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Delivering Timely Extension Information with the Agronomic Crops Team in Ohio

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Delivering Timely Extension Information with the Agronomic Crops Team in Ohio

Abstract

The Agronomic Crops Team was formed in 1995 to provide an Extension program that linked all disciplines together in an attempt to provide an integrated delivery mechanism designed to address all producer needs in a timely fashion. The team provides a newsletter, Web site, agronomy meetings and workshops, and a satellite broadcast to better serve state clientele. To date, the impact of the Agronomic Crops Team has been substantial, reaching managers of over 2.6 million acres of production ground in the state with an economic impact of over \$11 million.

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The Agronomic Crops Team--Delivering Timely Information

One of the challenges facing Extension programs today is delivering useful information to state clientele in a timely fashion to influence producer decisions. The Agronomic Crops Team was formed in 1995 to provide an Extension program that linked all disciplines together in an attempt to provide an integrated delivery mechanism designed to address producer needs related to field crops. The team concept for providing Extension programs and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration on applied research is a focus of Ohio State University Extension.

The Agronomic Crops Team is comprised of 17 state Extension specialists and Extension program specialists covering agronomy, pathology, entomology, weed science, agricultural engineering, and soil fertility for all major field crops. County Extension educators, representing 30 counties across the state, are the hub of the program, serving as the link between state Extension specialists and local producers and agribusiness. The county Extension educators provide valuable input regarding current production issues being faced by local producers that allows state Extension specialists to prepare newsletter articles and bulletins in addition to workshops relevant to grower concerns.

Producers and agribusiness are largely responsible for the direction taken by the team, the type of information the team provides, and the on-farm research that the team undertakes. The Agronomic Crops Team relies on Extension educators and their connection to local producers to determine the education materials prepared by state specialists to ensure the information prepared is timely and relevant. This team approach could serve as a model for other land-grant universities that desire to improve Extension programming for state clientele.

Crop Observation and Recommendation Network (C.O.R.N.) Newsletter

The primary mechanism used to disseminate information at Ohio State University is the *C.O.R.N. Newsletter*. The *C.O.R.N. Newsletter* is a weekly publication prepared by state Extension specialists, program specialists, and Extension educators to address current production concerns. A weekly teleconference involving all members of the Agronomic Crops Team occurs every Monday morning, which allows county Extension educators to inform state Extension specialists and program specialists of specific questions relevant to producer concerns. State Extension and program specialists then prepare short documents that cover as many issues as possible.

The information generated is distributed electronically via email to over 2,500 subscribers statewide and is made available on the Internet <<http://corn.osu.edu/>>. Over 250 articles are published in the C.O.R.N. Newsletter annually addressing all areas of field crop production. The *C.O.R.N. Newsletter* has had a documented impact of \$11.3 million and reaches managers of over 2.6 million acres of Ohio cropland (Battelle, 2005). The *C.O.R.N. Newsletter* is the centerpiece of the Agronomic Crops Team and serves as the primary interface between local producers and state specialists.

This type of weekly newsletter has been promoted as a model for other Extension programs in Ohio. The *C.O.R.N. Newsletter*, as well as the Web site maintained by the Agronomic Crops Team, can be found at <<http://agcrops.osu.edu/>> and can be used as a model for other Extension programs.

Agronomic Update Meetings

Regional Agronomy Meetings

To re-enforce information provided in publications or to provide new information based upon field research, Regional Agronomy Meetings are held at various locales across the state that feature state Extension specialists or program specialists representing multiple disciplines. Regional Agronomy Meetings allow a forum of discussion between state Extension specialists and growers to address a wide array of production issues.

Since 1997, over 5,500 clientele, including crop producers, agribusiness personnel, government personnel, and crop consultants, have attended Regional Agronomy Meetings. On average, four to eight locations every year have been selected to host Regional Agronomy Meetings. The agendas for the Regional Agronomy Meetings are prepared at biennial meetings among all members of the Agronomic Crops Team to determine the topics that need to be addressed.

Crop Profit Game

Initiated in 2003, the Crop Profit Game was designed to replace Regional Agronomy Meetings by providing information on production issues that growers will face in the upcoming growing season. The Crop Profit Game is a satellite broadcast accessible by all Extension offices across the state. Similar to the Regional Agronomy Meetings, a wide range of field crop production topics are covered. Satellite broadcasts are conducted during the winter, allowing part-time farmers and others who normally do not attend county Extension programs an opportunity to be educated by state specialists.

Interaction in the form of phone-in questions is encouraged to allow producers the opportunity to pose questions that directly relate to their operation. In the first year, 37 counties were scheduled to receive the satellite program, and nearly 400 producers actually viewed the broadcast. The Crop Profit Game is another tool employed by the Agronomic Crops Team to reach as many state clientele as possible to improve timeliness and relevance of agronomic information.

On-Farm Research

To maintain an objective research-based educational program and ensure that Extension information is timely and relevant, applied research that includes producer cooperation is a necessity. On-farm experiments are conducted across the state each year to evaluate new management concepts for crop production. Since 1999, over 180 on-farm trials have been conducted to address local needs and answer production questions. Potential research projects are discussed at biennial meetings between all members of the Agronomic Crops Team.

The Agronomic Crops Team at Ohio State University provides a diversified and innovative Extension program to address producer needs and provide timely and relevant information to

positively affect their operations. Dissemination of information through a newsletter, a Web site, regional agronomy meetings and workshops, as well as a satellite broadcast is having a positive effect on Ohio's agronomic industry.

References

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