

Ag Team Conference Call July 21, 2011

Participants: Sam Wang, Peter Ellsworth, Lydia Brown, Al Fournier, Shawna Loper, Ayman Mostafa, Russ Tronstad, Bob Roth, Rob Grumbles, Pedro Andrade, Rob Call, Rob Grumbles, Bill McCloskey

Ayman: We have needs assessment data that indicates an interest in pest biology and identification, sampling, crop management issues, etc. New PCAs entering the market with less experience. Our idea is to deliver some information in video format. Propose to produce audio-visual materials for clientele. Thresholds, identification of insect and weed pests, soil sampling, etc. and any other topics that the group comes up to. Youtube videos, DVDs, podcasts are all possible outputs. This would be put together as an SPI proposal. Funds to support travel to field sites, purchase of AV-editing software, producing and distribution of outputs would be requested. We have or will have some of the camera equipment. The vegetable team is producing good videos. Ayman will contact Marco and find out what they are using. Keep in mind: videos should be short and on a very focused topic. Do we have the expertise to do this? What sort of support is available to make sure we produce a quality product? Glenn Gigstad with ECAT might be resource, possibly with editing, etc. He may come out and do video taping. What information is already available to clientele? Currently, there is very little in video format.

Ayman, Shawna, Lydia and Al will work on this proposal before sending it out to the full Ag Team for review.

Shawna: Would like to develop a PCA-targeted professional development program. A lot of PCAs get their information and materials from UA. We would like to develop a program that is directly marketed to PCAs (no growers). Based on conversations with PCAs and Arizona Crop Protection Association, the feedback is that PCAs “already know everything” about pest management, but there might be more interest in agronomic topics. One option would be to move ahead with developing a proposal for a full statewide initiative to develop the program. An alternative approach might be to instead gather more information this year and move ahead next.

Rob G: you might need to provide an example, “test the waters” with a pilot project to stimulate more interest in that type of an approach in the future. Lin Evans indicated that PCAs tend to more deficient in agronomy, fertility and best crop management topics. We might focus on these kinds of topics. Bob Roth: what is being described is really the role of a certified crop advisor; do PCAs really want to do this? Or do their growers expect the PCAs to know this stuff?
Shawna: PCAs are asking agents for agronomic information because their growers are asking them.

Ayman: There are a number of new PCAs that do not have as much experience in good basic IPM. Feedback from surveys indicates that there is interest in many topics of IPM and crop management. We might invest more time in organizing the idea and developing the direction for the program. There are some new PCAs out there, but they are a small minority. It would be better if we can attract experienced PCAs as well. Another thing that will attract experienced

PCAs is to focus on what is new: new technologies, etc. Pedro could provide education on machinery related topics that may be of interest.

Sam: should we open it up to the farmers? Many PCAs are reluctant to do significant learning in front of their customers. It would be good to do it as dedicated PCA and / or CCA training. But there could be spin-off meetings that would specifically target growers.

Timing is an important issue. We have to offer any program at a time when PCAs are not that busy in the field. The highest concentration of new PCAs is in Yuma. Yuma trainings will not be successful in the winter because of the vegetable season. We may offer the program twice: different timing for Yuma and central AZ.

We will pursue an SPI as a pilot project for this year. With the goal of testing the waters to determine future need and direction for a full blown program in the future.

Shawna, Pedro, Ayman, Sam and Al will work on this proposal before sending it out to the full Ag Team for review.