Science Societies

Meet the ICCA board chair: Aaron Breimer

By Denice Rackley

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Rooted in agriculture, driven by learning

On the family farm in Ontario, Canada, Breimer's passion for agriculture grew naturally. Walking the fields with his father, with crops towering over him, and riding through hay fields on the wagon blossomed into tossing hay bales onto the wagon and driving the tractor planting crops. Attending the University of Guelph, he expanded his agronomic knowledge in the classroom and gained more experience during a semester in New Zealand.

In 2001, Breimer entered the agriculture retail industry and began applying his knowledge to the everyday challenges farmers face. A year later, he sat for the CCA exam and became an outspoken proponent for the program. "I see myself as a lifelong learner. The CCA program encourages new ways of thinking and problem solving."

Breimer spent 10 years working in agricultural retail as a research assistant, sales representative, sales agronomist, and crop protection specialist. In 2011, he transitioned into consulting, first serving as an agronomy specialist, then as a precision ag specialist, and eventually as a general manager. When that company was acquired, Breimer became their vice president of data insights. “It was a fascinating role that offered a unique perspective on agricultural practices across North America,” he says.

Collaboration as a career philosophy

A trip to Zambia in 2013, where Breimer visited with local farmers and supported subsistence farming communities, gave him the chance to reassess his thoughts about the broad world of agriculture. “I came away from that experience with increased objectivity and a commitment to reevaluate my ideas. It’s easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we have all the answers. I learned things in Africa that I could incorporate at home, and the trip reinforced my desire to develop solutions based on collaboration.”

For Breimer, collaboration isn’t just working together to reach each person’s individual goal. Instead, it’s about achieving shared goals that are bigger than anything any one person could accomplish alone. “I see collaboration as a way to achieve shared audacious accomplishments.”

Two years ago, Breimer began Moose Ag. The business name is a nod to his time in New Zealand and the nickname he received there. As a student eager to gain diverse experiences in a new country, he joined a local rugby team. His teammates knew little about Canada beyond it being cold, snowy, and having moose. The name stuck and followed him home.

With his chief morale officer, a border collie named Antler, by his side, Breimer enjoys the freedom of being an entrepreneur. “I am privileged to be a member of my clients' trusted inner network and work with others in their circle, creating solutions for the problems that keep my clients up at night.”



Aaron Breimer's chief morale officer, a border collie named Antler, is often by his side.

Breimer credits much of his success to the CCA program, which he says “cultivates a perpetual cycle of improvement.”

When Breimer has the chance to speak to audiences, he often quotes the seven most dangerous words uttered in any business: “We have always done it this way.” He views the program and CCAs themselves as continually pushing forward, never satisfied with the status quo.

An aspect of the CCA program that Breimer finds especially helpful is the opportunities to interact with like-minded individuals who willingly share their experiences. “Networking enables us to benefit from the experiences of others, and just as important, if not more so,

to be inspired by others."

"The number one tool in my toolbox is my list of cell phone contacts. I don't have all the answers, but I bet I know someone who does, or at least can point me in the right direction."

Leading the CCA program forward

Serving on various CCA committees has enabled Breimer to help fellow CCAs succeed and be inspired by those he works alongside. He joined the Ontario board in 2018 and began serving on the executive board in 2020. Attending his first ICCA meeting in Virginia sparked his interest in participating on the international board. Working with international board members, Breimer connected with people who, like him, are deeply dedicated to making the CCA designation more recognizable and meaningful.

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Breimer began serving as chair of the ICCA board in January and hopes to continue the incredible work of past chairs. "Sandy Endicott pushed for multiple meetings, and now we have virtual meetings enabling local boards to give their input and improve the

ICCA [program]. Karl Wyant has incorporated speakers who share the creative ideas and solutions that have worked for local boards."

Breimer plans to continue this effort of leaning into and seeking input from local boards while incorporating his passions for enhancing collaboration, increasing the number of CCAs, and helping farmers understand the extensive expertise provided by CCAs.

His primary goal is to strengthen interactions and collaboration between local boards and the ICCA. "Local members may not have always felt the ICCA board was as supportive as it could be—I want to change that." He also wants to reverse the trend of declining numbers of CCAs. Breimer sees the solution, in part, as attracting more young agriculture-focused individuals to the program and ensuring the program provides significant value. Breimer also wants to explore farmers' thoughts and attitudes toward CCAs.

"If farmers connect the dots between trusted, actionable advice and sustainability, demanding more CCAs, we will see renewed interest in the program."

"Designing simple survey questions to examine if farmers value the Certified Crop Adviser designation might be eye-opening," Breimer says. "Asking farmers if they value continuing

education and a code of ethics for their advisers, I believe they will say yes. However, we may find many farmers haven't connected the CCA designation with the foundational elements they value.

"My objective is to encourage farmers to consider the value their advisers bring to their operations. If farmers connect the dots between trusted, actionable advice and sustainability, demanding more CCAs, we will see renewed interest in the program."

"Continually working to bridge the gap between farmers, ag businesses, suppliers, CCAs, and the ICCA board, and supporting producers and ag businesses with data, ideas, and recommendations will lead to success for us, the CCA program, and farmers," Breimer says.

"By imagining what is possible, continually expanding our network and collaborating to achieve audacious goals, there is no limit to what we can achieve."

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Back to issue

Back to home

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