



Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association TURNROW TALK

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President's Column

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I am honored to have been given the opportunity to serve as your president. LACA is an invaluable organization for crop consultants in Louisiana. The information gleaned from updates, alerts, the annual meeting, and personal interactions provides a supply of knowledge that allows us to provide our customers with the most current and accurate data to manage their crops. Not only do we gain knowledge, we gain trusted friendships that we can lean on in these changing times. As we interact with one another we discover that we all have a lot of the same issues. It seems to be easy to be depressed in these changing times. It is good to know that we all have a base of support that can be leaned on to give us an encouraging word or just to listen when we have problems. We must do all we can to keep this organization viable. I would encourage those of you who have not held an office or been on a committee to get involved. I promise it will be greatly rewarding.

At the beginning of each year, I know we all sit and ponder what the upcoming year will be like. We probably never get close. We always hope for the best, but take whatever the year has to offer. Some years are uneventful; however, seems to be very few of those. Some years challenge us and we learn and grow in character. Then there are some years that are just nasty, which seems to be the norm lately. These years challenge us physically, mentally and emotionally. Each day we have to reach down and find the courage to face another day. It gets to a point when giving reports to clients brings a whirlwind of emotions. We are asked questions and given concerns that potentially leave livelihoods hanging in the balance. There comes times when wisdom is out the window and all we are running on is faith. But in the end all we have is faith. I was riding down the road one day after one of those many torrential downpours (about #20 in a row) and looked to the east and saw a double rainbow. I was reminded of who was in charge and His promise to provide for us and stand with us through our darkest hours. I found a great peace in that because we live in the greatest country, even with its faults, and we have an awesome God who is faithful even when we are not.

Before I go, I would like to thank Denise Wright and Roger Carter. Standing on the outside looking in there is no way you can see the amount of work and dedication these two put into this organization. I greatly appreciate their service and help while I was serving as President. We should all thank them for the time and energy they put into LACA.

Again, thank you for allowing me to serve as President. I appreciate your support and encouragement. Most of all, thank you for your friendship. I hope that you have a great year. God Bless you and your families.

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LACA Scholarships to be Awarded

Each year at the Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference, two to three scholarships are awarded to deserving students (undergraduate and graduate) studying to become agricultural professionals in one discipline or another. The LACA Executive Board and Scholarship Committee would like your help in recruiting applicants for the 2010 scholarships. \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded to at least two students in 2010. Applications can be found at <http://laagcon.org/LACA%20scholarship.pdf> and must be submitted to the Scholarship Committee by January 10, 2010. If you know of deserving students, please tell them about this great opportunity.

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Under Armour is the Enemy!

Sandy Stewart, Ph.D.

AgriThORITY, LLC

On a one-company crusade to rid the world of cotton and replace it with petroleum-based synthetic fiber, Under Armour expresses its corporate culture in the advertising campaign called “Cotton is the Enemy.” Under Armour CEO, Kevin Plank, has often been quoted as saying that “cotton is the enemy - you’ll hear that a lot around our office.”

Under Armour has made a name for itself in the apparel world by touting the superiority of its athletic gear that contains no cotton and only synthetic fibers. Unfortunately, they have gained a lot of traction. A quick Google search shows numerous blogs and messages by runners, outdoor sports enthusiasts, and athletes of all shapes that agree that cotton really is the enemy. They are convinced that cotton doesn’t breathe, keeps you cold, drags you down, and hampers your athletic prowess in general. One quote from CEO Plank even states that a cotton t-shirt can weigh as much as 2 pounds 3 oz when wet with sweat. Call me a skeptic, but that must be one sweaty huge man wearing a sheet instead of a t-shirt.

It’s a curious thing that in this day and time of being eco-conscious and mindful of living healthy, active lifestyles with a minimal environmental footprint, that petroleum-based synthetic fiber is replacing the natural alternative of cotton.

I’m reminded of a book written by David Brooks a few years back titled “The Bourgeois Bohemians.” In it, Brooks describes the quintessential environmentally and socially conscious, middle to upper income, modern day bohemian that strolls down the street in “active, outdoorsy wear” made of synthetic fibers. He looks like he has just returned from a trek up Mount Ranier and will probably go mountain biking later in the day. Never mind that he never really goes mountaineering, hasn’t run in weeks, and is on the way to his cubicle after stopping off at Starbucks for a double-latte’.

The book is really amusing but makes a great point. The vast majority of people have no real connection to or knowledge of what they put in their mouths or on their backs. They just do it so they can look and play the part. The “Bourgeois Bohemians” believe they are living a thoughtful environmentally-friendly lifestyle. The reality is they have given it little real consideration.

Under Armour has put forth the impression that if you want to be at your best in the great outdoors, then you must wear synthetic performance clothing. No consideration need be given to how it is made, or how renewable it really is.

I realize I’m making some broad strokes here. Sure, not everyone who runs, mountain bikes, goes rock climbing, or leads an active lifestyle does so with an eco-conscious mindset. Some do it simply to exercise and enjoy the activities. But, the notion of enjoying and preserving the great outdoors is undeniably part of the culture surrounding an active outdoor lifestyle where Under Armour targets its products. Therein lays the contradiction of enjoying and preserving the outdoors for an active lifestyle yet wearing 100% petroleum-based, non-renewable Under Armour for “maximum performance.”

Most of the patrons of Under Armour unwittingly live this contradiction because the marketing and ad campaigns have been so successful. Unfortunately, these individuals have not been properly educated by the cotton industry concerning the virtues of Storm Denim, Wicking Windows, and other cotton technology developed by Cotton Incorporated. If this same group were offered demonstrations of the utility of cotton fiber by CI, then they will never again believe that cotton is the enemy of an active lifestyle. In fact, it is likely that they would begin to believe that Under Armour’s non-renewable petroleum-based technology is the real controversial issue. Especially when considering the global economic and environmental consequences of using an energy resource for something as simple as clothing.

We might suspect that many of those who buy Under Armour clothing are simply poorly educated or caught up in the “hoopla” of the moment, but the worst offenders are those members of the cotton industry that have paid hard-earned cash for Under Armour. Consider this nugget of wisdom from a CNBC interview of our friend Kevin Plank of Under Armour: “Cotton is the enemy! That’s what our brand is about. To get consumers out of cotton.” Is this really a company from which cotton folks should be buying their t-shirts?

We have two opportunities to address this issue. The first is to wear only 100% cotton as often as possible. The second and most important task is to take every instance available to educate all segments of our populations about what cotton is. It is a 100% renewable fiber grown in an environmentally responsible way by the stewards of the land - the American cotton grower. Textile technology has developed uses for cotton that support and enhance an active lifestyle.

In contrast, Under Armour is petroleum based, synthetic, non-renewable, and even downright dangerous. This clothing could leave horrific burns if you stumble into your campfire on your next get-back-to-nature camping trip. In fact, the US Marine Corps currently does not allow anything but 100% cotton on patrol in Iraq due to the burn injuries suffered by Marines wearing Under Armour when an IED goes off. If it’s good enough for the Corps, then it’s good enough for us!

Support cotton, buy only 100% cotton clothes, and take every opportunity to let people know that Under Armour is the real enemy!

Strain Against Obama’s “Cap and Trade” Energy Policy

Sam Irwin

LDAF Press Secretary

Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain, D.V.M., said the proposed American Clean Energy Security Act that is currently being debated in Congress is not favorable for Louisiana or the national agriculture economic sector.

“Cap and Trade is in essence a tax on fossil fuels that will artificially increase the cost of energy and manufactured products,” Strain said. “The measure transfers those tax dollars to select individuals or groups in the hope that it will change private and corporate behavior. I think that is not good public policy.”

The bill calls for the federal government to place limits (caps) on how much greenhouse gas industry, including

agriculture, may release into the atmosphere. In theory, by using the cap and trade approach, generators of excess greenhouse gases who exceed the cap will be able to buy credits (trade) from economic sectors that sequester these gases.

“Louisiana farmers will be subject to caps because of the nature of their crops and the limits set by the federal government,” Strain said. “Our dairy and cattle operations as well as rice production will all be affected.”

“Of particular concern to state cattle operations is enteric fermentation, which is included in the greenhouse gas limit and accounts for 20 percent of the total limit on agricultural emissions. A proposed solution to reduce enteric fermentation is to alter the animals’ diets and receive credits for diet induced reductions. That implies that some farmers would be able to sell credits to heavy greenhouse gas emitting industries for a profit.”

“In reality, this creates an environment where many entities, not just farmers, will be in competition to sell their credits, but will ultimately lower the overall pool of funds available to farmers who may or may not have a chance to offset the added costs.”

“The legislation represents a net increased cost to the agricultural community and places Louisiana and United States agriculture at a disadvantage from a global trading standpoint.”

Strain said he would support a voluntary approach that allows agricultural producers to reduce greenhouse gases through a variety of methods.

“Soil carbon sequestration, methane and fertilizer management and voluntary carbon markets are all ideas that need to be looked at thoroughly,” Strain said. “The USDA Farm bill conservation programs, administered by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, have been very successful in helping farmers and other landowners to adopt best management practices like conservation tillage, nutrient management and water management.”

“The Louisiana Master Farmer Program has also been very successful in encouraging agricultural producers to implement total resource management system plans into their farming operations. These are the sort of programs that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon.”

“But, the main concern is that legislation should not hamper agriculture’s ability to provide abundant and safe food and fiber. American agriculture feeds the world and our government should do everything it can to ensure the United States maintains its preeminent agricultural position.”



Some Thoughts on My Career as a Pesticide Safety Specialist with the LSU AgCenter, Cooperative Extension Service

*Mary L. Grodner, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus*

“Farming is such a worthless pursuit, a mere laboring in a circle. You sow that you may reap, and you reap so that you can sow... nothing ever comes of it.”

STOBAEUS, Florilegium. Pt. xxxviii, 1.30 fl Fifth Century

It has been estimated that the first human farmers came into being about 12,000 years ago and arose in various parts of the world. Jericho was cultivating grain related to wheat and had domesticated goats and gazelles in about 7000 BCE. Around the same time the people in Northern Thailand domesticated beans, peas, gourds, and water chestnuts. In Mexico pumpkins and gourds were domesticated and people in the Near East practiced irrigation, planted nitrogen fixing crops and built grain silos. India and China were cultivating rice in around 3000 BCE.

No doubt the first farmers had to fight all sorts of pests - insects, disease, weeds and various varmints. We, as humans, may be at the “top of the food chain”, but we have no divine right to our food supply and must “fight” for it. I am fascinated by the various methods used by the classical Greeks and Romans; I don’t think any of it worked.

I grew up on a farm in Southwestern Georgia; the major crop was Shade Tobacco and one of my earliest memories is of the workers walking through the fields, picking the worms off and putting them in a bottle of diesel fuel. The only insecticides available were the various formulations of inorganic arsenic. Then World War II came and about the same time DDT made its appearance which changed pest control forever. Not too long after that regulations appeared! In 1906 the Pure Food Law was passed which stated that foods shipped in interstate commerce must be wholesome. The law was passed largely in response to Upton Sinclair’s novel, *The Jungle*, which was published in 1906. Next came the Federal Insecticide Act in 1910; this law mainly protected the farmer from substandard or fraudulent products. The publication of Rachael Carson’s book, *Silent Spring* in 1970 led directly or indirectly to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, & Rodenticide Act as amended in 1972 and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency. Production agriculture was changed forever. Please note that two of the most significant laws affecting production agriculture were enacted in the publication of two books. Victor Hugo is supposed to have said that “nothing is so strong as an idea whose time has come; armies cannot prevail against it.”

Regulations are not a product of 19th or 20th century American government- re-read The Torah or the first five books of the Christian Bible. The life of the early Hebrews was almost totally circumscribed by, in some instances, very severe regulations. Regulations are not usually anticipatory but are in response to some problem, perceived or real. However, education is a much less invasive and much more cost effective solution to problems than regulations are. People being humans and imperfect beings by their very nature, sometimes it takes more than education to get an idea across; therefore, there are times when regulations are necessary. It is my sin-

cere hope that all people who work with, and on the land, including farmers, share absolute wonder and amazement at the wonders of the natural world and consider its preservation as an absolute given. Most individuals also consider the protection of public health a very high priority. The control of arthropod vectors of human and other animal diseases is an amazing and for the most part an untold story. DDT probably saved more lives than any other single thing but was badly misused and this misuse helped the passage of regulations dealing with pesticide use. In 1526-1531 the monks of Troyes formally excommunicated the caterpillars that were plaguing the crops, but added that the interdict would be effective only for lands whose peasants had paid their church tithes! Isn't DDT much more effective?

The use of agricultural chemicals, however, will continue to be necessary to produce the food and fiber needed to feed, clothe, and house an ever expanding human population. Those same chemicals will be needed to protect humans and their livestock from arthropod transmitted diseases. Some individuals seemingly do not understand this; they subscribe to the view found in the Gospel of Mark in the Christian Bible (Mark 4: 26-29) "... a man scatters seed upon the ground; he goes to bed at night and gets up in the morning, and meanwhile the seed sprouts and grows - how, he does not know. The ground produces a crop by itself, first the blade, then the full ear, then the full grain in the ear..."

The key to continuing to have the chemicals available is really very simple - READ THE LABEL, UNDERSTAND THE LABEL, FOLLOW THE LABEL!

References and Further Readings:
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¹ Durant, W. 1957. *The History of Civilization: Part IV. The Reformation*. New York. Simon & Schuster P 850

Planning for Your Annual Conference

The LACA Executive Board, 2010 LATMC Program Planning Committee, and Governmental Affairs Committee met again in early October along with LSU AgCenter and USDA researchers and specialists to discuss important issues in agriculture, so that your annual conference can be the most informative and educational possible. From these general discussions and also crop specific roundtable discussions, ideas and topics for presentations are derived, as well as the best speaker(s) for the presentations.

This gathering is held to approximately 75 attendees in order to get the most done in a short period of time. Fol-

lowing this meeting, which has become known as the LACA Fall Retreat, the remainder of the conference program is planned via email and conference calls.

The “retreat” begins with a networking dinner on Thursday evening and concludes with lunch on Friday following the discussions. When the roundtable discussions are over and lunch has been served, the Program Planning Committee meets to put the first draft program together. Your Executive Director, Denise Wright, then takes the draft home to put the finishing touches on it over the next couple months.

Tradition is that the Commissioner of Agriculture and Chancellor of the AgCenter are invited guests to the networking dinner on Thursday evening. Commissioner Strain has graciously accepted and joined us for the past couple years and given updates on important issues within his department. Chancellor Richardson was unable to join us for dinner, but did make a special trip on Friday morning this year to thank LACA for all that was done on the AgCenter’s behalf during the budget crisis earlier this year. We appreciate so much the efforts of both!

If you’re interested in helping put together the 2011 LATMC, let us know your desire to serve. We can always use fresh, new ideas and we’ll put you to work!



Commissioner, Mike Strain, DVM talks with several retreat attendees during the social and networking dinner.



Harold Lambert leads the grain crops discussions during our “fall retreat”.



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For full details and application forms go to "naicc.org".

A Tribute to Chase Skipper

Roger Carter

Agricultural Management Services, Inc.



As an employer of young men and women, I have always been concerned about the safety of those under our charge. In 45 years of scouting and consulting, I have never experienced any worse event than what occurred this past summer.

Chase Skipper, 16, a summer employee with Agricultural Management Services, Inc., passed away Wednesday, July 22, 2009, from injuries received in a car wreck while on his way to work. He was a member of Sunnyside Church in Foulos where he was very active in the Youth Group. Chase was the type of young man that every father hopes his son would be. He was always eager to help anyone at anytime. And he always had a smile. He never had to be told what to do and even sought work as soon as he would finish a project.

Chase's parents, Linda and Kevin Skipper, are neighbors and friends. I consider Chase's grandfather, Raymond Skipper, one of my best friends. They are mournful, yet know that Chase's legacy will live on. And they are thankful for having such a great son and grandson.

Even at 16, Chase was a leader and one to which we had delegated the title of "Crew Chief". He was responsible enough that when he came from a field of cotton or soybeans, any one of AMS's consultants were assured of what was out there. And he expected his crew to do the same. Some say that putting a 16 year old in charge is too much and is irresponsible. But they didn't know Chase. Out of the hundreds of young men and women we have had the honor to work with over the years, he was one of the top three. And, he loved his work.

Most of you learned of the accident from Denise Wright when she emailed the LACA membership and friends of LACA. The compassion exhibited by many of you fellow consultants, dealers, reps, and others who called to wish us your condolences was phenomenal. And the cash contributions that many of you made to Chase's family will never be forgotten. Most of you did not know Chase or his family, but none the less, you showed your support.

From Chase's parents and from Chase's family here at AMS, we say thank you. Chase will never be forgotten.



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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