

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow...

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Working the Plan...

A year ago, we penned in these pages, an account of where the California CCA Program (CaCCA) had been, where we wanted to go and what was needed to build the program to a higher level. I would like to update you on the successes and some of the adjustments that are being made in the program to reach out to all current, future CaCCA's and growers.

Last fall presentations on the CCA Program were made at numerous forums including CAPCA Chapter Update Meetings, Western Plant Health Association (WPHA) Nutrient Seminars and the Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP) Conference. The CaCCA display booth was at various industry meetings, including the CAPCA Conference. Also visits were held with independent retailer groups. By the time the deadline for applications for the spring testing period were due a total of 49 aspiring CCA consultants had applied. That number represented a quantum improvement over previous spring testing periods!

A test preparation program beginning in the winter of 2007 has been a very important part of our program. Thanks to Rob Mikkelsen, International Plant Nutrition Institute and Sharon Benes, California State University, Fresno for conducting these programs. The training sessions held in two locations in California were very well attended. The CaCCA Testing Committee initiated an on-line sample of California State Test questions with the aid of Dr. Dan Putnam and The University of California at Davis. A link to this test site is available on the CaCCA website at www.cacca.org. The results were so remarkable the success rate of passing jumped substantially during the Spring Test period.

Beginning in January, preparations were made for the Summer Test Period with applications due by June 15th. The recruiting focus was on applicants from the southern part of the state. Again presentations were made to CAPCA Chapter gatherings, a WPHA Nutrient Seminar and a Cal Poly Nutrient Seminar prior to the deadline. CCA updates were also given at the CAPCA/WPHA student dinners. The results, again, were extremely gratifying. Applications were received from 24 candidates for the August Testing Period, which represents a 13-fold increase over last year. While it is too early, as this is being written, to know the test results, we are confident the success rate will be much higher than prior years as a result of the training seminars held in late July.

Trial by fire...

This past year has been a real learning experience in a number of areas. When listening to agricultural consultants critique the CaCCA program at our display booth or following a presentation, two issues were consistent. First, what value is there in being a CCA? Second, it is so hard and so expensive to obtain the required CEUs.

"What value is there in being a CCA", you ask? Plenty!! But there is more value to come, a high priority item on the list of "to-dos" of your CaCCA Board. Being a CCA validates your competence as an all-around ag consultant. As the public and government become more aware of agricultural practices it is important that they be assured that agronomic decisions are being made in a manner that protects the environment, a CCA has the skills to make that happen. As a CCA you can participate in the NRCS Technical Service Provider Program. And soon to come, being a CCA will allow you to write dairy manure management programs and provide guidance for clean water management.

"It is too hard and too expensive to get the required CEUs" was also an often-heard complaint. To address that issue, the CaCCA Board has begun working to encourage the UC Extension Service to apply for CEU recognition at their many local educational meetings. In those areas of qualification where CEU hours are hard to acquire, the Board is working to provide educational opportunities at gatherings such as the CAPCA Annual Meeting, at WPHA Nutrient Seminars and at the annual FREP Seminar. Self-study opportunities are available and they can be found on the both the CaCCA and the International CCA website, www.agronomy.org/cca.

Also, don't forget to report the various variety, seed trails and other meetings you attend as a consultant. An online self reporting form for CCA CEUs is available at https://www.agronomy.org/cca/ceu_reporting_form.html. The *Western Farm Press* also provides online training and CEUs, a list of courses can be found at <http://westernfarmpress.com/index.html>.

The CaCCA program is presenting a session on "Crop Qualify, Plant Health and Pest Interactions with Efficient Nutrient Management" at the 2007 CAPCA Conference on Monday, October 29th. Also CaCCA is sponsoring the refreshment session following this session in the exhibit hall. So after you attend the nutrient management session, have a cup of coffee on us and then stop by our booth to visit.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's FREP program continues to provide financial support to the CaCCA program for administration and outreach/marketing. For the period of 2007-2008 a grant is being provided. The support of FREP goes back many years and has been critical to the CaCCA success. FREP funds are provided by a mill assessment paid by the last fertilizer license selling the product to an end user. In most cases, that is the retailer of fertilizer that is providing the support. A special thanks to all that pay the mill assessment, the Fertilizer Inspection Advisory Board, the FREP Technical Advisory Subcommittee and the FREP staff for their support and guidance of our program.

What's next for 2007-2008?

The CaCCA board is dedicated to encouraging growth in CCA membership and adding value to your certification. Last year proved talking before groups of consultants is very productive and as such will continue. However, getting the message out to grower producers will take on a higher priority than previous. You should begin to hear from your grower clientele, the question "are you a CCA?" Articles in commodity group news publications will soon be published. The CaCCA Board will have its booth at grower gatherings this fall and we will have feature articles detailing the knowledge and skills of a CCA consultant.

Note: CCA exam registration packets will be available the week of October 1, 2007. The registration deadline for the February 1, 2008 exam is December 14, 2007.

Please contact either Laurie Karr or Michele Lovejoy at the Certified Crop Adviser program 1-608-268-4954 or 4953 respectively for additional information regarding the Ca CCA exams.