Science Societies

Sharing Knowledge, Solving Problems Fuels Passion for International CCA of Year

By Denice Rackley

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Paul Hermans from eastern Ontario, Canada, joins the ranks of dedicated CCAs honored to receive the International CCA of the Year award.

A drive to help growers succeed by sharing the latest agronomic information, a belief in mentoring the next generation of farmers and ag professionals, and advocating for the CCA program are hallmarks of the career of the most recent recipient of the International CCA of the Year award.

Paul Hermans from eastern Ontario, Canada, joins the ranks of dedicated CCAs honored to receive this prestigious award.

Hermans's childhood experiences and enjoyment of the outdoors opened the doors for his career in agronomy. Growing up on a farm with a father who worked for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Renfrew County provided Hermans his first exposure to agriculture. While his family didn't farm, the land was rented out to a local dairy farmer. Working for the dairy farmer by milking cows, feeding beef steers, harvesting hay, and planting crops provided Hermans the hands-on opportunity to experience many facets of the industry.

Much preferring working in the fields to the milking parlor, Hermans pursued an ag degree from the University of Guelph and spent summers working for a variety of ag companies. Upon graduation, he was hired as a soil and water conservation technician. He then began working at Pioneer as an area agronomist, pursuing his CCA certification soon after. He has also worked as a territory sales manager and digital effectiveness manager, each role allowing Hermans to experience different sectors of the industry and adding to his ability to translate complex information into actionable steps for industry partners and growers alike.

Mentorship Leads to Exponential Growth

“When I first entered the industry, I was surrounded by individuals who answered my questions and shared their knowledge—Jim Dippel, Dave Scott, Jim Coffey, and Paul Sullivan, just to name a few.” Understanding that mentorship plays a large role in success, Hermans actively mentors new industry professionals and young farmers.

To share agronomic information with young farmers aged 16 to 20, he began a Corn Share program. From physiology to fertilizer, everything related to growing corn is explored. “Through the growing season, four in-field sessions are held with these participants going over key growth stages and management ideas in detail.”

Due to interest in the Corn Share program, he began Soy Share. Having just completed the first Soy Share meeting, Herman notes, “The young people attending these programs are enthusiastic and interested in learning, which is exciting.”

“By engaging with young farmers, he encourages them in developing an understanding of agronomy that is crucial for the future of food and agriculture,” says Sarah Lindsay, Ontario CCA Program Administrator.

Sharing Knowledge

The Share programs are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Hermans’s passion for presenting the latest information to help growers succeed. Each winter, he plans research trials that answer farmers’ questions, address their concerns, and test the latest products. Relying on the generosity of farmers to provide land, equipment, and labor, Hermans has investigated biologicals, fungicides, environmentally sustainable nitrogen rates in corn, foliar-applied potassium in corn, and sulfur trials in soybeans. Currently seeking answers to the common problem of white mold in soybeans, he is exploring if solutions can be found in adjusting population counts. With 15 trials, each with different soybean populations, he will collect and analyze data to determine if

reducing populations could help farmers solve the problem and provide an economically viable answer.

When it comes sharing his research findings, he turns to social media. Hermans has been active on Twitter (now X), for more than 10 years and has gathered 3000 plus followers. “Starting conversations and spreading the word concerning the latest data is where the platform shines.”

Invested in growers’ success, Hermans’s passion for agronomy is fueled by sharing helpful information. In addition to utilizing social media, Hermans is often a guest on podcasts such as Pioneer’s *Made To Grow*, and *The Agronomists*. He also creates a bi-weekly blog, *Seed Sense*, which he sends to growers and industry partners. In addition, he enjoys sharing agronomic information as a contributing author in *Better Farming Magazine*.

Placing agronomy in eastern Canada on the map, his posts and articles focus on practical agronomic information that highlights field trial results and crop physiology.

Research Designed to Bring Clarity

Focusing his trials to help growers sort through the muddy waters of new products claiming to benefit growers is where Hermans believes he can provide the biggest impact.

“With so much change happening in agriculture, new products and technologies coming on the market, farmers and growers are looking for unbiased validation. Does it work?” Hermans centers his research around answering whether these new products are worth farmers’ time and money.

Hermans would like to see a variety of companies and individuals post research results to a central location that is accessible to everyone, saying this would be of immense help to growers.

CCA Program Supports Agronomic Excellence

Since becoming a CCA in 1998, Hermans has actively supported and advocated for the program through public speaking and seminars, designing virtual courses, and writing newsletter articles. He has served on the Ontario CCA CEU Committee for three years where he has actively trained dealers and participated in discussions of how to further the agronomic industry and become better crop advisers, says Liam Bracken, Pioneer territory manager.



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Hermans is just as passionate when speaking to industry professionals and fellow CCAs as when reaching out to young farmers. “He is an advocate for the agronomic industry and has promoted the CCA program within Pioneer and with other advisers,” Bracken notes.

“Paul is an extremely valuable source of information for me as a fellow CCA,” says Paul Sullivan of P.T. Sullivan Agro Incorporated. “He is known for his enthusiasm and engagement and is approachable and always willing to search out answers.”

Invested in the Success of Others

In Hermans’s 25 years in the agriculture industry, much has changed. New management practices, equipment, products, and technology have touched every acre. Thankfully, the commitment and dedication of CCAs like Hermans to stay abreast of the latest advances and seek out answers to growers’ concerns and questions has grown alongside the industry.

Hermans’s love of sharing knowledge to help others succeed is evident in the variety of ways he reaches out to young people interested in agriculture, industry professionals, and growers.

Throughout his career, Hermans has emulated his dad’s saying, ‘If you treat people well, they will treat you well.’ He often comments that when conversations with growers are 95% about their business and personal life and 5% about seed, you know you’re having an impact.

Pioneer might be a seed company, but Hermans believes great seed is only the first step. “Helping farmers succeed is the goal, and the way to do that is by finding solutions to their problems and concerns.”

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