CAST (the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology) is a network of experts that assembles, interprets, and communicates credible, balanced, and science-based information to policymakers, the media, the private sector, and the public. Since its beginnings in the early 1970s, CAST has proven to be a credible source of reliable information around issues of agricultural science and technology, food science, soil science, and plant science, presenting data and facts in a way that does not convey an opinion or an agenda.

CAST communicates information in various ways. First, the publications developed by CAST can be downloaded for free by anyone throughout the world. One recent example is the CAST Commentary: “A Life-cycle Approach to Low-Invasion Potential Bioenergy Production: Preventing the Next Kudzu” (see http://bit.ly/20QqKPW). Second, with the launch of each publication, CAST convenes a venue where the lead authors discuss the publication and key findings with an audience, both in person and virtually. Third, the Borlaug CAST Communication Award is presented annually for outstanding achievement by a scientist, engineer, technologist, or other professional working in the agricultural, environmental, or food sectors for contributing to the advancement of science in public policy. Finally, the CAST website provides access to information in variety of forms, including educational videos (CAST has its own SchoolTube video channel) and videos such as the “Top 50 Food Questions” video series.

More than 30 professional societies, governmental organizations, commodity organizations, and private companies are members of CAST. Each organization has one representative serving on the CAST Board of Representatives. CSSA, ASA, and SSSA are all members of CAST, and the president of each Society has appointed a representative to a three-year term. Your Society representatives to the CAST Board of Representatives are:

- ASA: Drew Lyon, Washington State University
- CSSA: David Baltensperger, Texas A&M University
- SSSA: Mary Beth Adams, USDA Forest Service

Having three representatives on the CAST Board of Representatives provides us with a strong voice at the table as issues of importance to agronomic, crop, and soil sciences are discussed and publication decisions are made.

What Does a Society Representative Do?

The primary charge of CAST Board or Representatives is to serve on a work group. All three of us participate in the Plant Agriculture and Environmental Issues Work Group. The other two work groups are: (1) Animal Agriculture and Environmental Issues and (2) Food Science and Safety.

Another important duty of representatives is to communicate effectively and regularly with the organizations they represent. This may include reporting to the organization’s board, leaders, newsletter, and other avenues to ensure that organizational members understand the current status of CAST projects, accomplishments, and recent activities.

Representatives also act as a first point of contact to facilitate and enhance communication between CAST staff and the member organizations. As the liaisons from our three Societies, we are looking for ideas for CAST publications or activities to present to the board. We encourage you to think about projects that might fit well under this format. Some projects currently in development include: (1) Agricultural Innovation: Irrigation and Precision Crop Management Technologies, (2) Agricultural Innovation: Plant Breeding and Genetics, and (3) Recruiting and Educating Graduate Students to Become Researchers and Leaders in Global Agricultural Sciences. Key components of any CAST publication request include potential authors and leaders for the effort. When you have an idea, please make sure to provide us with some potential authors and leaders of a given topic as well as the potential audience.

To learn more, check out the website (www.cast-science.org), or talk to one of us!

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