

Conservation Agriculture and its Role in Soil Health, Sustainable Food Production and Food Security.

A topical lunch on October 4th 2010 was held on the above topic. After introductions, Peter Hobbs briefly explained what soil health and conservation agriculture was from an agronomist's point of view. This was followed by a brief description of the CA web site by Lucy Fisher <http://conservationagriculture.mannlib.cornell.edu/> Erika Steiger also described her participation at the 5th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture held in Brisbane last week. The topic was then opened for discussion on ways to get a Cornell community more involved in the larger picture of sustainable land management to meet future food security needs.

There were several good comments made during the short discussion. Bernd Blossey felt the topic was too narrow to interest his environmental and larger scale research. But this means that there is a need to develop an umbrella group to encourage synergies between disciplines to better address the future challenges of feeding a population that is way bigger than nature ever intended. Sustainable Land Management will need involvement of soil science, agronomy, plant pathology, natural resource management, ecology, economics, climatology, sociology and other disciplines that we have at Cornell. We also need to link with outside agencies in the USA but also overseas.

Frank DiSalvo suggested that there was a need to leverage resources, one important role for any umbrella group. The CARE project that also has an interest in sustainable land management is an example of an outside linkage that could bring the different disciplines together. There was no time to discuss who would take the lead in finding such type of funding sources. Maybe a small working group could be formed for this purpose.

Bianca Moebius made a good suggestion after the meeting "to bring in people (in-house or from elsewhere) to explicitly address the differences in methods, vocabulary, scopes of interest, goals, mind-frames, etc, and invite a lot of discussion to move forward meaningfully." This could be done through well planned meetings where various campus groups are invited to get together and discuss issues of Sustainable Land management (SLM) including soil health, invasive species, waste management, water resources, SRI, EcoAgriculture and other interested groups.

The attendees at this meeting were:

Host Peter Hobbs, ph14 CSS and International Programs, CALS

Lucy Fisher, lhf2 CIIFAD and SRI program

Chris Barrett, cbb2 AEM

Bernd Blossey, bb22 NTRES

Janice Thies, janice.thies@cornell.edu CSS

Bianca Moebius-Clune, bnm5 CSS

Eugene Fifer, etf26 IARD MPS student

Erika Styger, eds8 CIIFAD and SRI

Frank DiSalvo, fjd3 Director Atkinson Center

Alex Travis, ajt32 Institute of Animal Health

Harold Van Es, hmv1 CSS

Champat Raj Mehta, crm236 Visiting scientist from India in CSS

David Lee, drl5 AEM

Helene Schember, hrs6 Executive Director Atkinson Center

Todd Schmit, tms1 AEM

Julie Lauren, jgl5 CSS

John Duxbury, jmd17 CSS

Emily Reiss, err76 Graduate Student Horticulture

Devon Jenkins, devonjenkins@gmail.com IARD MPS student

Meth Anne Medvecky, bam44 CIIFAD IGERT program

Mark Lawrence, mal64 Atkinson Center

Amod Thakur amod_wtcer@yahoo.com Borlaug Fellow from India

Ramana Rao Kondapally kvramanarao@yahoo.com Borlaug Fellow from India

Brian Sobol bds229 Graduate student Horticulture

Charles Hyland cph22 Research assistant CSS