Meetings

Recap of the Nitrogen Use Efficiency Conference

by Olga Walsh

The 2016 annual Nitrogen Use Efficiency Conference was a great success, with more than 60 attendees from more than 20 research institutions and 12 states. The conference started out in the early 1990s as a relatively small working group of Oklahoma State University (OSU), the University of Nebraska, the USDA-ARS, and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CYMMIT) in Mexico. Drs. Raun, Solie, and Stone (OSU) and Schepers (University of Nebraska–Lincoln, USDA-ARS)—pioneers of precision agriculture research—were the main drivers behind the conference. The idea was to bring together researchers and students to share experiences and new methodologies and to develop and advance the remote sensing concept.

With time, some progressive crop advisers and growers began taking part in the meetings. Extending precision nutrient management methodologies and concepts from ag engineering laboratories and small-plot precision ag research experiments to growers and crop advisers has become more and more important. Over the past 20 years, the conference has grown from a regional meeting originally set up as a hands-on workshop to a well-attended international meeting held annually in the first week of August. The meeting’s scope has expanded from wheat and corn to many other crops including sugarcane, cotton, potatoes, forages, sorghum, and specialty crops. Advances in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and recently revised FAA regulations for use of UAVs for ag research, has expanded the remote sensing discussion.

Participation and unique collaboration of agronomists, engineers, and extension professionals, as well as students, industry professionals, and crop advisers has notably strengthened and widened the scope of the outcomes of these meetings. The conference has resulted in many breakthroughs and development of local precision nutrient management methodologies around the world are using today to ensure their crop production practices.

This year’s meeting for the first time took place in the Pacific Northwest (PNW), being hosted in Boise, ID by the Cropping Systems Agronomy program at the University of Idaho Parma Research and Extension Center. It gave the opportunity for the participants to get a feel for Idaho ag issues and the typical challenges PNW growers face and to learn about the incredible variety and abundance of crops produced in the region. Holding the conference in Idaho has provided an excellent opportunity to showcase Idaho-based ag research and to specifically highlight several exceptional precision ag and remote-sensing projects led by Idaho scientists. Traditionally, the conference has grown from a regional meeting originally set up as a hands-on workshop to a well-attended international meeting held annually in the first week of August. The meeting’s scope has expanded from wheat and corn to many other crops including sugarcane, cotton, potatoes, forages, sorghum, and specialty crops. Advances in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and recently revised FAA regulations for use of UAVs for ag research, has expanded the remote sensing discussion.

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