



Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association

Turn Row Talk

Spring Issue 2025

Volume 35

A Message from the Executive Director

Denise Wright

The 2025 Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference was very well attended with a headcount of almost 300! The LACA Executive Board (XB), Governmental Affairs Committee (GAC), and LATMC Program Planning Committee (PPC) has already started working on topics and speakers for the 2026 annual consultants' meeting. This year we are trying something a little different in that small crop-focused committees of 2-3 will meet via Zoom or otherwise quarterly, if not more often, to discuss and determine what topics are of utmost importance to our consultants' membership and find speakers who are knowledgeable and proficient in speaking to those topics. One reason for going this route is to ensure we make contact with speakers early enough to get on their calendars. Below are listed the committees and their email addresses...please contact them with any fresh and pertinent ideas you may have for specific crops. If you have ideas for the general sessions, please relay those to me or anyone listed below, and we will put them in front of the XB, GAC, and PPC. THANKS for your help!!!

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Walking and Talking Fields

Consultant's Audio Blog

By now, maybe you've seen and/or heard the weekly consultants' blog, *Walking and Talking Fields*. With the help of our friend, Don Molino of LA Agri-News Network (Daily Voice), we've been able to interview two consultants, usually one from each end of the state, just about every week since the growing season began. We'll continue these blogs throughout the season so we can report on yields across the state. If you're a consultant, or a member of the ag community, and have something to contribute, please let me know and we'll certainly consider featuring you in an upcoming blog.



Watch your email during the early part of each week for an email from denise@laca1.org, and let us know what you think about the consultants' blogs.

Upcoming Field Days

- June 24th - H. Rouse Caffey Rice Station Field Day
Rayne, LA
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- June 11th - LSU AgCenter South Farm Rice Field Day
Crowley, LA
8:00 a.m.
- July 16th - 42nd Annual Sugarcane Field Day
St. Gabriel, LA
8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

For more, <https://www.lsuagcenter.com/events>



April 2025

Hello everyone...

Since January, many things have been moving at an incredibly fast pace. As I sit down to write this article, the latest national news hints that interest rates may be coming down. Tariffs, with the exception of tariffs placed on China, are paused and being renegotiated. Additionally, China and the United States are in negotiations, and soybean prices are moving up. President Trump has publicly stated that he will not try to fire Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, and the economy is at the very top of his priorities.

In addition, USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins has announced that she will markedly restructure the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to make the organization more efficient and responsive to the needs of America's farmers. Many federal programs have been paused or eliminated, thus affecting everything from local food supply chains, to soil and water conservation districts, and many programs in between. We are working diligently on a daily basis to rapidly analyze these changes and make any necessary adjustments to the programs involved.

The state legislature is also in session. There are a number of bills that we are a part of, either as department bills or upon the request of the legislature. Some of these bills include SB 32, by Senator Robert Allain, which will allow farmers to use industrially produced waste stream byproduct - gypsum, if it is given to them free of charge and provides for testing and a limitation of liability to the farmer for placing it in their fields.

HB 615, by Representative Bret Geymann, provides for the regulation of new solar facilities by the Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources. It requires letters of clearance from both the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, who is charged with certifying that the project would not cause unreasonable or irreparable harm to critical or protected natural habitat or species, and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, who is charged with analyzing whether the proposed site would utilize high value agricultural lands, farmlands of local importance, or lands the conversion of which would have a detrimental impact on the economy. The LDAF is further charged with determining whether the proposed site is located on the least agriculturally productive portions of the proposed site and whether feasible alternatives exist or have been considered.

HB 638, by Representative Kimberly Coates, establishes agricultural conversion fees for large-scale solar developments. This bill directs the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry to assess a fee on solar power generation facilities with a footprint of ten acres or more. Fees collected can only be used for the costs incurred by the department during the letter of clearance process under HB 615 and for the costs to replace or otherwise mitigate the loss of agricultural resources being

converted for large-scale solar development. The mitigation process will consider the average yield and value per acre, as well as the cost to replace these acres, and place them back into production at another site.

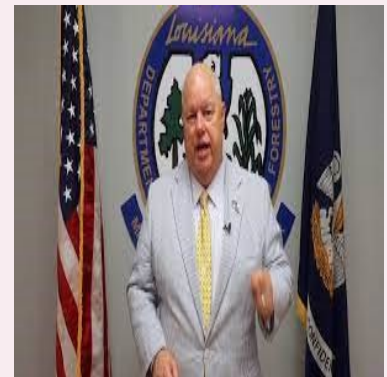
HB 652, by Representative Timothy Kerner, provides for seafood safety and testing. Specifically, this legislation streamlines the seafood licensing and testing process by transferring the Seafood Safety Task Force and consolidating the authorities which currently reside under the Office of Culture, Recreation and Tourism to the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, under the Office of Weights and Measures.

In addition to these bills, one of the most talked about bills is SB 14, by Senator Patrick McMath. SB 14 is known as Louisiana's "Make America Healthy Again" (MAHA) Bill. This legislation prohibits the sale of ultra processed foods to students in schools, and further defines what ingredients are not allowed. Secondly, this bill requires physicians and physician assistants practicing family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics & gynecology, to complete continuing education on nutrition and metabolic health.

This bill also requires a warning label for disclosure of artificial colors, certain additives, and other ingredients listed by manufacturers if they are banned in Australia, Canada, the European Union, or the United Kingdom. Additionally, this bill provides for disclosure of seed oil use by food establishments, and restrictions on soft drinks that contain natural or artificial sweeteners available under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This is a very comprehensive bill, with similar bills being introduced in other states with the goal of establishing uniform national standards after being ratified in multiple states.

Finally, more than 200 insurance bills have also been filed. All this in a fiscal session.

And there's much more to come, so stay tuned.....



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Ray and Dorothy Young Endowed Student Award

Schlyer Lee Thibodeaux, LSU College of Agriculture

The 2025 recipient of the Ray and Dorothy Young Endowed Graduate Student Award in Field Crop Integrated Pest Management, Schlyer Thibodeaux, was honored at the recent Louisiana Agricultural Technology and Management Conference hosted by the Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association.

Thibodeaux is a doctoral student in entomology under the mentorship of LSU AgCenter sugarcane and rice entomologist Blake Wilson. Her current focus of study is on the Mexican rice borer in Louisiana sugarcane. Mexican rice borer is an invasive species that threatens to cause >\$200 million in annual revenue losses to Louisiana's sugarcane and rice industries. Her work will be the first comprehensive research effort of this pest in Louisiana sugarcane. The research findings will directly benefit Louisiana crop consultants working in sugarcane as they adapt pest management strategies to the species. Particularly, it aims to determine if the scouting practices used for decades in managing a similar pest (the sugarcane borer) will be effective for the Mexican rice borer. The majority of her research will be conducted on commercial sugarcane farms working directly with growers and crop consultants.

Following graduation, Thibodeaux says her goals are to mentor the next generation of agriculture and continue the work of her mentors. She explains, "I hope to serve as an agricultural extension agent, where I can apply my PhD training and critical thinking to both familiar and new challenges. My goal is to connect scientific and interdisciplinary insights with practical applications, helping to deliver efficient and economically viable solutions to advance Louisiana's agricultural sector".

Thibodeaux is a native of Prairieville, LA, and was regularly exposed to horticultural sciences growing up. Her passion for pest management became evident after an industry internship and numerous valuable mentorships.

"This is by far the most significant award I've been given in my academic career. This award not only supports graduate students committed to the betterment of Louisiana agriculture, but it represents Mr. Ray and Mrs. Dorothy's dedication to serving producers and advocacy for the state's agriculture industry," Thibodeaux said. "Receiving this award is truly an honor."

Dr. Charles Winstead, well deserving and honored recipient of the Louisiana Agricultural Hall of Fame Award is shown with many of his former students...crop consultants, producers, crop specialists, and researchers at his induction during the 2025 Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference → → →



Schlyer scouting for MRB in sugarcane and rice fields



From left, Jesse Young, Ms. Dorothy Young, Schlyer Lee Thibodeaux, recipient of the Ray and Dorothy Young Endowed Assistantship, and Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter Executive Associate Vice President and Director.

Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Fame Award



2025 LACA Scholarships



My name is **Gavin Sparks**, I am currently a student at LSU pursuing a Master of Science in weed science through the School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences. Since the day I was born, row crop farming has had a significant impact on my life. The passion I have for agriculture began on a small farm in Arkansas where I was born and raised. My family's long history of farming inspired me to continue education in hopes of creating sustainable solutions for today's farmers. In May of 2024, I received my bachelor's degree in Agronomy (Integrated Crop Management) from Mississippi State University.

While at MSU I ranked in the top 6 students majoring in Agronomy every semester along with being ranked in the top 3 students for six of those semesters. I also completed nearly half of the graduate level hours required to earn a master's degree simultaneously. In addition, I became certified in Precision Ag and learned the importance of sustainable farming practices for the agriculture industry's future. Upon graduation I was awarded Summa Cum Laude honors and nominated for a national student recognition program recognizing outstanding seniors in Agronomy, Crop, Soil, & Environmental Science. In addition to these achievements, I participated in multiple extracurricular activities including Agronomy club, Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, Pinelake church, and many more.

I became interested in agricultural research after working as a farm hand for multiple summers. My farming experience led to the opportunity to do two summer internships with Syngenta. The last two years of my undergraduate degree I served as a general assistant to Syngenta's senior research and development scientist of Arkansas, David Black, evaluating a wide variety of trials across the state. This learning experience led me to believe that I would be unsatisfied in any other field of work.

At LSU, I am fortunate to be working with a new herbicide active ingredient for use in rice. At this point in the development phase, not much was known of this active ingredient as this was the first year of research at the University level. In year one, I conducted trials that will directly impact labelling decisions in terms of compatibility with other herbicides, rates, and spectrum of control. In weed science one of our biggest challenges tends to be herbicide resistance. The introduction of a new herbicide will provide the

rice industry with a tool to delay and prevent herbicide resistance. In order to maximize the use of a new herbicide, applied research must be conducted prior to release to provide growers with the best recommendations.



Ms. Dorothy and the late Mr. Ray Young sponsored the Masters scholarship. Shown with Gavin and Ms. Dorothy is her son, Jesse.



Ethan Ward wrote...Ever since I can remember I was on a farm. My grandfather was a small acreage farmer who I used to help from time to time in the summer. Helping him put out polypipe, punching holes, and learning how to drive tractors was a big part of my summers during my preteen years. Once I got a little older my father, who is a consultant, started having me work for him. Ever since I was 12, I've been riding around looking at crops from cotton to rice and even checking some pastures for armyworms along the way too. Consulting has been one of the biggest parts of my life over the last 9 years. I love being out in the fields and observing what is going on whether it may be insects, disease, weather, or even other plants to find the best way to improve yield and profit for the farmer. Over the last few years, I've had to really think about what I want to do going forward and how I want to spend the rest of my life, and in all of the dreams I've had being a consultant has been the one constant in all of them.

Robert Crotty (left) represented Louisiana Land Bank, sponsor of the undergrad scholarship awarded to Ethan Ward.



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Cade Richmond writes...I have been raised around agriculture my whole life. My grandmother was the first licensed female crop broker in the state of Louisiana. During my high school summers, I worked at the Macon Ridge AgCenter and for Sullivan’s Veterinary Clinic. I feel like all the work experience I have had has helped me gain a better understanding of sustainable farming practices. I have learned the importance of soil health and crop rotation.

While attending college, I have worked part-time for the Franklin Parish Sheriff’s Department, and in that capacity have worked with several programs, such as ‘Stay on the Court, not in Court’ and ‘Senior Citizens of Franklin Parish Triad Events’. This has helped in developing my communication and leadership skills. This past summer, I took a break from the sheriff’s dept. and worked for Ward Crop Consulting, I was a scout checking crops for insects and Disease. I learned many things working for Mr. Chris Ward.

Chris Ward, 2024 LACA President presents Cade Richmond with an undergraduate scholarship sponsored by the Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association.



Update of the 2025 Regular Legislative Session

April 30th, 2025

Blaine Viator, Rogers Leonard

2025 LACA Governmental Affairs Committee

The 2025 Regular Legislative Session convened on April 14th. There were quite a few bills pre-filed that gave us time to review the proposed legislation that would impact Louisiana agriculture. This is a brief synopsis of those bills that the LACA Governmental Affairs Committee is watching and working on in conjunction with Louisiana Farm Bureau, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and various commodity groups.

SB 14 – Senator Patrick McMath: This is what’s known as the “MAHA” bill. It is a rather lengthy bill that requires food labeling for unhealthy ingredients, restrictions on public schools, restaurant posting requirements, and other health related initiatives. We have been made aware that the author copied a bill currently in the Texas legislature. Of utmost concern is that this bill specifically lists the herbicide atrazine and requires it to be labeled on food products as a “banned substance”. First, atrazine is not a banned substance in the U.S. by the EPA nor the World Health Organization, and it is not a food additive. Louisiana Senators friendly to agriculture were able to convince the author to remove atrazine from the bill based on the scientific conclusions of the EPA. The bill was heard in the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare on April 30th. In the amendments submitted, atrazine was removed as promised, and no other pesticides were added. Of greater concern, the same bill in Texas (<https://legiscan.com/TX/text/SB25/id/3170989>) is much further along in the process, and not only does atrazine remain in the bill, ***but glyphosate was recently added in committee.*** These bills in Louisiana and Texas have the whole country watching closely. The EPA regulates pesticide labeling through FIFRA, and the FDA regularly tests food to make sure pesticide residues do not exceed established tolerances in our food supply.

Word is out that RFK Jr. will be flying down here to support these bills. Our LACA governmental affairs committee, LA Farm Bureau, and commodity groups will be watching closely to make sure that any attempts to add glyphosate to these bills will be contested aggressively. This is very important, so if we call in the cavalry, please take the time to make your voice heard.

<https://legis.la.gov/legis/BillInfo.aspx?i=247976>

SB 32 – Senator Robert Allain: Provides for the limitation of liability related to utilization of byproduct gypsum. This bill recently passed the Senate unanimously and now heads to the House. With soil sulfur levels plummeting due to EPA and DEQ air quality standards, crops grown in Louisiana are requiring more and more sulfur fertilization each year. Many industrial plants have stockpiles of gypsum (calcium sulfate) that are a liability to them and very costly to dispose of in landfills. This bill would create a testing program through LDAF and if the gypsum byproduct passes the standards set by LDAF, it would create a layer of indemnification for both the supplier and the landowner/grower utilizing the gypsum.

<https://legis.la.gov/legis/BillInfo.aspx?i=248087>

Corn Disease Identification and Management

Boyd Padgett, Trey Price
LSU AgCenter Plant Pathologists

HB 615 – Representative Brett Geymann: Provides for regulation of solar facilities. This will be one of the most contentious bills in the legislature this year related to agriculture. The bill attempts to establish statewide restrictions on industrial solar projects. It also would require that the Commissioner of Agriculture approve/disapprove if it is determined the solar facility would remove productive agricultural land from the local economy.

The bill passed through the house Committee on Natural Resources and Environment, but that was expected as the author Brett Geymann is also chair of that committee. There was extensive opposition from landowners, energy companies, etc. in the form of red cards and testimony in the committee meeting. You can watch the archived video of that committee hearing here:

https://www.house.louisiana.gov/H_Video/VideoArchivePlayer?v=house/2025/apr/0423_25_NR

To read the bill and follow through its progression, the below link will keep you updated:

<https://legis.la.gov/legis/BillInfo.aspx?s=25RS&b=HB615&sbi=y>

SB 229 – Senator Blake Miguez: Will impose significant state oversight on funding provided to state entities from foreign adversary countries. The LSU Ag Center would be affected through research regarding technology from Syngenta, ADAMA, and others. It would also prohibit the LSU Ag Center or other state universities from purchasing DJI drones.

<https://legis.la.gov/legis/BillInfo.aspx?i=248752>

HB 125 – Representative Dodie Horton: Provides for protections, storage, and access of genomic information. We are not sure if this will impact Louisiana colleges. We have sent this to the LSU Ag Center. It would prevent using any genomic mapping/sequencing equipment manufactured in foreign adversary countries. Depending on the equipment currently being used, it could impact variety breeding programs.

<https://legis.la.gov/legis/BillInfo.aspx?s=25RS&b=HB125&sbi=y>

The LACA Governmental Affairs Committee encourages all our members to remain active and vigilant in the state legislature on ag related issues. Below is the link to the Louisiana Legislature Home Page. Create a personal account and you can mark certain bills and committee meetings to keep an eye on. You will get email updates when a particular bill sees any activity. And as always, do not hesitate to reach out to your local legislators and voice your opinions. The more they hear from us, the better chance we have regarding legislation that would be detrimental to agriculture.

<https://legis.la.gov/legis/home.aspx>

Holcus spot/paraquat drift

Symptoms for Paraquat drift and Holcus spot are similar and are difficult to distinguish from each other. Symptoms appear as round to oval, light tan to white spots with or without yellow halos. Generally, if a drift pattern (gradient) is observed, if affected areas are large and more jagged than round, or if secondary fungi are within lesions, it is likely paraquat drift (Figure 1). If the distribution is random, the spots appear within 48 hours of a thunderstorm, and water-soaking is observed, it is likely holcus spot (Figure 2). The disease is favored by warm (76-86°F), wet weather. Microscopic observation of holcus spot may reveal bacterial streaming, as the disease is caused by *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *syringae*. Fungicides are not effective. Both issues are usually of minor concern.

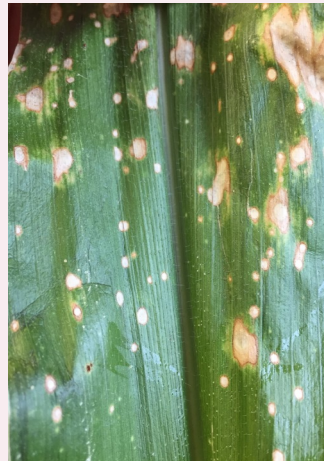


Figure 1. Paraquat (Gramoxone) drift



Figure 2. Holcus spot

Common rust

Common rust may be the first disease found in corn fields and usually occurs in the lower-to-mid-canopy. Pustules of common rust are brick red to dark orange, somewhat elongated, and will appear on both leaf surfaces as seen below. Common rust will progress during relatively cool temperatures (60-75°F) combined with rainy weather or heavy dews (6 hours of leaf wetness), and cloudy weather; however, very rarely are fungicide applications warranted for common rust. Warmer temperatures (>80°F) will greatly slow common rust development.



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Southern rust

Southern rust pustules are more orange than brick red, usually not as elongated, and usually appear on the upper surface of leaves (Figure 5). This disease develops during high humidity/dews (at least 4 hours of leaf wetness) and warm temperatures (80-90°F) and can continue to develop throughout the growing season. Like common rust, the disease usually initiates in the lower-to-mid-canopy. The disease can reach the upper-canopy during conditions favorable for development. Fungicides may be justified but should be made on a field-by-field basis. The genetic resistance of the hybrid and growth stage (post tassel) and current environmental conditions are factors to consider prior to applying a fungicide.



Figure 5. Southern rust

Northern corn leaf blight

Northern corn leaf blight (NCLB) is a disease usually seen every year in susceptible hybrids. This disease will usually appear in susceptible hybrids in fields following corn with reduced tillage. Disease development is favored when temperatures are 64-80°F during wet, humid weather. Initial symptoms (1-6 inch cigar-shaped lesions) are usually in the lower/mid canopy. As the disease progresses the center of the lesions will appear dirty (black sooty). The disease will progress slowly during dry weather, and more quickly during regular rainy periods. Most of the time fungicide applications are not needed for NCLB. However, severe disease may occur in susceptible hybrids following corn in reduced tillage situations. These are the fields that need to be watched closely.



Curvularia leaf spot

Curvularia leaf spot is a relatively new disease. It was first reported in the U.S. in 2017. Symptoms appear as small tan colored lesions (1/16-1/8 inch) with dark margins. Mature lesions may be surrounded by a light-yellow halo. This is best seen when the leaf is held up to light. Disease development is favored by warm, humid conditions. The fungus overwinters in corn debris. Fungicides are not labeled for this disease, but there is resistance in some hybrids.



Fungicide considerations

Fungicide application decisions should be carefully considered field by field based on: disease severity, crop stage (Table 1), [hybrid susceptibility](#), [Corn Foliar Efficacy 2025](#), tillage regime, prevailing environmental conditions, previous experience, commodity price, and the probability of a return on the investment. If applications are warranted, apply at labeled rates using maximum (5 GPA by air, minimum) water volume is recommended.

Table 1. Crop growth stage, defoliation, and associated yield loss. Percent yield loss (in blue) because of defoliation by crop stage. **For example...30% defoliation at dent stage results in a 2% yield loss.**

Growth Stage	% Defoliation									
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Tassel	3	7	13	21	31	42	55	68	83	100
Silked	3	7	12	20	29	39	51	65	80	97
Silks Brown	2	6	11	18	27	36	47	60	74	90
Pre-Blister	2	5	10	16	24	32	43	54	66	81
Blister	2	5	10	16	22	30	39	50	60	73
Early Milk	2	4	8	14	20	28	36	45	55	66
Milk	1	3	7	12	18	24	32	41	49	59
Late Milk	1	3	6	10	15	21	28	35	42	50
Soft Dough	1	2	4	8	12	17	23	29	35	41
Early Dent	0	1	2	5	9	13	18	23	27	32
Dent	0	0	2	4	7	10	14	17	20	23
Late Dent	0	0	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15
Nearly Mature	0	0	0	0	1	3	5	6	7	8

Welcome New LACA Members!!!

Voting

Fred Collins
Josh Copes
Nick Daigle
Turner Graham

Affiliate

Abigail Allison
Scott Moore

Sustaining

Asido
Farmsmart.ai
Patriot Agri Worx
SoLA Drones
Stratton Seed Company

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For information on membership in NAICC,
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Denise Wright at denise@laca1.org or
go to www.naicc.org

NAICC offers a certification program for its members. You can obtain a CPCC-I (Certified Professional Crop Consultant-Independent) and/or CPCC-R (Certified Professional Crop Consultant Researcher). On top of your state certification with the LDAF, this certification can further enhance your credibility in your profession.



**Affiliate
Member of
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