

STEP UP AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION

We live in an age of information overload, with an avalanche of information arriving each day. It can become a struggle to decide what information to accept and listen to, or judge which new ideas can be disregarded.

Getting reliable agronomic information is a challenge for everyone. We are all looking for innovations that will help improve efficiency and profitability. Plant nutrition products are evaluated for safety and for concerns arising during manufacturing and shipping, but there are no labels that tell you if they will work in your individual situation.

Several recent surveys of farmers from across the U.S. confirm the fact that crop advisers are the most frequently consulted source of agronomic information. Although the specific questions vary across regions and crops, farmers consistently look to their trusted adviser to help them sift through the information to get to the truth.



Given this critical role, it is essential to maintain that trust by staying current with the latest developments in agronomic science. This can be done through activities such as reading the latest trade journals and magazines, attending educational seminars, and asking probing questions. Practicing successful agronomy and horticulture requires assessing all the resources available and then using your experience to sort out what will work locally. For example, do you know how to implement the 4R's of Nutrient Stewardship in each field where you work? Can you clearly explain the cropping decisions you recommend if asked by a member of the general public?

Many new alternative fertilizer products have been introduced in the past decades. Some of these new products are based on sound science and their performance has been carefully evaluated in various scenarios. There are other products that have not been tested in a scientifically credible way, and they lack results that are explainable and reproducible. Instead, many of these products simply rely on endorsements and testimonials as a substitute for good science and statistical analysis.

Economic and environmental pressures on farmers seem to increase every year. Crop advisers have the unique opportunity to directly influence the success of farmers by providing the best possible information. The relationship of trust between farmer and adviser is reinforced each time accurate and useful information is transferred.

Certified Crop Advisers are tested to demonstrate proficiency in the areas of nutrient management, soil and water management, pest management, and crop management. Additionally, they are required to take 40 hours of continuing education every two years to keep current with the latest agronomic developments.

Whether you are a Certified Crop Adviser or any other type of farm adviser, remember that you are viewed as a trusted source of information in your community. Now you need to maintain your reputation by staying current in providing accurate and reliable agronomic information.

BETTER CROPS

International Plant Nutrition Institute
3500 Parkway Lane, Suite 550
Norcross, Georgia 30092-2844
www.ipni.net

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rob Mikkelsen'.

Robert Mikkelsen
Vice President, IPNI Communications
Director, North American Program