



CSA Newsletter

Canadian Society of Agronomy

July 2009



President's Message

Coming up on the end of my term as president of our society, I feel very encouraged to see the number of high-calibre candidates for positions of leadership in the recent election. Many thanks to Yousef Papadopoulos and the nomination committee. I am very pleased to announce the results. The new president-elect is Rigas Karamanos, agronomy manager for Viterra Inc. Rigas has been instrumental in fundraising for our last two conferences. Elected as eastern director is Thin-Meiw "Alek" Choo, research scientist at the Eastern Cereal and Oilseed Research Centre with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. And, as western director, Patricia Juskiw, plant breeder with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development in Lacombe. Prithiviraj Balakrishnan takes over from Gavin Humphries as secretary-treasurer.

Several people are completing their terms on the CSA executive. I would like to express appreciation for their efforts over the last few years. Yousef Papadopoulos steps down from the past-president position. The CSA owes a lot to Yousef's strong leadership and dedication over the past six years. Gavin Humphries completes his term as secretary-treasurer. Gavin has done an excellent job as liaison to Plant Canada as well. Rigas Karamanos and Philippe Seguin complete their terms as western and eastern director, respectively. I've learned a lot from working with all of you! I welcome Shabtai Bittman to the position of president. I'm confident that his integrative view of agronomy will serve CSA members well.

This summer's conference features ten invited speakers (see the spring newsletter or guelph09.ca for details), more than 100 volunteer talks, and 85 poster presentations. Sixteen CSA students are competing for best presentation, 7 in orals and 9 in posters. Graduate student activities, a statistics symposium and a tour of the Elora Research Station are all in the plans. More than 185 are already registered. If you haven't yet done so, don't miss out!

The conference theme, "Sciences for Sustainability: Soil, Agronomy and Atmosphere," ties our science to practical application. Sustainability has become a universal goal. It's showing up more and more frequently, in commercial advertising, on product labels, and in industry triple-bottom-line reporting. Cynics may call it "green-washing" — but if they are right, then we need to ask ourselves whether it's our science that has failed. The challenges of sustainability are immensely complex. Good science, properly harnessed to practical applications and political will, is essential to their resolution.

As agronomists we need to ask ourselves how we can better direct our resources to answering the questions that surround meeting human needs—for current and future generations—through the management of crops and soils. World hunger is projected to reach a historic high in 2009 with over one billion people going hungry every day, according to new estimates published by FAO. Canada has rich agricultural resources, but the only real increase since 1997 in net agricultural exports took place last year—mostly owing to higher prices, not higher production. Ontario's trade deficit in agri-food has now climbed past 7 billion dollars. We also need to make clear to the Canadian public that we could be doing a lot more to produce to our potential.

Future conferences are already in the active planning stage. Mark your calendars for 20-24 June 2010 in Saskatoon with CSSS, and 17-21 July 2011 in Halifax with Plant Canada.

I look forward to seeing you in Guelph.

*Tom Bruulsema,
President*

ELECTION RESULTS



President
Shabtai Bittman



President-Elect
Rigas Karamanos



Past President
Tom Bruulsema



Secretary/Treasurer
Balakrishnan Prithiviraj



Eastern Director
Alek Choo



Western Director
Patricia Juskiw

CSSS/CSA 2010 Conference

Our Evolving Biosphere - Transfers and Transformations

Place: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Dates: June 20-24, 2010
Host: University of Saskatchewan

- Conference will be on campus at the U of Saskatchewan.
- Accommodation will be nearby hotels with bus services, and the university student residence.
- Programs are being developed, which may include “A soils classification competition”, “Crop species identification competition”, “Field trips”, etc.

Should you wish to contribute some ideas to the conference, please contact one of the following CSA representatives of the local Organizing Committee:

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Next Plant Canada Conference
(for all member societies)
Summer 2011

Dear Colleague:

On behalf of the Organising Committee it is our pleasure to invite you to attend the Plant Canada meeting in Halifax during the summer of 2011. The meeting will be held in a first class conference environment while providing participants with easy access to the many entertainment options of this city including the historic waterfront, museums, galleries, shopping, dining and nightlife. In short we are hoping to entice you to participate in a meeting with excellent multidisciplinary science, and to also possibly set aside time for rest and relaxation in the region. Nova Scotia is known as one of the best vacation destinations in Canada! We look forward to seeing you in Halifax where Maritime hospitality is guaranteed!

Yousef A. Papadopoulos, Conference Co-Chair & Chairperson of the Organizing Committee
David Percival, Conference Co-Chair
Shahrokh Khanizadeh, Plant Canada President

<http://www.plantcanada.ca/eng/PCPoster.html>

Hijacked Future, Global Television Production. – review by Rene Van Acker

« Who controls the seeds controls the food » is the central theme of this broad ranging documentary which tells the tale of how the industrialized model of agriculture has lead to the point where very few companies now control a majority of the world's commercial seed and crop genetic resources. Through interviews with a cadre of well known Canadian commentators on the ills of industrial agriculture, including Terry Boehm, Pat Mooney, Devlin Kuyek and David Qualman, among others, watchers are introduced to concepts of industrialized agriculture, primarily the subjugation of farmers to the cost price squeeze. Much of the concepts and material presented will be very familiar to agriculturalists but it is rare to see these concepts and this material presented in such a forceful manner and in a format intended for viewing by the general public on a major Canadian network. This fact is perhaps a harbinger of how society may shape agriculture in the future and in what direction that shaping may take place. The documentary producers build their thesis of the ills and dangers of industrialized agriculture on a number of issues including the increasing dependence of farmers on external inputs, and the push for corporate control over commercial seeds, the patenting of seeds and the global efforts to concentrate seed ownership and prevent farmers from saving seeds. The industrialized model of Canadian farming in this regard, is contrasted with efforts in Ethiopia where projects including a living gene bank and cooperative plant breeding are given as examples of ways of supporting agriculture that lead to greater genetic diversity on the land and in reserve. This point is made strongly in this documentary and it is held up as fundamentally important if food production is to adapt to global climate change. The documentary makes clear the principle that ecosystems use diversity to maintain resilience. For those who are strong supporters of the industrialized model of agriculture, this documentary will be infuriating and it will seem one sided, but for agriculturalists who are keen observers of the evolution of agriculture, and especially the role of society in that evolution, this documentary is a window in on broader societal perspectives on agriculture and our shared future.

You can see the webpage, including view a trailer and buy the DVD, at <http://www.hijackedfuture.com/index.html>

For more information from Global Television, contact Yvonne Chiang, 604-422-6736, ychiang@globaltv.com

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