and flooding. The experts say this was a 500-year or 1,000-year rain event, and I hope they're right, and we never experience anything like this again.

Yes, the floods of 2016 were devastating to agriculture, and it will be a financial challenge moving forward. But our farmers are a resilient group, and they will survive this. They will plant their crops in the spring and carry on. It's in their blood, and it's a way of life. My hope is that Mother Nature will cooperate with us during the growing season in 2017, and our crops will be abundant.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the LACA for allowing me to serve as president in 2016. I had the privilege of working with a great board and enjoyed the dialogue, discussions, and decisions that were made as an organization. I would like to thank our Executive Director, Denise Wright, for all she does for our organization. She goes "above and beyond" and made my job a lot easier. I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, and I hope everyone has a successful season in 2017.

### **2017 LACA Scholarships Available**

**One undergraduate, one graduate, and two doctoral scholarships are available to be awarded to qualifying students who apply prior to January 10, 2017. Time is getting short, so if you know of a worthy student who could use this scholarship, please encourage them to apply at [www.laca1.org](http://www.laca1.org), Applications, College Scholarship...**



## Commissioner's Message

One of the biggest issues facing America is agricultural trade. One in three acres in the United States and the vast majority of Louisiana's production is sold abroad. Ninety-five percent of all consumers are outside the United States and represent a new growing middle class estimated to reach three billion people by the year 2030. This is why trade promotion and trade agreements are so critical.

In July and again in October, I went to Cuba. On the first trip, I led a delegation of 95 people to get a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges to open trade. We personally met with our counterparts and a number of high ranking ministers as well as hand delivered a draft of our memorandums of understanding for further trade and cooperation. In October, I returned with Governor John Bel Edwards, Secretary of Economic Development Don Pierson, Secretary of DOTD Dr. Shawn Wilson and a number of other high ranking private and government officials. On this trip, we further cemented our relationships with our counterparts, examined the island's infrastructure including roads, rail, and port facilities, and formally signed memorandums of understanding for agriculture, ports, and trade.

In the past ten years, Louisiana has sold more than \$1.4 billion worth of products to Cuba which exceeds the combined sales for the next four closest states. This year alone, Cuba will import over \$1.8 billion worth of food mostly from other countries. This amount is expected to grow by an additional 500 million per year due to increased foreign tourism to the island. Our goal is to capture at least \$1 billion of this business for the United States, half of which we expect to export from Louisiana ports.

Also in October, I was honored to lead the American delegation at the Tri-National Agricultural Accord in Ontario, Canada where we negotiate and debate trade issues between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. These accords represent more than \$60 billion a year in agricultural trade. It is critical that we have a level playing field and that trade is beneficial to all concerned. Any regulatory or factional impediments to trade will result in less economic opportunities for everyone. Increased trade will spur economic growth and farm incomes.

On November 15, I was requested to attend a meeting at the White House with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman, and Deputy U.S. Trade Representative and Chief Agricultural Negotiator Darci Vetter for a roundtable discussion of the economic benefits of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the political path forward to pass and implement the trade agreement. As with any large and complicated trade agreement, there are many specific issues, some of which a particular group will take issue with. However, taken in its entirety, this trade agreement represents more than \$63 billion to American agriculture which is more than 42 percent of our total agricultural exports.

We met in the Roosevelt Room in the West Wing and for more than an hour discussed the opportunities and challenges of increasing trade. With the next administration soon to take over, it is imperative that we are at the negotiating table. If we are not at the table, we will surely be on it. In the next year, not only will the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, and the North American Free trade agreement be examined, but so will trade with Cuba and Britain.

Louisiana and American agriculture have had a positive balance of trade for more than 50 years. Export of Louisiana agricultural products is more than \$8.3 billion per year and represents the majority of our total production. We must take advantage of every opportunity to expand trade and sell our products. This is the key to higher commodity prices and profitability. Where there are specific commodity issues, we must identify and fully understand them and then work to resolve them through negotiated trade accords.

Agriculture is an infinitely sustainable and renewable resource that can build and maintain the rural economy. It must be enhanced through investment, research and extension, maintaining and improving markets, and sheer hard work and determination. Together we can make this happen.

**Mike Strain, DVM**  
**Commissioner**  
**Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry**  
**(225) 922-1233**

## Fusarium Head Blight of Wheat (Scab)

**Trey Price, Field Crop Pathology, Macon Ridge Research Station**  
**Boyd Padgett, Interim Wheat Specialist, Dean Lee Research and Extension Center**

Over the past two years, Fusarium head blight (scab), caused primarily by *Fusarium graminearum*, has devastated Louisiana wheat. The worst scab we have observed in 30 years of walking wheat fields. There are several reasons this occurred. First, warm and wet weather conditions during flowering favored infection. Second, these conditions persisted which fueled epidemics. Third, there are no highly effective management practices (varieties or fungicides), which makes the disease difficult to manage.

Even though there is not a single effective management practice, combining a moderately resistant variety with a timely fungicide application for suppression can reduce the damage from this disease. Therefore, it is important to have a management plan in place before planting. The first step to managing scab is a knowledge of what conditions favor infection and disease development. The fungus also infects corn, therefore, wheat grown in fields planted to corn the previous year may be at higher risk to this disease. Infected corn debris (also wheat straw and other hosts) can serve as initial inoculum. Fungal spores produced on this debris are dispersed by rain splash or wind to nearby wheat plants. Later in the season,



plant to plant spread also occurs. Infection can occur from head emergence to harvest, but infection during flowering through soft dough is most damaging. Conditions that favor infection are temperatures from 75-85°F and 48-72 hours of free moisture.

Symptoms of the disease will first appear 10 to 14 days after flowering as bleached heads, which will be noticeable from the turn row (Photo 1). This symptom is often mistaken with the appearance of maturing wheat. Upon closer inspection, affected wheat heads will usually have infected kernels showing the characteristic bleached appearance with pinkish/salmon/light orange coloration along the glumes (Photo 2). This coloration is millions of microscopic spores (reproductive structures) of the fungal pathogen. There are usually healthy kernels along with the diseased kernels on the same head (Photo 3). In extreme cases, however, the entire head may be infected. At harvest, affected seed will be shriveled, off color, much lighter than healthy kernels, and are referred to as “tombstones” (Photo 4).

The pathogen over summers on corn, wheat, small grain residue, and other grasses. Therefore, some cultural practices may aid in management: crop rotation, tillage, mowing/shredding, or staggered planting/variety maturity. At harvest, combine fan speed may be increased to blow out infected seed, which is lighter than healthy seed. Additionally, seed cleaning equipment may help remove affected seed but may not be cost effective. These cultural practices alone will not completely manage FHB. An integrated approach is required to lessen the impact of FHB.

If possible **plant moderately resistant, locally adapted varieties.**

Plant high quality seed (**FUNGICIDE SEED TREATMENTS ARE NOT EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT FOR SCAB**).

**Apply a suppressive fungicide** in a timely manner. Triazole fungicides may be somewhat effective on FHB. Some earlier research indicated that tebuconazole (Folicur and generics) may reduce incidence and severity of FHB. Later research has shown that Prosaro (prothioconazole + tebuconazole), Proline (prothioconazole), and Caramba (metconazole) are most efficacious on FHB. **THESE APPLICATIONS WERE MADE UNDER IDEAL CONDITIONS WITH IDEAL TIMINGS AND THE MAXIMUM CONTROL WAS AROUND 50%. AVERAGE CONTROL WAS ABOUT 40%.**

**Timing is critical.** We have a very short window during flowering to make an effective application for FHB. The biggest problem is that ideal conditions (wet weather) for FHB infection are not ideal for making fungicide applications. Head coverage also is critical. Sprayers should be calibrated to deliver maximum water volume (minimum 15 GPA by ground, 5 GPA by air) and optimal droplet size (300 to 350 microns). For ground sprayers, nozzles angled at 30° to the horizontal will maximize head coverage. Some research has shown that dual nozzles angled in opposite directions will also increase head coverage.

It is common to see 2-3 years of epidemics of FHB followed by years with little to no disease. An online ([www.wheatcab.psu.edu](http://www.wheatcab.psu.edu)) risk assessment tool that is based on temperature and relative humidity is available, which has regional commentary that will help you to determine your risk at a given location.

For more information, please see the following resources:

[www.scabsmart.org](http://www.scabsmart.org)

[www.scabusa.org](http://www.scabusa.org)

<http://www.mississippi-crops.com/2015/04/24/wheat-disease-update-april-24-2015/>



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

*Continued on page 4...*





**Photo 4**

## **A Year of Extremes**

**Blaine Viator, Ph.D.**  
**2005 LACA President**

Well it's another season in the books, and this was certainly one this agricultural consultant will not soon forget. It was a year of extremes. In our part of the state, we wrapped up the wet 2015 sugarcane harvest and went the rest of the winter months without any significant frosts or freezes. This was an obvious warning that significant crop pest severity would occur in 2016, and that it did. To exacerbate the overwintering pest pressure, we recorded record rainfall from January 1<sup>st</sup> to the present. Even before the historic floods in Baton Rouge and Lafayette, one centrally located weather station logged a total of 68 inches cumulative rainfall prior to September 1<sup>st</sup>. This exceeded our mean annual rainfall amount for an entire 12 month period.

In soybeans, the pressure from diseases and insects was some of the heaviest I have seen in 29 seasons. This far south, we have had to manage redbanded stinkbugs (RBSB) to some extent every year since we first found them here in 2001. This season proved to be one of the most challenging, not only because of the high RBSB numbers, but also because of federal label changes to some of the most effective insecticides used to manage the pest. Many insecticides (single a.i. or premix) that contain a neonicotinoid now have stricter plant back rotational restrictions which prevented us from implementing these tools in many of our IPM/Resistance Management plans. This left us with really only one insecticide, acephate, to effectively manage economic threshold levels of RBSB. It's a scary situation, because relying on multiple, sequential applications of one a.i. is only asking for trouble when it comes to this pest. And all this was going on even before this season's "worm-ageddon" as it was later dubbed.

The wet, humid year provided a prolific stomping ground for soybean diseases. Most of the fields we scouted had at least some level of every major and minor soybean disease. There were some disease symptoms that I do not know were ever even documented. Because of the rainfall, environmental conditions, heavier than normal disease pressure, and crop yield potential, many soybean fields in the southern part of the state

were prescribed two fungicide applications. It was somewhat discouraging at first to see how much frogeye, cercospora, septoria, target spot, and soybean rust was still out there, even after two properly timed and applied fungicide applications. That is, until we started running into sprayer skips. Eradication is not a realistic, profitable, or sustainable goal. But suppression and economic management are goals most agricultural consultants strive to achieve in their professions.

The sugarcane crop here was not immune to atypical pest and agronomic challenges. Early brown rust epidemics, sugarcane borer, West Indian cane fly, and later aphid complexes were problematic in many areas throughout the season. A great deal had to be worked out and learned this season as some of these pest problems have very little economic threshold and/or efficacy data for consultants to use in their pest management plans.

And then the next big wave of rains came, which unfortunately came at a time during the season when many acres of early planted, early maturing soybeans were attempting to dry down for harvest. As many of you saw, there were quite a few fields that went from excellent quality to hog feed in a matter of days. It was very evident yet again this season that when it comes to weathering, all soybean varieties are not created equal.

Somehow, we all survived this season of extremes and got through it with our caps still on. As the old saying goes, "what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger". What was most encouraging to me was to see the communication going on between LACA consultants throughout the season. There were many times I called on some of you to bounce something off or to compare experiences. Many of you did the same. That to me is what makes LACA such a strong and viable organization.

As we all put our equipment back together and make preparations for the 2017 season, I'll finish up with a very timely, but also very old quote that seems to sum up our profession well:

*"These animals which the Creator has thought fit to form and preserve for ages, man will not be permitted to exterminate; we may, however, with propriety, strive by all means in our power, to lessen the number of these creatures which injure or destroy our property." Reverend Lansdown Guilding, 1828*



## A Letter from Dr. David Kerns

I wanted this to be an open letter to all the members of the Louisiana Crop Consultants Association and the agricultural producers of Louisiana. What can I say, but what a great bunch of people and such a valuable resource you are to the State of Louisiana and agriculture in general. Had it not been for the LACA I would have never left Texas to work in Louisiana. I remember prior to Thanksgiving in 2011, Mr. Ray calling me and telling me that he was going to drive to Lubbock, TX to meet with me. I was aware that Mr. Ray was no longer a spring chicken and I thought, "What kind of man is this? That a gentleman in his late 70's would take the time to drive all the way from NE LA to west Texas just to visit with me." I told Mr. Ray that I would be in east Texas celebrating Thanksgiving and would simply come over and see him instead. Of course the Youngs are always such gracious hosts and it did not take long for Mr. Ray to convince me that NE LA was the place for me. He wasn't wrong. I thoroughly enjoyed, loved and benefitted from working for the consultants and growers of Louisiana, not to mention my colleagues with the AgCenter. I could take up an entire page of listing all the people with LACA who have touched my life, enriched it, and made my work in Louisiana wonderful.

Things don't always work out as we plan, but who am I to be planning my life. We encounter difficulties that lead to change and I truly believe that God's Divine Providence carried me to Louisiana and has since taken me back to Texas. I have no regrets having moved to Louisiana...I have been greatly blessed during my career with the LSU AgCenter and especially blessed with great people to work with. Louisiana's greatest resource is her people. I left Louisiana with a great amount of trepidation...the decision was heart wrenching, but the difficulties my family had been going through the last few years had become overwhelming.

It is every bit of my intention of keeping relationships, both personal and professional, with all of you. Any of you can call or email me at any time. I am sure Dr. Leonard will find someone who will make a fine replacement and I have all the trust in the world that Sebe Brown will continue to be an outstanding asset to you. I thank you for all you have done for me, and I hope that my efforts to serve you have been beneficial.

God Bless you and have a Merry Christmas.

**David Kerns**

**Professor, IPM Coordinator & Extension Specialist**

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## The Makings of a Successful Meeting

**Denise Wright**  
**LACA Executive Director**

Every fall, traditionally at the end of October, the LACA Executive Board along with the Governmental Affairs Committee and the LATMC Program Planning Committee hold roundtable discussions and a program planning meeting to form your consultants' annual meeting...it doesn't just happen...it is the effort of many LSU AgCenter, USDA-ARS, LDAF personnel, and other informed persons.

It is LACA's ultimate goal to provide to our consultants and others attending the Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference, the most informative speakers bringing the most beneficial agricultural information and news. We welcome **YOUR** ideas for topics and speakers. Please feel free (it is welcomed) to call or email me at any time during the year to let me know you just heard an exceptional speaker or read an exceptional article so that I can make note of this...We want to think "outside the box", as the old cliché goes, to bring to our conference the best of the best, in as much as is feasibly possible!

We hope that we will see you at our consultants' meeting in February, 2017. In addition to the continuing education our meeting provides, the networking opportunities are endless. Take full advantage of this in the short time we are all under one roof at Paragon Casino Resort. See you soon!!!



## 2017 LACA Scholarships Available

Paul Templet, Chair of the Scholarship Committee and members of his committee have worked very hard to recruit applicants for the three (NOW four) scholarships awarded each year at our annual meeting, as well as spending many rigorous hours going through applications, transcripts, and references to glean the most worthy students for these scholarships. The scholarship criteria and application can be found on the LACA website at <http://www.laca1.org/LACAScholarshipRequirements-050216.pdf>. If you know of an undergrad, graduate, or doctoral students who might qualify, please encourage them to apply NOW (deadline January 10, 2017).

## Become a Tigers Advocate

Visit [www.lsualumni.org/tigeradvocates](http://www.lsualumni.org/tigeradvocates)

Sign up today!

You will receive email notifications at critical times when your voice needs to be heard in the state legislature. With just a click or call, your legislators will know the LSU Tiger Nation are closely monitoring legislative decisions that impact the future of LSU. Your legislators represent YOU...Show them you care about LSU and they will to...

All state legislators can be accessed from this website, so register as a Tigers Advocate today!

## Membership Dues Renewal

Dues invoicing for all membership categories has been emailed as of the end of November, 2016. Please take a minute to check your email for your invoice and pay as soon as possible. If you have not received a dues invoice in your Inbox, please check your Spam, or call or email Denise ([denise@laca1.org](mailto:denise@laca1.org) or 337-945-3694) so she can get you another copy sent. The deadline of December 31, 2016 was stated on invoices, and it would be great if this date could be met, but dues invoices must absolutely be paid by March 31, 2017 to be included in the 2017 directory. THANKS for your prompt attention to this matter!!!

For information on membership in NAICC go to [www.naicc.org](http://www.naicc.org) or contact Allison Jones at [JonesNAICC@aol.com](mailto:JonesNAICC@aol.com) or Denise Wright at [wrightpme@aol.com](mailto:wrightpme@aol.com)

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