

# **Growing the Science of Agronomy by Growing the Profession: A Message from the President of the American Society of Agronomy**

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We often refer to the American Society of Agronomy (ASA) as being both *scientific* and *professional*. Membership within our organization includes a wide-range of people from diverse regions and cultures of the world working with complex and diverse cropping systems. Yet members are unified by their passion to work together to develop the science, create better solutions, and effectively communicate agronomic knowledge. Principally, they are dedicated to the conservation and wise use of natural resources to produce food, feed, and fiber crops while maintaining and improving the environment. ASA is seen as a progressive scientific society meeting the needs of its members through publications, recognition and awards, placement service, certification programs, meetings, and student activities. We also give U.S. members a voice in government with a Science Policy Office in Washington, DC. But just as *science* grows with new discovery, so should the *profession*. Thus the organization of a society that is concerned with both *scientific* and *professional* needs of its members should not remain stagnant. Sustainable scientific and professional societies respond to emerging issues, embrace innovative communication advances, and answer to the needs of the recipient audience of its science.

During its strategic planning in 2006, the ASA Board of Directors took a careful and realized that the science of agronomy was being held back by a dated society organizational structure. The Board noted that the Society was defined by a divisional structure and naming that went back many decades, even though modern agronomic challenges and issues were often defined by new nomenclature. And most notably, the fabric of our society was defined by rigid bylaws, not very elastic to changes. We were struggling to keep up with members' needs. It was obvious a change was needed.

Over the past three years actions have been taken to restructure ASA. At the annual meetings in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania in 2009, a restructuring plan was presented at each of the ASA division business meetings. Then in the summer of 2010 members voted and with over 90% in support, the change of organizational structure was approved. The new ASA organization officially started January 1, 2011.

So what changed? Instead of a one-tiered, divisional structure, the new ASA has two levels of organization for programs and services. The first order of organization is ***Communities***. Communities can be created along varied topical areas of members'

interests. Within Communities grass-root ideas and planning for meeting sessions or other activities will occur. Many of the programs and service activities within ASA will be initiated within Communities. Since they are not written within the bylaws, Communities can form and disband easily.

The second order of organization is **Sections**. Sections are defined by broad disciplinary and functional areas within agronomic science. Sections are the unifying organizational framework for Community activities, providing coordination and management functions. Sections are written into the bylaws and therefore will be relatively stable over time. Seven Sections were identified. In just 3 months, 35 Communities have been formed within these seven Sections (see sidebar). The new structure gives new language to describing ASA and the science it represents. For up to date developments in the organization, go to <https://www.agronomy.org/membership/sections>

In addition to ASA organization restructuring, a second major effort has been undertaken to grow the impact of agronomy science. This is accomplished by enhancing professional services to those who work on day-by-day basis with farmers and land managers with the International Certified Crop Adviser (ICCA) program. This program consists of over 13,000 practicing agronomic professionals throughout the world. These advisers work with grower clients to apply the most recent research findings and technical knowledge to maximize return in their farming operations. While members of this certification program are currently concentrated in North America, ICCA programs are quickly emerging in other areas of the world. Most notably, ICCA launched a program in India in 2010. The ASA's ICCA Program is based in the United States but the India CCA is based in New Delhi, India. India CCA is the first venture outside of North America and greatly expands the international vision for the program. For more details see: <https://www.certifiedcropadviser.org/india> ..

#### **Agronomic Production Systems Section**

- Applied Soybean Research
- Bioenergy Systems
- High Plains Dryland Cropping Systems
- Organic Management Systems
- Precision Agriculture Systems
- Professional Applied Agronomists
- Sensor-Based Nutrient Management
- Solar Corridor Crop System
- Weedy and Invasive Plant Species

#### **Biometry and Statistical Computing Section**

- Bioinformatics in Crops and Soils
- Statistical Education/Training for Researchers
- Spatial Statistics Application

#### **Climatology and Modeling Section**

- Agroclimatology and Agronomic Modeling
- Airborne and Satellite Remote Sensing
- Biophysical Measurements and Sensors
- Global Climate Change
- Model Applications in Field Research
- Remote Sensing of Evapotranspiration
- Sensor-Based Water Management
- Soil-Plant-Water Relations

#### **Education and Extension Section**

- Advancing Agronomy via Public-Private Collaboration
- Advisors Developing Undergraduate Student Activities
- Extension Education
- K-12 Outreach and Activities
- Social Media in Education/Extension
- Undergraduate Education

#### **Environmental Quality Section**

- Animal Agriculture and the Environment
- Biochar: Agronomic and Environmental Uses
- By-product Gypsum Uses in Agriculture
- Nutrient Loss Assessment and Prevention
- Soil Carbon and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

#### **Global Agronomy Section**

- Field Diagnosis for Smallholder Agriculture
- Global Digital Soil Map

#### **Land Management and Conservation Section**

- Agricultural Experiment Station Management
- Military Land Use and Management