

## Top Farmer Crop Workshop: Strategies for Charting Your Future

by Bruce Erickson

Strategies to manage your risk with fertilizer pricing and supplier relationships, new technology that is changing the functionality of RTK guidance, how predicted future inflation might affect how you do business—and how to prepare for this—are all on the agenda for this year's Top Farmer Crop Workshop, July 19-22, on the Purdue University Campus, West Lafayette, Indiana.

The Top Farmer Crop Workshop is one of the longest-running agricultural programs in the country, this being its 42<sup>nd</sup> year. The workshop is unique in that it not only brings producers together in a forum to compare ideas, but also allows each producer to test their ideas in the context of their unique farming setup using the linear programming model. Along with the interaction and programming runs at this year's workshop will be over 50 presenters, always a blend of expertise from the academic, ag industry, and production sides of the business.



*Klinefelter*



*Dartt*

We're especially pleased this year to feature well-known agricultural economist Danny Klinefelter from Texas A& M University, who is also the director of The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers (TEPAP), a curriculum known internationally for helping farmers form successful strategies. This is Danny's first time here, and he will speak about ten best business practices that most producers don't do—but if you're looking for an edge or ways to get better, these ten are good places to start.

Personality differences have made, or broken, many a good business. Barbara Dartt of Lookout Ridge Consulting will lead a self-analysis of your working style, helping you to answer: What is it about my behavior that allows good relationships with many but tests others? What can I do with certain individuals to foster more positive interaction?

Presentations by farmers to their farmer peers have always been a part of the workshop, and this year is no different. Kip Cullers smashed soybean yield records with 139 bu/A in 2006 and 154 bu/A 2007. He offers advice for producers in 'how not be an average soybean farmer,' a topic we've wrestled with at many previous workshops. We will beam in Kip from Missouri using the live two-way video-audio capabilities and large screens of the auditorium, so bring your hard questions to ask—we have microphones by every chair. Physically present at the meeting will be Australian farmer Bruce Watson, who manages about 9,000 acres of wheat, canola, and pulse crops on his New South Wales operation. Bruce will tell us a bit about his operation, but we're probably more interested in his



*Watson*



controlled trafficking and his risk management strategies in a country that provides little support for farm incomes.

We all geared up our spraying capacity in 2005 anticipating a rust situation that thankfully didn't materialize what was earlier feared. But whether treating for rust or more familiar weeds, diseases, or insects, how we apply water-based crop inputs remains one of our most important tasks. Kansas State's Robert Wolf is an Application Technology Extension Specialist that travels the country advising crop input suppliers and growers how to maximize control and minimize drift through the intelligent management of nozzles, calibration, adjuvants, boom heights, section controls....we will spend some quality time with Bob out at the Agronomy Farm.

Guidance systems are becoming mainstream technology, moving the question for many from "should I use guidance" to "what options in guidance work the best" and "where do I go next with this?" Chad Pfitzer is an RTK/Systems specialist with Trimble Navigation, and he will lead our thinking about RTK clusters, RTK networks, CORS signals, VRS, terrain correction, and a host of other topics that will influence your guidance future.

Managing the growing crop is one thing; storing it and selling it are another. A lot of new storage has been built, and farmers are storing more crop and often for longer periods. Gil Garcia of Integris will help you think through some sensor and software options that can help take away some of the worry and shave your expenses while protecting these assets—why not let a sensor decide when to turn on or off drying or aeration based on grain condition and weather? Advice and perspectives on marketing our crops have always been a part of Top Farmer Crop Workshop. Included in this year's slate of marketing presenters will be Scott Stewart, of Stewart Peterson, Brian Maple of F.C. Stone & Co., and Alan Brugler of Brugler Marketing, all individuals/firms with national reputations.

Risk, uncertainty, and events around the world continue to shape the future of crop production. The above is but a sampling of what we are planning for you this July. While you've been working around wet spots, ponds, and pop-up showers to get this year's crop planted, we've been assembling a program that will make it worth your trip here. Final program details, the full agenda, and registration materials will be ready in the next couple of weeks. We look forward to seeing you in July!

