

Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) Program

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The Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) Program is being developed under the auspices of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA). The ad hoc steering committee is comprised of industry and university agronomists, state dealer associations, independent crop consultants, several organizations (including T.F.I., P.P.I., ARA, TVA) and ASA staff. This is a broad group representing wide geographic parts of the U.S., and has also included USDA officials, representing SCS and Extension.

The purpose of the CCA program is to establish credible base-level standards of knowledge and skills for those who advise farmers on their production inputs, at the retail level. It is a voluntary program, but certainly could serve as the model if legislation should mandate credentials for those who help farmers develop their crop input plans. Further, even though this has started out aimed at dealers, there is considerable sentiment for such standards being appropriate also for extension agents, SCS specialists, independent crop consultants, etc. The program will be coordinated with states to achieve the strength of national certification standards, but also adapted to more local needs on a state-by-state basis.

The components of the CCA program are as follows:

1. A comprehensive national exam, plus a more localized state exam, on:
 - (a) Soil fertility/Plant Nutrition
 - (b) Pest Management (weeds, insects, diseases)
 - (c) Soil and Water Management
 - (d) Crop Production/Cultural practices
2. Education/Experience documentation, with minimum requirements of 4 years of post high school qualifying crop production practices experience, documented by letters of reference. A qualifying B.S. degree in agriculture can substitute for 2 of the 4 years experience requirement and an associate degree may fulfill one year of the requirement. Certain internship programs may also partially reduce the total experience time requirements.
3. Adherence to a Code of Ethics for CCA.
4. Continuing re-certification requirements through continuing education programs and/or periodic re-examination.
5. Localized direction of the program through State Certification Boards which consist of a cross-section of agricultural/environmental interests. The State Boards can appoint an agent to administer/facilitate the program, in close cooperation with the American Society of Agronomy.
6. Record-keeping, though not a requirement, is encouraged, to document all recommendations made by a CCA.

* Presented at the North Central Extension-Industry Soil Fertility Conference, November 19, 1992, St. Louis, MO.

7. Training programs, though not a direct component of CCA, are expected to evolve to provide enhanced learning opportunities for crop production advisers.

The CCA program is a proactive approach from within the entire agribusiness industry, to document and maintain the skills and professionalism of those who serve farmers. It is a program to convey to the public, legislators, and regulators, that our industry has both the desire and skills to assist farmers in growing crops with both economic and environmental responsibility.

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