Industry News

Fluid Fertilizer Foundation

The Fluid Fertilizer Foundation presented the 2017 Werner L. Nelson Award to Dr. Robert Miller, Affiliate Professor and Proficiency Program Coordinator at Colorado State University, at its February 2018 meeting in Scottsdale, AZ. The award recognizes Miller’s contributions in the development of soil fertility practices and plan nutrition management to increase crop yields for the benefit of the North American farmer and consumer. This honor is bestowed on an individual who has demonstrated leadership, innovation, keen insight, and integrity in the pursuit of wise and careful fertilizer use to maximize crop yields.

Syngenta Acquires Independent Vegetable Seed Breeder

Syngenta recently announced the acquisition of Abbott & Cobb, a U.S.-owned independent breeder, producer, and marketer of vegetable seeds. Syngenta says the move will strengthen its vegetable seeds business in sweet corn.

“Abbott & Cobb is a strategic acquisition for Syngenta Vegetable Seeds, and it will give us access to high-eating-quality germplasm and early-maturity varieties to complement the Syngenta portfolio,” says Javier Martinez-Cabrera, Syngenta Head of Vegetables Seeds North America. “We welcome the Abbott & Cobb team into the business and look forward to achieving great things as one team.”

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New Corporate Member

We welcome the following new corporate member as of 11 May 2018:

Verdesian Life Sciences, Cary, NC, Silver Level

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Corporate Membership is an effective component in your company’s outreach to agronomic, crop, soil, and environmental science professionals and students. Three corporate membership levels enable your company to interact with the Societies in ways that best fit your needs. All levels provide access to journal, meetings, membership, and recognition benefits, as well as special reduced rates for company-wide Digital Library subscriptions. And a Corporate Membership supports the missions of the Societies and the development of students in our professions.

Visit www.agronomy.org/membership/corporate for more information, or contact Eric Welsh at ewelsh@sciencesocieties.org or 608-268-4981.

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Letter to the Editor

Re: Does It Matter What We Call It?

In the April 2018 issue of CSA News magazine, ASA President Steven Evett poses the question, “Does it matter what we call it?” (referring to agronomy and the related disciplines and subdisciplines).

I would argue that it does matter for a variety of reasons. First, identity comes in a name; derived from the Latin, “agronomy” means “field” (agros), and I was told “management” (nomos) though I can’t verify the second part. Thus, agronomy is a broad term covering all aspects of field management as opposed to city management or forest management. It is a reality that many other fields have spread their realms into agronomy (e.g., agricultural engineering, natural resources management, hydrology, environmental science, etc., as described in Dr. Evett’s article). This doesn’t mean we should abandon our identity; it means we need to be more effective at claiming our identity. As agronomists, we need to educate the public as to what we do and, even more so, make fellow scientists aware that we do essential work.

Secondly, the name of agronomy roots us to crops (food, fiber, and biofuel) and agriculture. As the world population grows and climate changes, these will become more important, not less. We need more media coverage of our value to solving world problems. Maybe we need better keyword input to computer search engines so that when people are interested in a subject, they are pointed to ASA and associated journals and societies as well as government agencies that employ agronomists. I think at the Agronomy Club at Penn State when I was there in the late 1970s, we had a t-shirt slogan that read, “Outstanding in our field.” We are outstanding and have been addressing world problems for hundreds of years. Unfortunately, with regards to promotion of our subject matter, many agronomists tend to be quiet, unassuming types that are not prone to boast. We need to “toot our own horn” much more.

Thirdly, just because the world is rapidly changing and globalizing doesn’t mean that we need to “modernize” by changing the name of our field (no pun intended). There is a risk of losing the territory that we have controlled or the antecedence or precedence of being the experts on issues related to crops, water, and soil. Many reputations are at stake in changing the name from agronomy with international understanding of the word agronomy (e.g., French = agronomie, Spanish = agronomía, Italian = agronomy, German = agronomy, Russian = agronomy). If internationally we are losing ground to other scientists, then we need to not be so insular in our meetings, publications, and contacts.

Thanks for the thought-provoking coverage you provide.

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