



Why Should You Care if Your Crop Adviser is CERTIFIED?

By Susan Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Ontario

Throughout North America, 13,874 men and women serve farm clients as crop advisers, providing information and expertise on crop production, crop protection and natural resource management. This group of commercial, public and independent advisers plays an important role in modern agriculture. Crop advisers provide advice and council producers in their decision making process. This responsibility requires a good understanding of science, food safety, technology, economics and environment. Crop advisers combine knowledge in these disciplines with their local experience to render sound recommendations.

In 1991, under the leadership of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA), leaders from agribusiness, government and university organizations began discussions that led to the creation of the Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) program. The aim of this group was to develop a voluntary program for crop advisers that would: establish standards for knowledge, experience, ethical conduct and continuing education; enhance professionalism; and promote dialogue among those involved in agriculture and natural resource management.

Technology, regulations, environment, and consumer demand are changing the face of agriculture and creating tremendous challenges and opportunities for growers. CCAs offer experience across a wide spectrum of farming, are up to date on new technology through continuing education, and can reward you financially through better crop returns, lower input costs and sound nutrient management decisions. Farmers are increasingly finding that CCAs are valuable partners who help them to compete in a global marketplace.

We all know that efficient and responsible agronomic practices

have a positive impact on the farm economy AND on the image of today's agriculture. Inefficient or misguided practices will have the opposite effect. As consumers become more concerned about food safety and the environment, the techniques of modern growers are increasingly in the public eye. Consumers demand the highest standards in food production as well as compliant environmental stewardship. These farms need good record keeping and accountability and much of this is being provided by CCAs.

Achieving the CCA designation is not an easy process. Candidates must document work experience, pass exams and maintain on-going continuing education.

Experience

Certification requires at least two years of documented crop advising experience with grower references.

Exams

CCAs must pass two comprehensive exams covering nutrient management, soil and water management, integrated pest management and crop production.

Continuing Education

In order to maintain their CCA designation, they must earn 40 hours of accredited continuing education every two years. This helps ensure that CCAs always have the latest information new technology and industry developments.

Ethics

CCAs must sign and adhere to a code of ethics, meaning they always focus on grower profitability while optimizing and protecting natural resources.

Awarding Excellence

Beginning in 2003, the Ontario CCA Board began awarding an annual CCA Award of Excellence to recognize one of these 500 CCAs who delivers exemplary

customer service. The award was designed to recognize a crop adviser who delivers exceptional customer service, is highly innovative, has shown that they are a leader in their field, and has contributed substantially to the exchange of ideas and the transfer of agronomic knowledge within the agriculture industry.

The 2005 recipient was Terry Phillips. Terry is employed by Co-operative Regionale de Nipissing-Sudbury in Verner and is the only CCA in Northern Ontario. He is working with a dairy and cash crop-based clientele. He has demonstrated an ability to introduce new technology to producer clients to increase their profitability despite inherent shortfalls, i.e. short season, distance to market, etc. He routinely hosts or coordinates educational opportunities with industry partners throughout the value chain. As well, Terry undertakes to find solutions to the marketing and transportation issues faced by his growers including sourcing new markets and end uses for their crops.

One grower reference commented that, "Terry is committed to doing what is best rather than what is fastest or the most profitable for his employer. His strong involvement in the community reflects his commitments to his clients."

The 2005 CCA Award of Excellence was presented to Terry Phillips on January 11, 2006 at the CCA Conference and Annual Meeting in Niagara Falls before 180 of his peers. The other 2005 nominees were Bill Gallaher, Brussels Agromart and Laura Neubrand, Hoegy's Farm Supply in Brodhagen. Previous winners of the CCA Award of Excellence are Kirk Patterson, Scotland Agromart (2004) and Deb Campbell, Cargill (2003). The Award is jointly sponsored by Syngenta Crop Protection and CropLife Canada – Ontario Council.



There are over 500 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA) in Ontario. Each CCA has demonstrated their knowledge about Ontario crop production by passing the required exams. In addition, they have the crop advisory experience, the education, the commitment to continuing education and have signed a comprehensive code of ethics, which places the grower's interests first.

This industry driven program helps ensure that Ontario crop producers are well served by those providing their crop production advice.