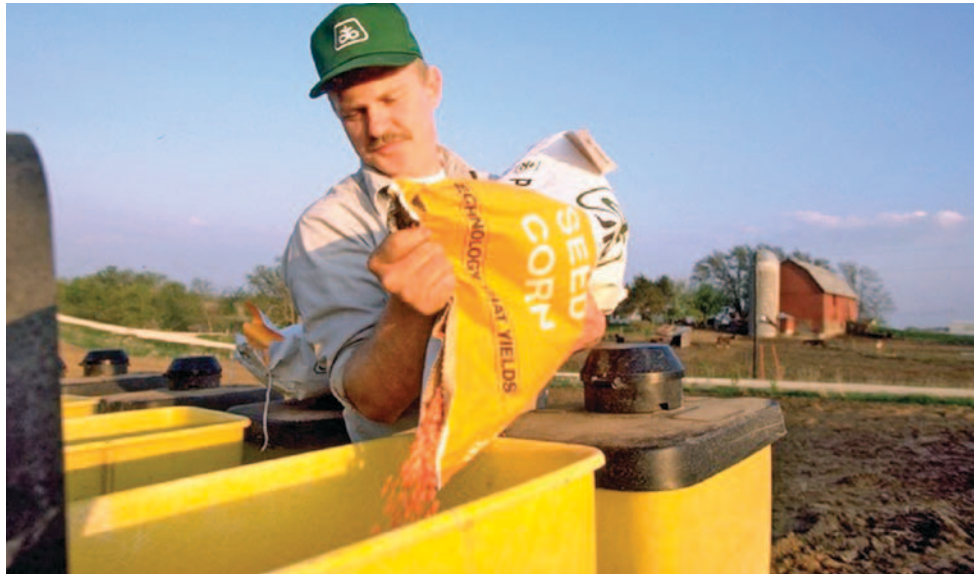


Consulting Firm Hosts Meetings

Company marketing concept of meetings shows value of a trusted crop consultant.



Selecting the seed for best fit per field was a major topic of a recent Advanced Ag Solutions Meeting.

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Advanced Ag Solutions (AAS) is an agronomic consulting service that hosts meetings bringing together progressive thinkers and speakers with unique approaches in order to spur creative solutions. The goal is for attendees to see new opportunities and solutions in agriculture and possibly work with AAS in the future. It has proven to be a good marketing tool for the company.

A topic at the most recent meeting in February included a discussion of seed selection. AAS President, Daryl Starr, said at the meeting, "Farmers are forced to make decisions about what seed to plant and where to plant it at a particular rate. They want solid data but eventually need to make a subjective call for their particular field."

He and the group assembled went on to discuss Monsanto's programs to assist in seed selection. Dekalb agronomist Brian Debord shared about the more than 50 on-farm research plots organized over the last two years and the geo-spatial analysis of the yield monitor data resulting in better understanding of variety performance by soil type. He noted this information is helping their sales team better place varieties for particular growers once they know more about the soils they farm. Expectations of many growers at the meeting expressed their desire and need for this research to begin earlier in the development stages so that information is known before the variety becomes too outdated.

AAS provides a program for seed selection and site selection for planting seed with their own Optimizer Seed Selection tool. There was discussion about how the program allows a farmer to provide field boundaries, yield goals and preferred seed supplier information that leads to seed selection that fits a farming operation and in what fields to plant specific seeds.

The idea that variety recommendations and seeding rates

could be modified and updated via wireless uplink while in the field during a rainstorm had many attendees shaking their heads. Perhaps the onset of drought-tolerant corn and nitrogen management could improve the concept for variety switching on the go, it was noted. The possibilities are endless but the data management appears to be paramount to the confidence level many growers will have with the decision.

The Optimizer electronic program allows for back and forth interaction that improves the placement of particular varieties and more accurate seeding rates, it was explained. When asked about where his research comes from, Starr explained to the group, "We use all available information. This requires us to work with seed companies, but also allows us to use our clients' data and with a splash of intuition." He suggested not downplaying the intuition of trained crop consultants.

"The precision tools in my cab are capable of more than I am," said one farmer. There is no doubt that tomorrow's complexity will assure best management practices are rewarded. And relying on the ability of trusted persons such as a professional crop consultant seemed to resonate well with the gathered group. In the end, attendees noted their need to be able to trust any persons involved in the decision making process.

On-farm research as proof is also key for farmers to believe in tools such as the Optimizer. Starr said, "At some point, the best farmers need to go to the source. They need to network with other like-minded farmers and simply ask them what they can and cannot trust about the on-farm research they are using to make the subjective part of business decisions." **AG**

Advanced Ag Solutions is based in Indiana and specializes in helping farmers with cropping, financial and marketing plans.