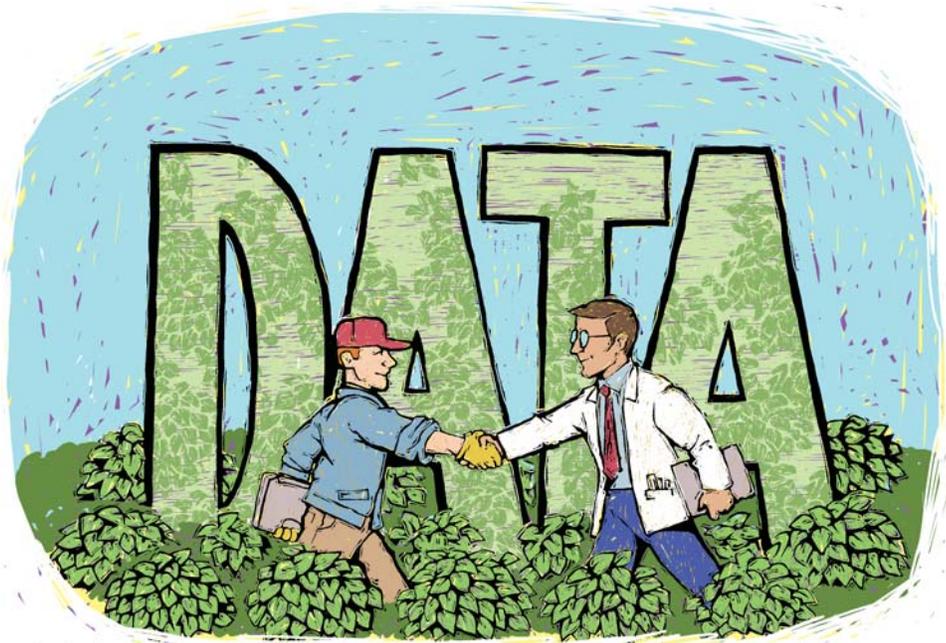


DATA: LANDFILL OR LEGACY

If you are reading this back cover, data is likely a significant part of your life. If you do science for a living, your job is to generate meaningful data that offer insight into the perplexing problems of the day. If you are a user of science - CCA, grower, service provider, etc., the products created from scientific data form the principles upon which you make informed decisions or offer informed advice. Indeed, it seems data is critically important to agronomy and perhaps especially important to the discipline of soil fertility. So, the question I pose on this back cover that closes another informative set of data-based scientific articles, is why do we treat data like just another item on a convoluted voyage to the landfill when in fact it can become our legacy?



Data stewardship is a relatively new term to most of us, but I hope it becomes a fundamental element in the lexicon of agronomy. It involves viewing data, and its supportive metadata (data on how the data were collected or the circumstances that created it), as the primary products of scientific endeavor and as such deserving of careful standardization and preservation. With proper care, high quality data sets grow in value with time and with aggregation (enabled by open access). It takes a substantial investment to create such sets, but experience demonstrates that it's a sound investment with an amazing return. This is not a concept relevant only to the professional scientist. It pertains just as well to farms where data can be viewed as another valued product of the farm and the principles discussed above are just as important. Precision ag has taken us a long way down this path, but the journey has just begun.

The North American fertilizer industry, through the creation of the 4R Research Fund, has made a commitment to a step change in data stewardship in agronomic science via two significant actions. The first projects it funded are all systematic reviews with meta-analyses that will create datasets from published scientific literature to address questions about 4R impacts. The second action was to require that data generated by all funded new projects become part of an open-access data repository that will preserve the data to not only answer today's questions, but those of the future as well.

What about your data? Is it on the way to the landfill or to becoming part of your legacy?

**BETTER
CROPS**

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

Paul E. Fixen
Senior Vice President and Director of Research, IPNI