

Fall 2013, No. 5

## **THE INFOAG CONFERENCE – CONNECTING 4R NUTRIENT STEWARDSHIP AND PRECISION AGRICULTURE**

**In the wake of the largest InfoAg Conference ever, it is a good time to emphasize the importance of this event and precision agriculture to the fertilizer industry.** Since 1995, IPNI has partnered with PAQ Interactive and CropLife Media Group to put together a biennial gathering of manufacturers, retailers, researchers (industry and university), advisers and consultants, producers, and policy makers within the precision ag industry. The conference has become the premier event to discuss and view applied precision agriculture technology. The question that gets asked is “Why does IPNI, a fertilizer industry-supported organization, invest so much time and so many resources into a conference focused largely on technology and information management?” The answer relates to IPNI’s organizational mission.

**The mission of IPNI is ‘To develop and promote scientific information about the responsible management of plant nutrition for the benefit of the human family.’** Responsible management refers to following 4R Nutrient Stewardship, which is applying the right nutrient source at the right rate, at the right time, and in the right place. The management decisions are made within the context of the cropping system and will work toward meeting economic, environmental, and social goals of a sustainable agricultural system. The 4Rs are interconnected and must be considered holistically as any change made to one factor affects, and is affected by, the other three. The complexity of this puzzle is best solved using the tools, technologies, and information management strategies that are found in precision agriculture.

**In addition to the jigsaw puzzle that is the 4Rs, InfoAg also helps solve another type of puzzle— connecting the dots; and in this case, the ‘dots’ are people.** InfoAg was started as a way to bring together vendors and practitioners of precision ag technologies. Building and fostering these relationships remains one of the greatest attributes of the conference today. Social media is one of our most valuable communication tools for sharing information, but following each other on Twitter doesn’t result in the depth or quality of the relationships that face-to-face time at InfoAg can accomplish.

**The goal of a connect-the-dots puzzle is to create a picture. InfoAg creates a picture of partnerships.** Connecting the right people at the InfoAg conference creates the partnerships that are necessary to overcome the obstacles production agriculture will face in the coming decades. Producing the food, feed, fiber, and fuel needed to sustain a population projected to surpass 9 billion people by 2050, is not a task that science, technology, or policy can accomplish alone. This massive challenge will only be met by creating partnerships that combine the accuracy of science, the precision of technology, and the support of policy.

**In a response to the challenges ahead and feedback from participants, InfoAg will leave its traditional biennial format and become an annual event beginning in the summer of 2014.** The next InfoAg will be held July 29 – July 31 at the Union Station Hilton in downtown St. Louis, MO. Stay informed by visiting [www.infoag.org](http://www.infoag.org) and following @InfoAg.

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