

Communication Network Conference Call - May 1, 2007

Great discussion again today. Here's a summary of the conversation:

Participants

Wayne Reeves, Jeff McClellan, Russ Evans, Larry Wright, Brian Lindley, Jerry Hatfield, Don Reicosky, Randall Reeder, Chris Foster, Dick Wittman, Jeff Mitchell, Brian Noyes

Agenda

- Update from Alan and Don about Canadian and Mexican groups joining the network
- Update on web site
- Name for group/communication network
- Actions the group can take to address the fate of conservation in new era of \$4 corn
- Who is able/planning to attend June 25-27 conference in Florida?
- Other ways CTIC can support this network?

Update from Don Reicosky

Don contacted Hugo Escoto, former leader of national no-till group in Mexico. Although he's changed jobs, Escoto does want to be involved. He provided names of others individuals. Don suggests that as the network develops more infrastructure and objectives, we will seek their involvement and input. Hopefully, Hugo will continue to provide guidance. The discussion noted that, as in the U.S., definitions of no-till are different in Mexico. We will need to be mindful of this issue as we continue forward.

Update on web site

CTIC has begun to develop the web page. Members are invited to view the work in progress. Go to www.conservationinformation.org. At the top of the page, find a tab in the blue bar labeled "Learning Center." Hover over "Learning Center" to see a dropdown menu. Click on "Communication Network." I'll keep the draft page active for a few days, so you have a chance to review it and send comments. I'll turn it off again on Friday to continue work on it.

Name for the network

Great email discussion started, yet no sense of consensus at this point. One suggestion was to table the discussion until we could meet in person, perhaps at the Southern Conservation Agricultural Systems Conference, June 25-27 (http://www.conservationinformation.org/?action=events_sctscconf). Turns out, however, that only a few folks will be able to attend that conference (see below). A conference call dedicated to this topic will be arranged in the future.

In the meantime, a suggestion was made to focus on the principles we do agree on. Through discussion, we discovered that the groups agree to these fundamentals:

- Cropping systems or management systems are the important focus of our work
- North American focus for the network

Another observation was the use of "conservation agriculture." Don R relayed what he's adopted as a definition of CA: 1. minimum soil disturbance 2. Continuous residue covers 3. cover crops and diverse rotation 4. Controlled traffic

In a related discussion, the group talked about the target audience(s) of the network. Many voiced the agreement that the network's primary audience is the groups involved in the network. The network's purpose is to strengthen each group and their efforts to promote/advance no-till management systems, to help new groups to get established and become effective quickly, and to help get all participating groups "on the same page" on major issues impacting conservation ag and speaking as a network and as individual groups with a consistent message. Success of the network can be measured by the number of members within the network and the improved effectiveness of each member group.

A comment was offered that there is a need for site-specific management systems developed for and focused on North America. Taking information from other regions/ag zones will not help to achieve consistent message.

Attending SCAS Conference

Jeff Mi - yes
Jerry – no
Don – no
Russ – no
Dick – no
Randall – no
Chris – no
Brian – yes, if travel \$
Brian – yes, if travel
Jeff Mc – no
Larry – maybe
Wayne - yes

Other ways CTIC can support this network?

Help to develop a work plan for the network that identifies issues to discuss and address. In the short-term start a discussion (email) about the questions/concerns our groups are facing today with the prospects of many more corn acres and the associated energy push? What are the downsides of short-term gains? Do you have specific suggestions on how to deal with those concerns?

Actions Needed:

Karen – add Mexican contacts to contact list
Karen – send description of network to Don
Don – send description and letter to Mexican counterparts
Karen will send via email to the entire group the questions to start the discussion about corn/energy and impacts to conservation. Please reply all with your responses and thoughts.
Karen – distribute information about travel stipends for June 25-27 conference in Florida

If you have anything to add to the summary, please reply all.

The next conference call will be Tuesday, June 5 at 11am (eastern).