News Release
Conservation Technology Information Center 30
CTIC champions , promotes, and provides information about conservation and sustainable agricultural systems that are beneficial for soil, water, air, and wildlife resources and are productive and profitable for agriculture.

CTIC Celebrates Past, Present and Future of Conservation Agriculture

The Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) celebrated its 30th anniversary on October 25, 2012, at Monsanto's facility in Creve Coeur, Mo., with a pair of panel discussions exploring the past, present and future of agricultural conservation. That evening, the organization also held a dinner banquet honoring the visionaries who created, led and supported the organization over the past three decades.

"Celebrating CTIC's 30th anniversary is a perfect opportunity to take stock of the conservation achievements of American agriculture over the last 30 years, trace the path that the industry has taken to get where we are, and chart a course for the future," said CTIC board member Ron Olson of The Mosaic Company, the lead sponsor for the event. "Information about the stewardship of soil, water and air quality is absolutely critical to agriculture and to society as a whole. CTIC has a long and proud history of sharing the information that helps put conservation practices on the ground to everybody's benefit."

Panel 1: Looking Back
The first panel discussion, titled "Looking Back on 30 Years of Agricultural Conservation," brought together a variety of speakers, including Steve Taylor of the Missouri Agribusiness Association, farmer and former chief of the Soil Conservation Service Bill Richards, Brent Haglund of the Sand County Foundation, Jane Frankenberger of Purdue University, and former USDA undersecretary Bruce Knight. Neil Strong, a retired Syngenta executive and former CTIC board chair, moderated the panel.

Richards, who served as CTIC board chair in 2003, pointed to CTIC's long-standing role in forming public-private partnerships to advance conservation tillage.

"In 1990, we were failing to meet the requirements of the '85 Farm Bill," he recounted. "SCS reached out to CTIC and industry and promoted residue management. CTIC was really the vehicle to do what government does not do well – that was marketing and working with partners."

The concept of partnerships was emphasized repeatedly throughout the panel discussion. Frankenberger pointed out that conservation – not just erosion control, but also management of dissolved pollutants in water flowing from farm fields – will require "strong and robust partnerships that are moving our knowledge base ahead."

Putting that philosophy into action, Frankenberger has worked with CTIC and the Agricultural Drainage Management Coalition on a Conservation Innovation Grant sponsored by USDA-NRCS to study controlled drainage management.

Knight underscored the importance of partnerships. "Almost every success we've had in the last 30 years in conservation has been because of partnerships," he noted.

Panel 2: Looking Ahead
The celebration's second panel was titled "Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities for Agricultural Conservation." Moderated by Sara Wyant, president of Agri-Pulse Communications and former director on CTIC's board, the panel included Fred Luckey of Field to Market, the Keystone Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture; Indiana no-till farmer Dan DeSutter; Larry Clemens of The Nature Conservancy; Jerry Hatfield, director of the USDA-ARS National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment; and former USDA deputy secretary Jim Moseley.

The discussion ranged in scale from tiny to massive, connecting local "microwatersheds" to vast regions like the Gulf of Mexico and the Chesapeake Bay drainage. At the heart of the matter, agreed the panelists, is understanding and nurturing the complex underground ecosystem in farm soils.

"Start with the biology – that helps solve problems in the soil," advised Hatfield of USDA.

DeSutter emphasized the grand scale of soil biology, pointing out that every acre of healthy agricultural soil contains tons of fungi, bacteria and organic matter that sustain crops. "We already have livestock on the farm," he noted. "They're underground."

Recognitions
In addition to the organized exploration of conservation issues, the celebration also honored the founders and builders of CTIC, notes Karen A. Scanlon, executive director of the organization.

"A milestone like our 30th anniversary was a great time to recognize the people whose vision, dedication and energy launched CTIC and guided us for the past 30 years," Scanlon said. "We were very fortunate to have many of our founders, leaders and long-time supporters with us for the celebration. The recognition dinner was an outstanding way to reflect on the way people's deep commitment to the sustainability of America's farmers evolved from a great idea to a great clearinghouse for information on conservation practices."

The gala dinner – emceed by Mike Adams, host of the nationally syndicated AgriTalk radio program and past president of the National Association of Farm Broadcasters – honored a long list of dedicated CTIC volunteers. Four founders were honored with special recognition:

- Dick Foell, CTIC's visionary founder and first chair;
- Bob Rice, the PR executive working for Foell, who helped turn the vision of CTIC into a reality;
- Jim Lake, CTIC's first executive director; and
- Frank Lessiter, editor of No-Till Farmer magazine and active supporter of CTIC since its founding in 1982.

Throughout the long day of reflection and celebration, participants lauded CTIC's central role in collecting and disseminating valuable information that has helped advance sustainable farming practices for the past 30 years. Through efforts such as CTIC's, noted Knight, "sustainability moved from a belief-based system to a science-based system."

CTIC recorded the sessions and is working on ways to share the information in webinars or online archives, says Scanlon. Visit www.ctic.org/Thirty Years for details.

Former CTIC board member Sara Wyant [left] led a panel discussion about future challenges facing conservation agriculture, helping set the direction for CTIC's next 30 years.

Panelists at the CTIC 30th anniversary celebration engaged the crowd of more than 100 guests in dialogue about economic and environmental sustainability.

CTIC founder Dick Foell addresses attendees at the CTIC 30th anniversary celebration dinner as his wife, Chic, and master of ceremonies Mike Adams look on.

True to CTIC's history, academicians, agribusiness people, ag media and government representatives chatted over lunch at CTIC's 30th anniversary celebration at Monsanto's headquarters campus.

For these and other photos, please visit www.ctic.org/ThirtyYears/Photo Gallery.

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