

Proposed Model for Coordinating and Enhancing the Value of Conservation Agronomists and the CCA Program

As farmer and supply chain-driven demand for regenerative agriculture services increases, Conservation Agronomists (CAs) are gaining popularity as valuable additions to ag retailers, coops, and other agribusinesses. Their roles include but are not limited to: providing technical assistance to growers on conservation practices and products, data stewardship and insights, and enrollment assistance for financial incentive programs and sustainability markets. Various CA models have been tested, with varying levels of success and value driven to the business. Simultaneously, many states have reported a decline in new and continuing Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs), including in the SSp and 4R NMS specialties. Currently, no required or highly sought after CA certification program exists.

We propose that a concerted effort to pre-competitively coordinate and support Conservation Agronomists across companies, states and nationally, could greatly enhance the value and impact of these positions and simultaneously drive new value and interest to the CCA program as the standard bearer for agronomist certification. This would be accomplished by developing two types of positions tied to the CCA program:

1. A cohort of State Coordinators hosted by state ag organizations, industry groups, or ASA/ the national CCA program, each serving as a resource and connector for individual CAs by facilitating trainings and a peer learning network, maintaining a knowledgebase of grower opportunities, and helping businesses achieve value in their CA positions.
2. A National Coordinator employed and hosted by the ASA/CCA program, who would standardize training materials and resources across states, maintain a multi-state CA network, and seek opportunities to expand the State Coordinator positions into new geographies.

