

California Department of Food & Agriculture
Fertilizer Research & Education Program

Project Title: California Certified Crop Advisor FREP Educational Project

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Administration of the California Certified Crop Advisor Program.

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August 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007= \$49,999
January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008+\$48,999

17 month final report for California Certified Crop Advisor FREP Educational Project: August 1, 2007-December 31, 2008

This report is being submitted to the California Department of Food & Agriculture's Fertilizer Research & Education Program (FREP). This annual/final report complies with the CDFA FREP 2008 project requirements.

Statement of Objectives:

The Ca. CCA educational project has as its goal to provide a needs-based mechanism for the educational credits and certification of qualified individuals to promote the educational goals of FREP with regards to soil, water, crop and resource management; enhance to viability of Crop Advisor Certification by several marketing/outreach methods. The main audience for this project will be the CCA members themselves, service companies who can (and should) promote the CCA program amongst employees, regulatory and resource management agencies and other interested individuals.

The following are the objectives outlined in the approved project.

1. *Broaden California CCA's identification and role in the California regulatory environment;*
2. *Increase and strengthen California CCA membership;*
3. *Outline multi-tiered, long term plan towards self-sustainability as an organization;*
4. *Efficiently administer and track the continuing education units (CEUs of the California CCA and keep the flow of information to California CCA members.*

Abstract/Summary:

This report addresses the achievements and challenges experienced during the 17 month educational grant period regarding the agreement with the Regents of the University of California as the Contractor and the California Association of Pest Control Advisers (CAPCA) as the Cooperator for support of the California Certified Crop Advisor Board (Ca. CCA).

The key challenge is to identify the key players (farmers, farm employees, fertilizer applicators, service companies and other service providers) with regards to the judicious use of fertilizers (and other resources) in California's crop production systems. However, the question arises as to what mechanism exists to best assure sum-total improvement in knowledge among practitioners in California.

To summarize major milestones accomplished during the reporting period:

- Accomplishment of expanding the Ca. CCA vision, identification and role in the leadership for the nutrient management expertise to affiliated industries, and regulatory bodies impacting by improper use of fertilizer applications or the safeguards utilized to prevent environmental harm;
- Successfully launched and managed a marketing and recruitment effort to acknowledge to potential CCA candidates value for

possessing a CCA certification to enhance current and future program participants;

- Established foundation ground work for the development of self-sustainability as an organization with both dues and non dues revenue;
- Maintained administration of CEU hour announcements and approvals for membership and supported ICCA efforts in accuracy of tracking data.

The approach to achieve the goals of the Ca. CCA FREP educational project was to model the continuing education units (CEUs) for the Ca. CCA after the California Department of Pesticides (CDPR) for continued certification accreditation that was operationally and administratively available to CCA members. The Cooperator (CAPCA) performed this function on a daily basis. The Ca. CCA Board developed educational and marketing outreach tools to reach key audiences acknowledging the role and value of using a CCA for advising agricultural producers on fertilizer use and issues as they impact and are impacted by regulations and environmental laws. The long term self-sustainability/viability of the Ca. CCA program continues to loom as a challenge currently being addressed by improved membership numbers and strategies to develop non-dues revenue streams to assist in educational opportunities for members involved with decision-making pertaining to fertilizers to increase their knowledge base.

Introduction:

The California Certified Crop Advisor (Ca.CCA) Program is a voluntary, non-profit organization that represents the Certified Crop Advisors who provide nutrient recommendations to private applicators, agricultural producers such as the dairy industry, and governmental agencies tasked with the stewardship of the state's natural resources.

The Ca. CCA program continues to establish its value as an asset in public education related to fertilizers, soil resource management, and crop production. There exists many opportunities in the Ca. CCA program to work with growers and to develop incentives for growers to utilize the skills and knowledge of CCAs in their production operations as the State becomes more and more active with regards to environment regulations. Specifically, nutrient management plans (NMPs) will likely be an important component of the future of many types of farming operations, driven by permitting and public agencies.

Funding received during the seventeen month Ca. CCA educational project from CDFA/FREP enabled the all volunteer CCA board to achieve work objectives to improve the educational opportunities of California agriculture related to fertilizers, farm management and agricultural sustainability.

Work Objectives Accomplished During August 1, 2007 –December 31, 2008:

Objectives:

1. Broaden Ca. CCA's identification and role of in the California regulatory environment through the California CCA Board, Public Relations and Marketing Committees to develop the best approaches to messaging the CCA role in the stewardship of our natural resources.

Task 1: Meet with/raising awareness among legislators, regulators and/or environmental groups.

The Ca. CCA Board with membership volunteers supported by CAPCA and Marketing consultant has experienced impressive achievements in our outreach programs to articulate the importance and value of having the CCA expertise involved in nutrient management decision making. CCA volunteers engaged in speaking before numerous agricultural crop management/nutrient management groups and affiliated commodity groups to raise the awareness of the Ca. CCA program. Marketing material was distributed at several large annual conferences as part of an over all exhibit and member presence. Several key tasks accomplished included the consulting and expertise Ca. CCAs contributed to compliance with the manure management concerns being raised by the Central Valley Water Control Board, partnering with CAPCA and the Organic Fertilizer Association of California to provide food management expertise; support for the awareness for the "Pathway to PCA/CCA" program being implemented by the Stanley W. Strew Educational Fund and presentations to university officials and agricultural students at the Western Plant Health Association & CAPCA student dinners/career days.

Task 1.1: Ca. CCA forms a Public Relations Committee to address fertilizer/environmental issues and the role of Ca. CCA is taking to mitigate the negative impact, educate producers, legislators and regulatory staff.

The Ca. CCA Board authorized and implemented a Public Relations Committee to address aforementioned issues.

Task 2: Partner with affiliated fertilizer industry organizations to conduct technical workshops.

The Ca. CCA Board engaged CAPCA, California ASA, WPHA and the California Organic Fertilizer Association (OFAC) to provide

speakers on technical nutrient management topics and provide farmer friendly information on how to address regulatory challenges or concerns.

Task 3: Develop and produce informational media.

Task 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3: Develop and produce informational/recruiting brochures; develop and produce Power Point Presentations; and design and maintain exhibit booths for use as a CCA informational forum respectively.

The Ca. CCA Board through its Marketing Committee volunteers with advice from the marketing consultant produced CCA brochures, recruiting pamphlets, pre-exam web based study, Power Point Presentations for both pre exam on sight tutorial study as well as a PPT used for educational awareness. The Ca.CCA exhibit booth photos and message board were upgraded to be current with the various conferences and seminars where CCA volunteers staffed to provide program awareness.

2. Increase and strengthen California CCA membership.

Task 1: Communicate benefits of being a certified crop advisor (CCA).

The California CCA membership as has other states experienced an undocumented decline in members at the beginning of 2007. A 10% drop in membership seemed to parallel the decline in licensed PCAs in California where “baby boomers’ are retiring. Of the CCA membership for California, 85% hold PCA licenses. The numbers dropped to a low of 407 members coming into the beginning of this educational grant period. The CCA Board successfully implemented pre-exam training and incorporated an on-line practice exam to assist candidates in their exam preparation. As a result of the Ca. CCA Board’s educational outreach identifying the value of a CCA certification, the membership participation has climbed to 452 members for December 2008 and this achievement was realized while dues and test fees were increased.

Task1.1: Deliver the Ca. CCA message established in Objective 1 via the internet, printed materials, professional meetings, display booths and messages delivered to producers, manufacturers, marketers’ service groups and CAPCA.

The Ca. CCA Board with support from CAPCA and the marketing consultant accomplished the goal of identifying the optimum venues to participate and executed the tasks identified in Task 1.1. Web based information, email, e-newsletters; printed materials and seminar based marketing were all incorporated and implemented.

Task 1.2: The CCA booth to be displayed at CAPCA and FREP annual conference.

The Ca. CCA exhibit booth was utilized at a number of industry events during the 17 month educational grant period to include: CAPCA, FREP, Almond Board Conference and Alfalfa Conference.

Task 1.3: CAPCA to coordinate & publish CCA articles in Adviser Magazine.

CAPCA allocated article space and no cost CCA advertising in nine publications during the educational project. E-newsletters were utilized to inform members as well as web based informational postings.

Task 1.4: CCA Marketing Committee will review other states' CCA marketing strategies, programs and materials to identify value to California program.

Ca. CCA Board Chair with assistance from marketing consultant conducted inquires from key CCA regions to maximize marketing and educational outreach opportunities for the Ca. CCA program.

Task 1.5: Ca. CCA membership committee and volunteers to hold area meetings for current and potential CCA members.

The marketing committee led by the CCA Board Chair, CAPCA CEO and marketing consultant engaged in numerous seminar and educational venues throughout California to articulate advantages in possessing a CCA certification. The decision to partner or participate with existing educational oriented venues and seminars provide the widest audience opportunities and controlled costs from not having to independently conduct a meeting or workshop.

Task 2: Identify, develop and promote CEU for CCA specialty crop/nutrient environment.

Task 2.1 & 2.2:

CAPCA utilized its continuing education provider's mailing list to inform and encourage seminar sponsors to submit requests for CCA hours to maximize the educational opportunities and published the courses both in the CAPCA Adviser magazine and on the CCA web page. CEU chairs were reminded constantly to consider and allow for CCA nutrient oriented presentations. Western Farm Press with support from allied crop protection sponsors and WPHA developed several on-line CEU courses during the educational project period. Additionally, huge progress has been realized in the development and educational dissemination of a manure management program for compliance with the Central Valley Water Control Board's expectations of improved management plans for dairies. The UCCE system was encouraged to submit CEU approval requests to develop a larger universe of nutrient oriented research seminars. The CCA Board successfully gained reciprocity with both Arizona and the NW CCA regional association for testing conformity.

Task 3: Recruit new CCA members.

Task 3.1; 3.2 and 3.3: Identify and outline potential sources for new CCA members; devise and implement recruitment activities; and develop study guides and testing assistance for certification.

The Ca. CCA Board successfully engaged the fertilizer, crop protection, nutrient manufacturers and licensed PCAs in addressing the value and importance of achieving a CCA certification and the professional achievement of obtaining this certification. CAPCA, Wilbur-Ellis, Helena Chemical Company, Simplot, Western Farm Service and the IAP retailers and distributors were all included in the public and educational outreach venues to seek their future support and involvement in having eligible employees obtain their CCA certification. Participation in CAPCA/WPHA student dinner career seminars allowed for outreach at the campus level and the career opportunities in the healthy plant and crop protection industries. The Ca.CCA program will be a beneficiary of the Stanley W. Strew Educational "Pathway to PCA" program being designed to recruit PCAs and nutrient management professionals. The Ca. CCA Board introduced two pre exam training seminars offered twice annually to assist CCA candidates with their study materials and test expectations. UCCE hosts an on-line pre exam practice test for candidates as an additional tool.

Task 4: Retain current CCA members.

Task 4.1; 4.2; and 4.3: Mail annual notice to members regarding CEU status; CCA board to review membership status and trends

and make personal contacts to retain members; and CAPCA to administer web site for member information.

The retention of members has been a challenge due to a 10% retirement rate realized in early 2007. This reduction in members correlates to the same data being experienced by PCA, County Ag staffs and DPR personnel due to retirements. Notwithstanding, the Ca. CCA Board has been aggressive during the educational project period and has regained the total count of memberships previously lost do to a positive recruitment effort. CAPCA and ICCA provide the official notices to all CCAs to are delinquent in CEU hours or have not paid their dues. The CCA Board personal contacts any member falling into either category to determine if assistance can be provided. ICCA and CAPCA web sites provide the essential information for membership information and retention.

3. Outline multi-tiered, long term plan towards self-sustainability as an organization.

Task 1: Ca. CCA Board to examine alternative opportunities for self sustainability or minimum FREP support and develop a multi-tiered approach to realization of this goal.

The California CCA Board has taken this assignment very seriously. The California CCA program recognizes without the support of CDFA/FREP, they would be challenged financially to be a viable resource for nutrient/fertilizer outreach. Current membership dues/test fees alone will not provide the necessary resources to adequately fund the goals of the organization although both dues and test fees have been increased. The Ca. CCA Board leadership has embarked on developing non dues revenue to determine what resources are truly available to support the educational values achieved via the CCA certification. The Ca. CCA Board has established an initial partnership with the California ASA to conduct a statewide CCA event as the one previously held with CAPCA to find the right venue to hold a general membership meeting. The need for input from members is vital for continuing or moving the CCA program to the next level. The California Board has also began to organize two non dues programs to raise revenue. First is to seek associate membership participation from allied crop/nutrient management companies recognizing the CCA role in California and the second program is too develop and conduct nutrient management seminars independently and with existing industry partners to develop a revenue source. The continued recognition by CDFA/FREP via educational grant awards is of extreme importance during this transitional phase for self-sustainability.

Task 2: Develop ways to increase member revenues.

Task 2.1 & 2.2: Develop an associate membership program for manufacturers and retailers; recruitment & retention of members and new members.

The Ca. CCA Board has increased members dues and has identified an associate membership program to be launched in 2009. Recruitment and retention is the corner stone to all Ca. CCA outreach and educational activities.

Task 3: Develop ways of increasing Ca. CCA member involvement to strengthen implementation of the ca. CCA program.

Task 3.1; 3.2; 3.3: Recruit volunteers & committee members from non-board members; develop an annual Ca. CCA meeting; and increase Ca. CCA involvement in the ICCA program.

The Ca. CCA board has exhibited an exemplary accomplishment in these tasking. The Board has reached outside of the Board make-up to invite and incorporate CCAs and University/Farm Advisors to participate and support the re-building of the Ca. CCA program. The Ca. CCA program initially had one third of the CAPCA annual conference breakout sessions in 2007 to experience the interest and support for a general membership meeting. During the 2008 project period, the CCA representatives will utilize the 2009 Ca. ASA annual conference to test response from Ca. CCA members to engage in their own networking opportunity. The Ca. CCA Board Chair has attended the ICCAs annual meetings, been elected to the ICCA board and received the CCA of the Year award. The ICCA Executive Director attended a Ca. CCA Board meeting and has participated on conference calls when invited.

3. Efficiently administer & track the CEUs of CCAs and keep flow of information to the California CCA member.

Task 1: Administer the Ca. CCA CEU documentation.

Task 1.1; Task 1.2; Task 1.3; Task 1.4: Daily administer accreditation of members' CE; report members' CEUs to ICCA for tracking; answer members' questions where applicable; and submit quarterly reports to University of California for CDFA/FREP documentation.

CAPCA as the Cooperator of the FREP grant provides the daily administration for the CEU approval and member communications. The administration of the approved course data is published on web, print media and e-newsletters to the membership. CAPCA coordinates with ICCA for all announcements regarding CCA CEU record tracking and

provides the administration support for the two CCA exams held in California at as many as five exam site locations. CAPCA complies the quarterly reports for the University of California for the CDFA/FREP reports.

Results/Discussion/Conclusion:

As an educational outreach project, we have no representative data obtained from experiments. Likewise, we have no findings, evidence or interpretations to disclose. Our project was an educational endeavor to raise the visibility of the Ca. CCA program and to acknowledge the professional value of possessing a certified crop advisor certification for the purpose to improve the educational opportunities of California agriculture related to fertilizers, farm management and agricultural sustainability. It is our belief we have experienced many positive achievements and successes identified in the 17 month project that warrants recognition for the accomplishments made by a volunteer organization.

Project Evaluation:

The University of California (Davis) is satisfied with the accomplishments realized during the seventeen month grant period regarding the Ca. CCA educational project. As the Contractor, the performances of the services of the Cooperator (CAPCA) and the direction and leadership provided by the California CCA Board of Directors and volunteers accomplished or addressed the objectives and tasks in a satisfactory manner. The daily execution of the program administration continues to be exemplary servicing the inquiries and needs of members and potential members alike.

The empowerment of the CCA volunteers is starting to pay dividends as stakeholder interest is beginning to develop the passion and drive the educational awareness and value to agronomy related audiences for holding a CCA certification has been noteworthy as evidenced by a growth in membership and a new found stakeholder involvement. The CCA Board has become much more engaged in developing programs and strategies to obtain self funding and had one of the most successful recruiting for test applicants and potential CCA certification in recent history. The University of California does recognize the continued partnership and support from FREP is essential to the success of both programs in articulating the nutrient management profession in California.

Outreach Activities Summary:

The quarterly reports submitted by the project leader, principles, cooperator and the marketing consultant identified the outreach activities. During the 17 month educational period, venues including CAPCA Annual Conference & CE seminars, WPHA nutrient management seminars, Alfalfa Conference, Almond Conference,

OFAC seminars and affiliated industry meetings were all recipients of the Ca. CCA outreach efforts. Articles in the *CAPCA Adviser* and the *ICCA* magazines were distributed to thousands of agronomy and pest management professionals. Specific data for participants make up of audience and evaluation of the overall effectiveness or impact of the outreach event was not maintained. We can state that PCAs, CCAs, qualified applicators, producers, commodity board staffs, service industry members, Ag Commissioner Staffs, NRCS staffs and UCCE advisors were in attendance and benefited from the message regarding educational goals of FREP and the California Certified Crop Advisor program

Additional Resource:

California CCA PPT