

CASA Conference Call - May 6, 2008

Conservation Agriculture Systems Alliance Conference Call Tuesday, May 6, 2008 at 11 a.m. (eastern)

Participants:

Karen Scanlon
Peter Gamache
Randall Reeder
Doug McKell
Russ Evans
Sjoerd Duiker
Jerry Hatfield
Tim Healey

Agenda:

Update on SARE proposal
Operations Committee Report
Message Committee Report
Next steps
News from CASA members
General Discussion

Update on SARE proposal

Randy emailed prior to call and indicated that he had not heard from SARE. He will attempt to contact. He advised that CASA should be prepared to develop a proposal. He will get to with details ASAP.

Operations Committee Report

Karen emailed letter from CTIC Board of Directors, in response to the CASA proposal, to the contact list today. Karen work with Peter to set next teleconference.

Message Committee Report

Russ has circulated draft to solicit comment from committee members, however no feedback was received. Karen and Russ will work to set up new teleconference.

Next steps

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News from CASA members

Reduced Tillage LINKAGES: Soil sampling, setting up activities. Working on document, "value of no-till," to look at economic, environment, agronomic value of the practice. To counteract message that the "job is done" because no-till acres are increasing. Would like to circulate to CASA for review and feedback. May help in ongoing battle for funding. Also sending update on carbon trading in Alberta.

PNDSA: Writing grants is main focus now. Farmer-to-Farmer internet network (similar to LINKAGES) proposed (farmers register and answer survey about practices; other farmers can ask questions and get replies from registered farmers; searchable database (offline)). Potential to link with similar networks in Canada, Plains, etc. Local tour on June 24 with direct seed breakfast club in conjunction with board meeting. With Hans Kok, will continue with transect survey around Palouse. Continue with carbon marketing. Pilot project with emission reductions from precision ag. Finalizing contracts and developing protocol for carbon sequestration for no-till within the northwest region. Working with WSU to quantify how much carbon will be offset in the region.

Ohio No-Till Council: OH No-till field day Aug 14th in Kenton, Ohio, cover crops and manure are main topics. Question: energy balance of ethanol conventional vs no till.

Soil Conservation Council of Canada: Tremendous movement in no-till equipment recently. Farmers are active across the country. Stakeholder meeting for "Growing Forward" program, May 27-28, provides impetus for more environmental programs for agriculture. Member of IPOG, conference calls weekly, provides input to Environment Canada with respect to carbon offset system. System to be running late summer or fall; trades between industry and agriculture (no-till). Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels, providing principles on impact to soils from production of biofuels.

Proposal to national funding organization to take over greenhouse gas calculator. Next meeting in July, hope to have news about program funding.

PA No-till Alliance: Jeff McLellen working part-time until July. PNTA waiting for new funding to hire new director. Commodity prices very high, input prices high. Manure worth money and farmers are starting to trade it. Biofuels getting lots of attention. New biodiesel plant in Erie County working full capacity. Looking at camelina as new crop in rotation. Noticed new publications advocating tillage to sequester carbon.

Tim Healey, Agrotain International: Recently visited with Mike Hubbs, NRCS state conservationist in Kentucky. He asked, "What can CTIC, agencies, private sectors do to increase continuous no-till by up to 50% over the next 10 years?" And, "Is corn/bean rotation enough to stop arterial rotation in continuous no-till or is cover crop required?"

General discussion

Public agencies often are not helping the cause of no-till by promoting increased production of corn, wheat or canola.

New research/publications advocating tillage to sequester carbon don't seem to be looking at the entire cropping system.

PNDSA was encouraged to get no-tillers on the boards of the commodity organizations in the region. Perhaps we can put that recommendation out to all CASA members?