



# Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association

## Turn Row Talk

**Spring Issue 2022**

**Volume 32**

### A Message from our President

*Jeremy Babin*

*Calvin Viator, Ph.D. & Associates LLC*

Wow, what a roller-coaster ride it's been the past couple years and seems like the future years to come. I'm not only talking for myself, but everyone who lives in this world today. It was sure nice to see everyone at the LATMC conference in February after the cancellation in 2021. When I sit back and think of all those that lost the battle in this pandemic and those still fighting to hang on, I shouldn't be annoyed by all the inconveniences we have from the virus. Growing up we are taught about all the famines, plagues, and wars that changed the world forever, never thinking it would happen again during our lifetime. With the Ukraine situation now, how far are we from another war or world war?

Farmers in south Louisiana have been enjoying more favorable weather that has been much drier than last winter and spring. Many farmers are still feeling the effects of the record-breaking wet year of 2021. Sugarcane planting was delayed because of wet conditions and then for South east Louisiana hurricane Ida came ashore flattening the crop causing more billets to be planted. No problem, the industry has made huge advances with planting sugarcane by billets successfully. Problem is many areas didn't receive rainfall for six to eight weeks afterwards causing weak or failed stands. Farmers are way ahead of last year with field work and spring spraying. Plenty farmers have started fertilizing the sugarcane crop and making good progress even with the two rain events the last couple weeks. More producers are using coulter blades to apply fertilizer down the middle of the row instead of side dressing. Eight-foot row configuration started this trend and a few six-foot row guys began trying it. Seems like each year a few more farmers are getting a couple rigs to supplement the operation or going all in. As times change and technology evolves farmers continue to adapt in order to cover the acres needed to stay in business. With bean prices on the higher end, our soybean acres in sugarcane fallow rotation will increase this year to try to offset high input costs that are associated with having fallow ground. Overall, the sugarcane crop coming up is looking promising, although we had a light freeze on March 13 that set it back some.

We live such busy lives in these times that I and most of us lose sight on what is truly important. Family and people. I have served as an assistant fire chief the last eight years and became the fire chief on January 1, 2022. I'm very thankful for

the opportunity to serve the community I live in, and the members of the department. For a few years I was asked to serve on the LACA Board and would turn it down because I didn't feel I had the time to dedicate to the positions. After responding and assisting in many tragic events as a first responder I realized tomorrow isn't guaranteed, and you better live today to the fullest. My wife Cherisse, kids Claire and Andrew have always supported me, even though a lot of time is taken away from them. I enjoy going to the kids' soccer games, football games, track meets, and karate events because for a little while you forget all the deeds awaiting your attention. I sit here typing this article looking out the window at the two empty wooden rocking chairs on the front porch that the kids and I bought for my wife, Mother's Day last year thinking how nice it would be to go sit out before sunset. We have sat in them twice!

In closing, I would like to thank all of the LACA members for allowing me to serve as president. I've been able to make new connections with consultants and researchers from all corners of Louisiana that have experience in row crop production with abundance of knowledge to share. I wish all of you a safe and joyous growing season.

## Welcome New LACA Members!!!

### Affiliate

**Keith Burnell**

**Renee Castro**

**Andre Reis**

**Sammy Soignier**

### Sustaining

**AgXplore**

**Pivot Bio**

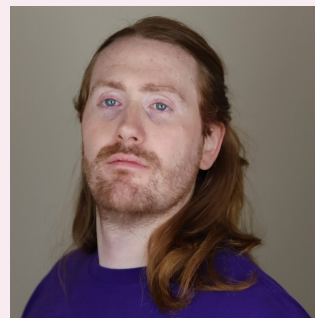
**Progeny Ag**

**Roots to Shoots**

**Stoller USA**

## 2022 LACA Scholarships

### **Colin Bonser (PhD)**



If anything can be said about Colin Bonser, it is that he is dedicated to his goals and driven to excel, shown by his academic history and achievements as a nontraditional student. He joined the U.S. Navy following his graduation of high school in 2007. For five years, he proudly served as a Hospital Corpsman where he received training as a surgical technologist to provide life-saving care. He was stationed at U.S. Naval Hospital Guam, then at Camp LeJeune, NC with 2<sup>nd</sup> Medical Battalion. In 2011, he deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. The U.S. Navy taught him invaluable experience in leadership, time management, and working under pressure.

His academic career began at Red Rocks Community College in Lakewood, CO separating from the U.S. Navy. He completed three semesters there and then transferred to CU Boulder where he was awarded an Associate's Degree in General Studies. While at CU Boulder, he traveled to Germany to study abroad, and then moved to Poland where he worked as a language tutor and lecturer at a private firm.

In 2018, he began his PhD program at LSU in Dr. Jeffrey A. Davis' Soybean Entomology Lab where his research interests include the use of nanoparticles as pest control tools. More specifically, he is looking at biopolymeric nanoparticles as an alternative pesticide and vehicle for administration of chemical active ingredients, while also elucidating the chronic effects and possible mechanisms of their action. His goal is to incorporate applied entomology and nanoscience to create a new field of study, which he has coined as "*nanoentomology*." His mentor, Dr. Davis, taught him that the goal of an applied entomologist in agriculture is to aid the farmer. Thus, his current research is focused on nanoparticles as alternative pest control tools and the lasting effects of the particles in the field and on the insect. Hopefully, his research will be able to benefit consultants by adding a new technology for their use as a tool in integrated pest management. It is his hope that his research will be utilized to bring nanoscience and integrated pest management into the new era of research and development—"nanoentomology."



### **Hector Hugo Fajardo Duran (MS)**

Hector is currently working on a MS in soil fertility and GIS in the school of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences. He received his BS from the Universidad Mayor de San Andres in Ag Engineering.

In the past, he worked as an irrigation systems management consultant, where he developed activities with many farmers' associations where he designed the irrigation plan and analyzed the water balance of the irrigated area. Moreover, he was also an extension specialist working with farmers to implement best agricultural practices that can help them to achieve their potential production. Now as a graduate research assistant, he hopes to gain new skills on how new agricultural technologies can enhance the sustainability of production systems. Under the tutelage of Dr. Brenda Tubana, he will use remote sensing devices to improve the adoption and understanding of cover cropping on sugarcane production cycle for a more viable and diversified system. His main career goal is to work for the increase in agricultural production in a more sustainable way, with a soil health and an environmentally friendly management perspective. In the near future, he would like to continue his education pursuing a Ph.D. degree in sustainable digital agriculture. Later, he would like to start his own consulting firm in agriculture and soil management because he is well versed in engaging with stakeholders and running government or international cooperation projects.



***Pictured with Colin Bonser is right, Dennis Long of Belchim Crop Protection, scholarship sponsor, and left, 2020-2021 LACA President, Blaine Viator, Ph.D.***

Sugarcane is one of the most important and successful row crops in Louisiana. Sugarcane is not only a vital industry for the state's economy but, it has tradition and history that dates back to the 18th century. The project that he is conducting at the LSU AgCenter Sugar Research Station in St. Gabriel was established in 2019. It is focused on improving soil health for sugarcane production. The

## **2022 LACA Scholarships (cont'd)**

main objective of this research is to determine the impact of planting method (broadcast vs. drill) and rate of cover crops on sugarcane yield and quality components. In addition, assessment on the effect on soil nutrients levels under different planting methods and rates of cover crops is part of the objective of this project. Moreover, he is evaluating the use of different remote sensing tools to predict cover crops biomass and potential nutrient turn over to soil, so the adoption of cover cropping would be greater. All these combined together will be essential to improving fertilizer management in sugarcane production with a beneficial impact to the environment, i.e., lower risk of losing nutrients to the environment.



***Pictured with Hector Duran is Ray and Dorothy Young, scholarship sponsors.***

### ***Sara Tarver (Undergrad)***



Sarah Tarver is a junior studying plant and soil systems at Louisiana State University. Her time studying and researching at LSU has inspired her to pursue a career in agriculture advocacy. Applying for this scholarship was motivated by her passion for bridging the gap between the agriculture industry and its many stakeholders, specifically those of non-agricultural backgrounds, in order to preserve our natural resources and ensure sufficient crop yields.

Growing up in Pointe Coupee Parish, her daily commute to Baton Rouge for the duration of her primary education was accompanied by rows of sugar cane, cattle pastures, and slowing down for the occasional combine on the road. In high school, she realized that her classmates did not share the same experiences and were unaware that their sugar was being harvested just across the Mississippi River. This sparked her interest in advocating for the agriculture industry within non-traditional communities.

While studying plant and soil systems at LSU, she has gained a multidimensional understanding of our land from the ground up. Engaging with topics such as soil health, botany, and sustainable crop production has allowed her to comprehend dense scientific findings and analyze the root cause of our problems.

Since January of 2021, Sara has been conducting undergraduate research in LSU's Plant Pathology Department with LSU Plant Pathologist Dr. Raj Singh and LSU Consumer Horticulturist Dr. Heather Kirk-Ballard. Her research project evaluates the antimicrobial effects of a natural fungicide derived from essential oils to prevent southern blight fungus infections in industrial hemp. In 2020, over 80% of the Louisiana pilot hemp crop reported complete crop loss and evidence of southern blight, according to a 2020 USDA Crop Data Report. This negatively affected the farmers invested in the Louisiana industrial hemp industry, the environment, and identified a desperate need for a solution before Louisiana falls further behind in the hemp industry.

Since March of 2021, the examined plant-based fungicide has been 100% effective throughout in-vitro trials and promising strong antimicrobial action. She is eager to begin testing the product in plant trials over the semester with hopes of providing a solution for Louisiana hemp farmers, who have no fungicides labeled for use on industrial hemp preventing southern blight.

Preceding her undergraduate research, in the summer of 2020, Sara had the opportunity to travel to the Midwest interviewing farmers and ranchers about mental health, succession planning, and sustainable land management practices with the National Grazing Lands Coalition. This on-the-ground work emphasized the need for making producer's personal testimonies easily accessible to educate other landowners, advocate for the needs of land managers at the state and national level, and communicate the importance of land stewardship. Additionally, she had the opportunity to work collaboratively with a professional videographer, Taylor Frey, to create media content emphasizing the importance of land and soil conservation while connecting industry stakeholders with producers first-hand.

## **2022 LACA Scholarships (cont'd)**

Furthermore, her previous internship at the LSU Sweet Potato Research Station allowed her to work with Louisiana producers on a personal level and highlighted the importance of extension work. From this internship, Sara became aware that problem-specific technical assistance is necessary for establishing our research findings into long-term practice. Farmers and ranchers manage the majority of our natural lands; thus, it is our role to educate and promote strong land stewardship practices by navigating difficult conversations, working first-hand with landowners, and building relationships across diverse communities of stakeholders.

Upon finishing her BS degree in 2023, she plans to attend graduate school and earn a master's degree in agriculture economics or agriculture communications to strengthen her abilities to convey the importance of land stewardship and achieve strong policy outcomes at the local, state, and national level.



***Sara Tarver with sponsor, Louisiana Land Bank representative, Robert Crotty and 2020-2021 LACA President, Blaine Viator, Ph.D.***

### ***Katie Paterson (Undergrad)***

Agriculture has always been of great interest to Katie, and since her time at LSU she has realized she wants to be a part of the industry and make an impact. She works for the Louisiana State University AgCenter in the School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences, specifically in the Weed Science Department. Working in a research lab has opened countless opportunities for her future and has provided her with invaluable relationships with mentors. Throughout Katie's time here she has found that she has a seat at the table in the agricultural industry. Research has become her focus and what will continue to be her focus as she begins graduate school in June 2022. She will be starting her PhD in weed science and ecology where she will investigate and compare all methods of harvest weed seed control, an alternative non-chemical approach to weed management. As she prepares for her future studies in graduate school, she envisions the impact that they will have on the industry as this is vital information for today's farmers and growers. There is nothing more important to her than doing anything she can to provide farmers and growers with the tools necessary to succeed. She feels everyone deserves a seat at the table in agriculture and she is happy to finally have found hers.

Some of Katie's awards and recognitions include:

Distinguished Undergraduate Researcher Candidate (2021)

Dean's List (2020, 2021)

Elected Louisiana State University Agriculture Student Association Secretary (2020-2021)

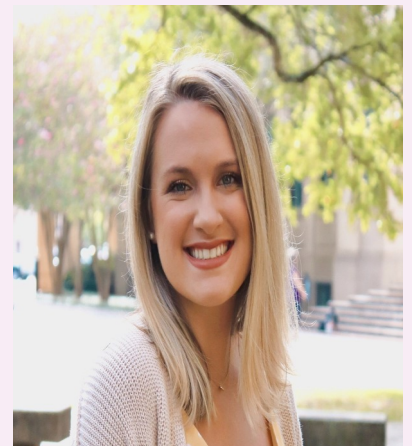
A. Wilbert's Sons Undergraduate Research Internship Program (2020)

National FFA American Degree recipient (2020)

John Jachetta Weed Science Society of America Undergraduate Research Award recipient (2019)

Zachary High School Student of the Year Finalist (2019)

Louisiana FFA Association State Secretary (2018-2019)



***Katie Paterson pictured above, was unable to attend the 2022 LATMC. Grady and Barbara Coburn of Pest Management Enterprises sponsored her scholarship.***

**New LSU AgCenter Faculty**  
***Submitted by: Dr. Michael Salassi***



**Dr. Tri Setiyono** – Assistant Professor of Agronomy,  
School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences,  
Baton Rouge, LA

**Degrees:**

B.S. – Agronomy, Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia, 1999

M.S. – Agronomy, Kansas State University, 2003

Ph.D. – Agronomy, University of Nebraska, 2007

**AgCenter job responsibilities:**

Research/extension program in remote sensing, crop modeling and artificial intelligence in precision ag

Research/extension program in climate-smart and environmentally friendly agronomic crop production practices



**Dr. Andre Reis** – Assistant Professor of Agronomy,  
Dean Lee Research Station, Alexandria, LA  
Started ***December 1, 2021***

**Degrees:**

B.S. – Agronomy, University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), 2007

M.S. – Crop Science, Federal University of Tocantins (Brazil),  
2013

Ph.D. – Crop Science, University of Sao Paulo, 2017

Worked as a crop consultant form 2008-2015

Agronomy leader for crop innovation with John Deere form  
2017-2018

**AgCenter job responsibilities:**

Research program in sugarcane and soybean agronomy and ecophysiology

Research appointments at Dean Lee and Iberia Research Stations

**New LSU AgCenter Faculty (cont'd)**

*Submitted by: Dr. Michael Salassi*

**Dr. Xi Zhang** – Assistant Professor of Soil Science

Red River Research Station, Bossier City, LA

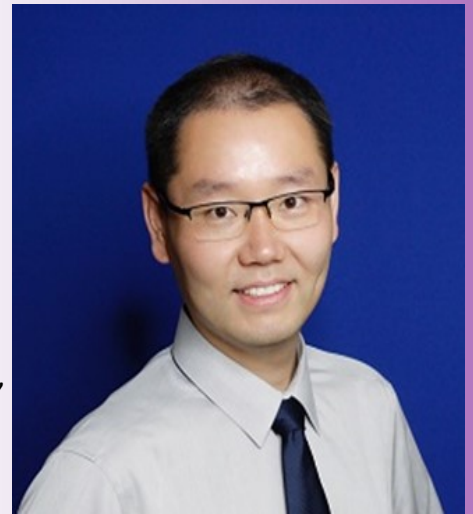
Started **Dec. 1, 2021**

Degrees:

B.S. – Environmental Engineering, Anhui University, China, 2019

M.S. – Environmental Engineering & Soil Microbiology, Zhejiang University,

Ph.D. – Soil Science, University of Kentucky, 2019



Before joining the LSU AgCenter, he worked as a post doc researcher at Oregon State University

AgCenter job responsibilities:

- Soil physics
- evaluating the influence of cropping systems and agricultural management on soil properties and their overall impact on soil health and water use efficiency



**Dr. Connor Webster** – Assistant Professor of Weed Science

School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Science, LA

Start date - **Feb. 15, 2022**

Degrees:

B.S. – Agronomy and Soils, Auburn University, 2017

M.S. – Weed Science, L.S.U., 2019

Ph.D. – Weed Science, L.S.U., 2022

AgCenter job responsibilities:

Rice weed science research, extension and teaching



## **Agriculture Today**

**by Commissioner Mike Strain, DVM**

Never before in history has the world been so dependent on industrial agriculture. We find ourselves today in the midst of a worldwide pandemic with social and political unrest across the globe. Once again, we are witness to an escalating war in Europe with the fate of many people hanging in the balance.

Oil is over \$100 per barrel, road diesel over \$4.00 per gallon, nitrogen fertilizer reaching over \$1,250 per ton, and food costs the highest in history. Yesterday, I bought a whole chicken for Sunday dinner for \$11.18.

When we analyze the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE), it is abundantly clear that production/supply/demand estimates are almost parallel and equal in most major commodities, with some commodities, i.e., cotton, being consumed much faster than it is being produced.

Of great concern today is Russia, Belarus, and China, who account for over 53.4% of the world's potash production. By most estimates, the US imports approximately 50% of the nitrogen and over 80% of the potash fertilizer that it uses. Recent reports indicate that the US is going to increase its domestic production of potash by 19% per year through 2025 with total usage increasing only 1.6% per year during that same time. Total US fertilizer utilization is estimated today at 10 percent of worldwide consumption, versus 25% in 1961, 18% in 1980, and 14% in 2000.

In addition to weather and market instability, we must now address input costs and availability as never before. As my father used to say, we had better put a sharp pencil on the balance sheet. Reliable information is critical to proper decision making. We must place additional scrutiny on all costs and strive for greater efficiency and productivity in every aspect of our operations. Commodity prices will rise, driven by the global economy and supply/demand ratios. It is also important that we work hand in hand with our consultants and bankers to weather this storm until we reach calmer and more stable times.

On a very positive note, the United States of America is the world's largest exporter of food accounting for over one out of three acres of our production. The world desperately needs our grains, meats, and other food products, and is willing to pay for it. Our production is wholesome, safe, reliable, and fully deliverable on a regimented timetable. American productivity and stability are keys to our success and essential to feeding the world. Additionally, we are continuing to make record significant public and private investments in our ports and export infrastructure. We are just beginning to see the positive results of these investments whose dividends will increase exponentially over time. Further, science, technology, and seed varieties are advancing at an incredible pace.

We must lean forward and embrace every aspect of current and emerging technology and be unapologetic about agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry on an industrial scale. Without us, the world will starve.

By every projection, the trend in increased consumption versus production will continue. This will ensure stronger markets with enhanced prices for years to come. But first, together we must weather the storm.

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

### **NAICC Crawfish Boil on the Hill and Legislator Visits**

**by Denise Wright, LACA Executive Director**

The NAICC Executive Board and other members were back in Washington, DC last week for the return of the Crawfish Boil on the Hill and held numerous visits with our legislators. The NAICC Leadership Program inspired by our own **Mr. Ray Young**, hosted two young leaders in agriculture, Summer Theus and Derek Potratz, who I understand represented NAICC very well on the Hill. Yours truly was asked to be a mentor to Summer who will visit Pest Management Enterprises in late summer to learn about private contract research. Below is a photo of Mr. Ray, Derek, and Summer visiting with Congresswoman Julia Letlow in her DC office.



## Remembering Those Gone Too Soon

We are not promised tomorrow...I personally know so many who have lost their lives, some very young lives, to Covid, and others who have succumbed to long illnesses, or sudden death by heart attack or some other fateful event.

Nelson Prochaska of R&D Research Farm, a LACA Associate member for many years, was one of those who passed away suddenly a few months ago. Nelson left behind a wife and grandchildren who adored him.



Let's continue to keep those who grieve the loss of their loved ones close in our hearts and prayers.

## LACA Supports GAIAC

*by Denise Wright, LACA Executive Director*

The Global Alliance of Independent Agricultural Consultants (GAIAC) is made up of independent crop consultants and researchers from several different countries, the United States, Canada, Brazil, the UK, Australia, and France to name a few. This organization was formed by a handful of consultants attending the NAICC Annual Meeting a few years back. An annual meeting of the Board of Directors is held each year at the NAICC annual meeting and the directors meet frequently online.

LACA members attending the 2022 Business Meeting held at our annual meeting in Marksville this year voted to support GAIAC as a sustaining member. A couple of us are also individual members of GAIAC and participate in discussions via WhatsApp, a free mobile app that allows members to send pictures, articles, alerts, etc. Just recently, we kept in touch with a member from the UK who was in Ukraine when the Russians started bombing. We were able to follow him until he had made it safely across the border into Romania. I would encourage any of our members who are interested to join GAIAC as individual members and hook up with us on WhatsApp. If you're interested, let me know if I can help you get involved!



## LACA Joins the NCC as an Affiliate Member

A few months ago, the LACA Executive Board made the decision to join the National Cotton Council as an Affiliate member. Dr. Don Parker is the Executive Director of the NCC. For more information on the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, go to [www.trustuscotton.org](http://www.trustuscotton.org) or contact Don at [dparker@cotton.org](mailto:dparker@cotton.org) or 901-604-0402. **Hank Jones** and **Rogers Leonard** represent LACA within the NCC, so you can also pick their brains on what the Cotton Trust Protocol is all about. In a nutshell, the mission is to reach all cotton growers, and explain this effort to preserve the U.S. cotton market. Do your part to sustain agriculture!

## Change of Venue for 2023 LATMC

*by Denise Wright, LACA Executive Director*

Well, plans do change, as we saw unexpectedly last year when we had to cancel our annual meeting completely. The 2021 venue, the Randolph Riverfront Center and Holiday Inn Downtown host hotel were gracious allowing us to bow out of our contracts. Since LACA had already signed a contract with Paragon for 2022, we, in good faith planned to hold our 2023 meeting in Alexandria at the riverfront center with host hotel Holiday Inn Downtown. Due to Covid and possibly other factors, it does not appear that either the riverfront center or hotel can honor the contract tentatively agreed upon last year. Costs have gone up significantly and arrangements that were firmed up last year cannot be honored in 2023, so the LACA Executive Board has made the decision to return to Paragon for the foreseeable future.

Paragon has been good to LACA, and although I know there are a few who really don't care for the casino environment, the positives outweigh the negatives here. It is Paragon's hope, as it is ours, that things will have returned to somewhat more normalcy in 2023 with more restaurants opening up, and operating fully at least while we are occupying the premises.

I, as well as others were excited about a new venue with a change of scenery every other year or so, and we're not saying it won't happen at some point, but for now, we have decided to stay put and allow Paragon to continue helping us to hold an excellent conference. I thought things went very well this year, and those areas that need improvement are being worked on (hoping not to have those long registration lines in 2023). Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or comments concerning the annual meeting venue. I'm always happy to discuss this or anything else concerning LACA with our members.

**For information on membership in NAICC contact  
Allison Jones at [allisonjones@naicc.org](mailto:allisonjones@naicc.org) or  
Denise Wright at [denise@laca1.org](mailto:denise@laca1.org) or  
go to [www.naicc.org](http://www.naicc.org)**



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