Dale Cowan starts his day like many in agriculture, looking for signs of changing weather. But Cowan isn’t looking to the skies. He is consulting a weather station network of 80 automated stations with updates on temperatures, humidity, rainfall, growing degree days, and corn heat units.

Like many in agriculture, Cowan’s work as a senior agronomist and CCA is highly dependent on technology. It is, in part, his crafted use of technology that has earned him the International Certified Crop Adviser (ICCA) of the Year Award.

The award recognizes CCAs who deliver exceptional customer service, are highly innovative and leaders in their field, and have contributed substantially to the exchange of ideas and the transfer of agronomic knowledge within the agriculture industry. Cowan was nominated by peers at AGRIS and Wanstead Cooperatives, Ontario, Canada.

“Dale has taken great pride in understanding new technologies as they become available and investigating how these technologies can provide value to our farmer-owners and customers,” AGRIS General Manager Jim Campbell says. “Dale has taken precision farming well beyond grid soil sampling to using remote imagery, drone scouting, yield mapping, and other technologies to determine management zones to make agronomic recommendations on a zone-by-zone basis.”

As his day continues, Cowan may answer questions about crop problems via Twitter or text messages. He may use computer-generated models to predict crop growth or inform decisions about the next round of diseases and insects blowing in. Or he may put together a YouTube training video.

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Working on the north shore of Lake Erie, with its infamous algal bloom, Cowan knows how it feels to be in the crosshairs of public concern. He has served on advisory boards charged with solutions to environmental challenges. Bringing opposing viewpoints towards understanding is not always easy. The key is to seek clarity and understanding to identify the current concerns and offer the fact-based, knowledge-based, science-based background we have to resolve issues. Then calmly offer solutions for consideration that are practical, implementable, and have measurable metrics. The alternative is to never be asked to sit at the table,” he explains.

Cowan estimates his 35 years in the field have given him 10,000 hours of CCA of the Year, Dale Cowan Trust, technical knowledge mark career.

By Martha Pings, Communications Coordinator for ASA, CSSA, and SSSA

Meet the Professional

Trust, technical knowledge mark career of CCA of the Year, Dale Cowan