ASA President’s Message

ASA Approves a Five-Year Strategic Plan

Did you ever wonder (1) what color is an airplane’s black-box? Or (2) how long the Hundred Years’ War lasted? Or (3) what color is a male purple finch? (If so, see the answers at the end of the article.)

Most of the time, the words we use to describe something do influence how and what we think. In June, the ASA board met to discuss a new five-year strategic plan,1 which was subsequently approved by the ASA board at its August 2013 conference call. The plan states that ASA’s Core Purpose is: Knowledge to feed and sustain the world. The Society’s Vision Statement reads: ASA members will integrate and apply science to sustainably double agronomic production.

The Core Values of the Society have remained the same since the last approved strategic plan and include: Scientific inquiry and innovation; integrity; accountability/transparency; inclusiveness; service to society; sustainability/stewardship; and global perspective. There are four five-year goals outlined in the document:

Five-Year Goals

Goal A is that ASA will have valued programs/services and more diversified revenue. There are three high-, three medium-, and three low-priority strategies listed under this goal. One of the high-priority strategies is to develop emerging-issue webinars, which we started this summer. We had more than 200 participants for each of the weed resistance and harvest issues webinars and more than 300 for the cover crops webinar. These webinars should continue to provide the knowledge to feed and sustain the world as specified in the Core Purpose. In addition, one of the medium priorities is to setup K-12 curriculum to integrate into school and after-school programs. Some Reinvest ASA grants have been channeled specifically for this purpose, and CSSA and ASA education committees have been merged to try to move the educational efforts along.

Goal B for the five-year plan discusses awareness of agronomy and states, the integrated science of agronomy will be recognized by key audiences. Six strategies are listed, with three being high priority including expanding and promoting ASA Congressional Visits Day to remind policymakers that American and world agronomic enterprises feed and clothe the world and are important in providing biofuels for worldwide health and wealth. In addition, in order to keep the enterprise strong, continuing investments are needed in research and infrastructure. Also listed is a medium-priority strategy of producing education materials for K-12 that bridge scientific knowledge for teachers to aid in specific learning objectives.

Goal C states that ASA members will be in engaged in the Society (involvement). There are four strategies, with three listed as high priorities. One is to implement new technologies for connecting communities and their members, which has been partially funded through ASA Reinvest funds and hopefully in the next few years will be used by members. Another high priority is to develop a fully integrated membership communications plan that highlights and actively encourages engagement. And a medium priority under this goal is to develop a mentoring program for early career professionals and create a graduate student board rep position on the ASA board.

Goal D is to have ASA be more collaborative. This goal is well under way with Canadian Society of Agronomy and International Society Terrain-Vehicle Systems meeting with ASA, CSSA, and SSSA in Tampa in just a few weeks. In addition, ICCAs have been engaged with weed resistance issues with the Weed Science Society of America and others to bring not only the science, but also management practices, to the forefront of agronomic issues that must be managed. A medium-priority issue is to optimize collaborations with industry and allied associations on workforce development. This issue is being addressed through the rollout next year of CCAs mentoring undergraduate students in a Golden Opportunity (GO) track for practitioners as well as continuing the well-established GO academic track.

So we have already started down the five-year strategic goal path, making headway in some areas and challenging the Society’s membership to help work on other areas. How can you help? Volunteer for one of the many ASA committees that are out there, help in manuscript review, make a difference in your community through leadership, and apply for Congressional Visit Day opportunities. This is your Society, and it’s up to you to make a difference.

Now the answers to the quiz: (1) orange, (2) 116 years (between England and France), and (3) raspberry red with a brown tail (the female is mostly brown). See, words can make a difference in how you think...

If you have any comments or questions, please contact me at the email or number above.