



I.D.E.A. Industry Update - February 5, 2004

***Another Great I.D.E.A.!

The I.D.E.A. 5th Annual General Meeting and Conference, held January 29-30, 2004 in Canmore, Alberta, was a great success. The event, which was well attended by I.D.E.A. members and industry representatives, featured a full agenda of socializing, information sharing, and practical business knowledge. Attendees were entertained by the magic of Michael Berends on Thursday night, and on Friday, heard presentations from several speakers, including:

- Frank Kernick, a successful independent developer in Canmore;
- Larry Couture, from Olds College who spoke about the college's Agricultural Business Program and the Cooperative Work Experience Program which links students with business;
- Bill Keogh of AgKnowlogy Inc., who discussed his system for increasing sales, loyalty and profitability in independent ag retailing businesses; and
- Donald Cooper (Cooper Sports Equipment), a world-class manufacturer and an award-winning, innovative retailer, who discussed how to increase market share and profitability in the face of ever increasing competition and how to find and keep the best staff. *(Donald Cooper's presentations, in DVD format, are available on loan from the I.D.E.A. to I.D.E.A. members and sponsors.)*

Thanks to our 2004 Sponsors, who helped make this event possible, shown online at www.independentdealers.com/sponsors.htm, and listed here: **PLATINUM LEVEL** – Agrium, Interag, Ramboc Enterprises, Syngenta; **GOLD LEVEL** – Monsanto, Saskferco, Simplot; **SILVER LEVEL** – AgResource, Brett-Young Seeds, Dow Agrosiences, Linear Grain Inc., Nexus Ag, NorthPoint Distribution Inc., Univar; **BRONZE LEVEL** – Becker Underwood, IMC, Kenmex, MaXfield Inc., Northstar Seed Ltd., Polywest, Rancan Fertilizer Systems Inc.; **SUPPORTING LEVEL** – UAP.

***Membership in I.D.E.A.

Do you know someone who could benefit by becoming a member of I.D.E.A.? Call the I.D.E.A. office at 306-934-4904 to let us know and we'll send out a membership kit. Currently, any person or corporation may become a regular member if, in the sole opinion of the Board, he or it carries on a business which is engaged or directly involved in the input and crop protection retail industry and is not controlled by a manufacturer, elevator line company or major supplier. *Welcome to our most recent member Jeff Farr of Farr-Mor Fertilizer in Lewvan, Saskatchewan.*

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*****The Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) Program**

Looking for information on CAIS? Visit www.agr.gc.ca/caisprogram/main.html.

*****Practical GPS Uses**

Technology continues to change the way we farm. Precision agriculture has grown to much more than yield monitors and GPS (Global Positioning Systems). At the recent Farm\$mart conference at the University of Guelph, Todd Peterson, PhD., CCA, with Pioneer Ltd., Iowa, shared the practical considerations his GPS clients have learned as they've adopted GPS on their farms.

Peterson said GPS gives farmers a better handle on production costs. He used a client who mounted a GPS on his planting tractor as an example. The farmer determined his production costs to plant an acre of soybeans were \$8 an acre for some fields, yet \$16 per acre for others. Peterson recommends hiring the custom operator who charges \$12 an acre to plant the fields costing the farmer more than that.

GPS can also identify bottlenecks. A client considering upgrading to a larger combine had GPS records showing an uptime of 80 per cent, a fairly good record indicating the machine was only stopped for lunch and a couple of breaks. A larger machine would require bigger trucks and a larger elevator leg to accommodate more flow. It was determined there would be more idle time for the machine without the other upgrades and the switch to a larger combine was not recommended.

Peterson recommended that farmers with GPS use it every time they go into a field to manage productivity. "One of the best practices that we have seen from the top operators is they are already recording costs and returns. . . . on a field boundary basis," he said. He also recommends use of the time stamp function, calling it the "most underused application of data in GPS agriculture." The time stamp is shown as the number of seconds since January 1, 1970. By converting this data to a date and time, farmers can precisely determine when field operations were undertaken.

Despite technological advancements in the GPS industry and the precision and accuracy of the information, the first step can be difficult and overwhelming. Peterson recommends farmers considering GPS begin by doing yield mapping of their fields and develop a field-level record keeping system. "You don't need the latest and greatest technology just to get started." The purchase of a low-cost hand-held GPS receiver and older technology will provide the basics. Particularly for farmers who use the services of custom operators, Peterson recommended farmers log the longitude and latitude of each field driveways, to eliminate any confusion or mistakes for custom operators. *(By Anne Howden Thompson; Reprinted in part from the AgExpert Express newsletter by permission of AgExpert Management Software and Farm Credit Canada.)*

*****Handling and Storage of Dangerous Goods**

New regulations have been developed under section 200 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA 1999) for substances identified by Environment Canada as potentially harmful to human health or the environment, should they be released due to an accident, act of terrorism or vandalism. These new regulations, which came into force on November 18, 2003, with full enforcement after one year, will require the development of Environmental Emergency (E2) plans. Products affected by these regulations include propane, gasoline, anhydrous ammonia and ammonia solutions (in specific quantities). To assist the industry, a comprehensive E2 planning guidebook has been developed by CAAR to assist members with the reporting process, developing an E2 plan and annual testing exercises. For more information, contact Jeff Kisiloski of CAAR at 1-800-463-9323.

*****KEEP POSTED FOR DETAILS REGARDING A MEMBER CONFERENCE CALL TO BE HELD IN THE NEAR FUTURE REGARDING FERTILIZER BUYING AND CREDIT ISSUES.**