In his own words ...

Joe Needham
Takes on the Role of NC-213 Liaison

By Joe Needham, The Andersons

I'm impressed. Three months into a new job at The Andersons and an assignment as our company's liaison to NC-213, seeing firsthand the professional work and research results of the consortium is impressive. Terms like "relevant," "diligent," "creative," and "urgent" all come to mind. The work on mycotoxins, insects, grain storability, and DDGS (distillers dried grain with solubles) handling are all topical in our industry. So if a relatively objective outsider's initial impression counts, you are doing really good work.

With the recent retirement of Bob Smigelski after 250 years with The Andersons (my number) and my recent move to the Maumee, Ohio, headquarters from Delphi, Indiana, I've been asked to fill his size 45 shoes (his number) as company liaison to NC-213 and appointment to the Industry Advisory Committee.

By way of a brief background, I did my bachelor's in business at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, spent 2.5 years in the Peace Corps in Malaysia as an ag coop advisor, earned my master's degree in agricultural economics from Ohio State, and worked for Continental Grain at the Mississippi River terminals before joining The Andersons in 1984. My career path was grain merchandising and facility general management until my recent move to Maumee as our vice president of the Grain Division.

The Andersons operates 13 grain facilities in the eastern Corn Belt, handling some 200 million bushels of corn, beans, and wheat. The company's 80 million bushels of space puts us in the top 10 of grain storage capacity and makes us HIGHLY interested in grain-quality issues.

What do we see as near-term issues? First, the growth in ethanol appears to encourage a shift to more corn acres. New hybrids promise better ethanol yield and different by-product quality. More domestic demand implies more grain storage.

The boom in DDGS production has storage, handling, and feeding implications. DDGS (distillers dried grain with solubles) is the spent corn after the starch is converted to sugar and fed to animals. The DDGS typically is higher protein than corn (25% vs. 10%), high fiber, and lower energy.

OSU Breeds Wheat
With Millers, Markets in Mind

Ohio State University's wheat-breeding efforts are focused on developing varieties that give producers high yields and disease resistance while meeting the needs of millers, explained Clay Sneller, associate professor in the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science and a specialist in wheat breeding and genetics.

Besides the flour yield, wheat breeders are interested in flour texture and functionality factors such as water absorption, protein quality and composition (gluten strength), sugar, starches, ash, and enzymes. The ideal variety for a specific use would rate excellent for all these characteristics, as well as for grain yield and disease resistance.

Unfortunately, the chances of finding that ideal variety are about one in 10 million, Sneller notes. The chances of finding a variety that offers excellent yield and rankings that are acceptable or better for all the other traits are about one in 1,300.

In the future, a nationwide research effort to identify molecular markers for different traits could cut down on the number of trials needed to develop a new variety. "Hopefully, it will improve our odds of coming up with these new lines," Sneller explains. In the meantime, Ohio State's wheat-breeding program is evaluating about 25,000 crosses a year.

Sneller is also comparing the quality and stability of wheat and barley varieties. "We're looking at how the variety affects the shelf life of the product," Sneller explains. It's important because these days, he says, "you just aren't producing a product for a market anymore. You're creating a product for a shelf life.


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NC-213 Web Site Updates

If you have recently visited the NC-213 web site, you have probably noticed some changes. The web site starts off with the explanation of a Multistate Project, now followed by a more project-team-focused message. This message is geared more towards the core participants of NC-213, and information posted is timely and relevant.

Another addition to the web site is a section that lists the awarded research grants for both regular and team competitions.

The web site still offers past issues of the Grain Quality Newsletter, past meeting minutes, past progress reports, and a complete listing of executive committee members and station representatives.

Suggestions for the web site are always welcome!