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Agricultural Investment, Today and Into the Future

Philippe de Lapérouse predicts more investment in agriculture is on the way.

Investment in agriculture around the globe has been fairly steady over the past decade. Furthermore, the industry can expect to continue seeing more investment dollars heading its way beyond 2020.

This was the message delivered to virtual attendees of the annual Mid America CropLife Association meeting from Philippe de Lapérouse, Managing Director of Highquest Partners. Lapérouse spent his time on the meeting's agenda detailing the findings from his company's report on the state of global investment in food and agriculture. According to Lapérouse, the report is the first of its kind to look at the current and future investing trends in these important sectors of the economy.

"The top three agriculture investors manage more than 50 million acres of farmland worldwide," he said. "That equates to the same amount of land as France, and we suspect that the actual number is really 50% larger than what showed up in our report data."

Overall, said Lapérouse, the Highquest Partners report found that there was \$131 billion of investment made in food and agricultural assets during 2019, "much larger than anticipated," he added.

"There are lots of ways to play investing in the food and agriculture sectors," said Lapérouse. "It's much more complex than just giving money to someone to go out and buy farmland."

A Nexus of Reasons

As for why this level of investment has taken place in food and agriculture, Lapérouse says two primary factors are at work. The first ties back to overall production. "We see an increasing nexus between agricultural production and large-scale food production as investors see shifts in consumer trends related to both," he said. "This is definitely driving investment dollars."

The second trend ties to technology. "Many venture capital investors see agriculture and its increasing use of new technology as a way of furthering the investment many of them already have in these emerging technologies by moving into new areas of use."

Looking at food and agricultural investment trends in 2020, Lapérouse says that the industry has already seen strong activity compared with other sectors. "So far this year, there are 300 new major investors in this space," he said.

Perhaps significantly, the overall economic uncertainty created by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic seems to have not put a damper on food and agricultural investment. "In fact, we think that the food and agricultural industries have a role to play in mitigating the risk of future pandemics," said Lapérouse. "That's because any improvements in crop yields will reduce the pressures on arable land use. This could keep encroachment on new frontiers and little contacted animal populations from taking place, which is where many of the risks for new pandemics tend to come from."

With this in mind, Lapérouse spelled out for attendees in what areas Highquest Partners foresees food and agricultural investment taking place moving through the rest of 2020 and beyond. This includes alternative protein sources, "impossible foods" (such as the Impossible Whopper from Burger King), indoor/vertical farming models, sustainability, and the accelerated adoption of robotics and artificial intelligence as a way for the food and agricultural sectors to lessen their dependence upon a limited human labor pool.

"There will also be investment in logistics handling and infrastructure reconfigurations by food and agriculture," said Lapérouse. "We've already seen this part of both markets suffer disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, so investing in new and different ways to keep products moving across the landscape will make sense."



Philippe de Lapérouse

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



MACA members,

As we reflect on 2020, it's easy to think of all the negative things...and it's easy to let that bog us down because we are forced to do things we have never done. Working from home, staying at home, not traveling, using virtual backgrounds in Zoom, the list goes on and on.

I challenge each of you to consider 3 things you are thankful for because of 2020. I am thankful for more time

with my family, a new habit of walking 2.5 miles each morning, and a new career that I wouldn't have had the courage to start but thought "why not" since I had already been working away from my "work buddies". What are you thankful for? What habits have you started? What good has come from your year? (Please feel free to email me at LJackson@epogee.com if you have some great new things that are in your life now, I'd love to hear about it!)

The good for MACA has been more engagement from the active membership and a wonderful and innovative virtual annual meeting. The Annual Meeting committee worked together like they never have before to create a meeting on a new virtual platform, Socio, that none of them had ever used before. We went from considering that we not have an annual meeting because we weren't sure how to pull off an engaging virtual meeting...to creating a meeting that was well attended and well-

reviewed. My deepest thanks to that entire committee and all their hard work.

We'll continue to grow our virtual reach as we finish out 2020 with our November quarterly meeting. Not only will our meeting be virtual... but we will also have a virtual Murder Mystery dinner activity...who dun it? You??? Join us to see!!

We are working on exciting offerings for our members in 2021 and we hope that you can join us for them! Our membership companies are truly some of the most innovative in the ag industry, our members are some of the most talented and passionate group of people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. If you are reading this and are a member, thank you for continuing to support MACA and being involved. If you are reading this and you aren't a member...why not? What is stopping you? Check out MACA.org, become a CropLife Ambassador (search that out on maca.org for more info), follow us on social media, reach out to me personally, but do get involved. You will not regret it.

Have a wonderful rest of 2020,

Lindsey

Lindsey Jackson
2020-2021 President
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MACA Election Held

The MACA election held during the virtual annual business meeting on September 10, 2020, results show the following:



*President:
Lindsey Jackson, Epogee*



*Vice President:
Rodney Schmidt, Bayer*



*Secretary-Treasurer:
Joe Olson,
Helena Agri-Enterprises,*

Re-elected to the board for a three year term as a director was Shelbi Domjen, KOVA; while Jane Hanson, Rosen's, was elected to the board for a three year term and Deanna Smith, MFA, was elected to complete a two year term on the board.



Shelbi Domjen, KOVA



Jane Hanson, Rosen's



Deanna Smith, MFA

A Slow Recovery Ahead for Agriculture

Purdue's Dr. Jason Henderson doesn't foresee a return to a vibrant ag economy anytime soon.

According to Dr. Jason Henderson, Senior Associate Dean of Agriculture and Director of Extension at Purdue University, 2020 will long be remembered by agricultural industry watchers, for all the wrong reasons. "This year looked to be very promising, but turned out to be really disappointing," said Henderson, speaking at the 2020 Mid America CropLife



Association virtual annual meeting in September. "In fact, a colleague of mine said 2020 is a year that makes every other year look amazing."

Of course, going into 2020, the agricultural industry had plenty of reasons for optimism, he said. The long-running U.S.-China trade dispute seemed to be heading for some kind of resolution and the overall economy of the country looked ready to rebound from a slower 2019. Then, the coronavirus pandemic hit, and everything changed.

"This year was a year of opportunity lost," said Henderson. "In the U.S., we went from record low unemployment at the start of the year to COVID-19 hitting and 22 million people filing for unemployment insurance by May. It will probably take us a couple of years to get back to seeing better employment numbers."

Unfortunately, this disruption in the general economy is already negatively affecting agricultural fortunes. For example, he said, restaurants – big consumers of agricultural products in normal times – saw their sales fall from \$65 billion in 2019 to \$30 billion in 2020 during the spring. And even with an uptick coming in July, Henderson predicted agriculture product sales to restaurants will likely remain lower going into 2021, "until social distancing concerns go away."

"This means that demand for agriculture will be sluggish for the rest of 2020, maybe going up some as a dead cat bounce," he said. "But it's important to remember that after they bounce, a dead cat is still a dead cat!"

Trade, Money Concerns

Going into 2020, said Henderson, farmers were hoping that the trade concerns between the U.S. and China would be on their way to being resolved. In fact, according to its own survey work, a significant percentage of farmers believed this would be the case. "But not now," he added.

Over the next few years, Henderson predicted that agriculture would be stuck in a kind of "trade policy trap" between opposing administrations in both countries. In reality, U.S. farmers need access to Chinese food markets while China needs access to U.S. manufacturers, "but if this happens or not is anyone's guess," he said.

In the meantime, the U.S. government has shown it will step in and provide U.S. farmers with federal aid to make up shortfalls in crop export income, to the tune of \$30 billion so far in 2020. This has helped keep net farm income above the \$80 billion mark for the year. "But that's no comfort to me, because what happens going into 2021?" asked Henderson. "This is not the financial picture agriculture had for itself going into this year."

Perhaps most troubling, access to working capital for farmers has fallen significantly over the past year. "Before COVID-19, farmers had more than \$200 billion in working capital at their disposal," said Henderson. "Now, it's around \$50 billion." Indeed, he added, many farmers used government Payback Protection Program loans during the second quarter of 2020 to manage their financial needs.

Still, it's a positive for farmer finances that interest rates have remained low. "This is a saving grace," said Henderson.

For the future, Henderson predicted that agricultural finances will remain under pressure for many more years to come. "It's going to be a tough couple of years for U.S. agriculture," he concluded. "Overall, demand will have a very sluggish rebound. And it will probably be 2023 before the industry is back to the pre-COVID-19 economy."

NOVEMBER QUARTERLY MEETINGS

The Mid America CropLife Association November Quarterly Meetings will be held via electronic platforms November 9-12, 2020. Contact the MACA office for additional details.

DOT HAZMAT TRAINING VIDEOS

A member benefit – the videos are free to MACA member companies. Just go to the MACA website www.maca.org and scroll down to DOT to enter your password and user name

Plenty of 'Storm Clouds' in Ag's Present



Chris Novak

CropLife America's Chris Novak discussed the myriad attacks on agriculture.

Chris Novak, President/CEO at CropLife America, conveyed a simple message to virtual attendees at the 2020 Mid America CropLife Association annual meeting: Agriculture has work yet to do!

"This is a critical time for our industry," said Novak. "There are lots of challenges ahead."

Among these challenges, Novak cited several that are likely to play a role in the agriculture's fortunes over the next five years. This included addressing questions about supply chain stability, ethanol policy, trade instability, the overall health of the livestock industry, and, of course, the lingering effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

In the present day, said Novak, all of these factors have put some extreme financial stress upon the nation's growers. "Farm debt is back to levels we last saw in the 1980s," he said. "The good news is that interest rates today are obviously lower, so the ability to repay this debt is greater. But we are still seeing a continued uptick in farm bankruptcies."

In all, this adds up to some challenging times for the industry. "The bottom line on the bottom line?" he said. "There are a lot of storm clouds ahead for agriculture."

Pesticides in the Crosshairs

For the pesticides segment of the business, Novak said the industry is facing what he calls a "coordinated attack" from various different sectors. This includes anti-industry activist groups, consumers, global influences, local/state/federal legislation, and numerous lawsuits. "Although these may all seem unrelated, I assure you that they are all part of the same coordinated strategy," he said. "There are so many places these issues are arising, it's like playing whack-a-mole at the carnival. You never quite know where the next attack is going to come from."

In recent years, the two most critical of these attacking groups have been consumers and lawsuits, he added. According to Novak, consumer attitudes on pesticide use in agriculture – that it is "dangerous and unhealthy" – has quickly spilled over into the decision-making processes at both the food company and governmental levels, shaping many of the restrictions on usage now being implemented across the country.

And in many cases, these attitudes don't line up with what the pesticides industry knows about its products and their use. "When we've conducted studies of consumer attitudes, we've found many of these views are based upon feelings, not facts," said Novak. "Most think that regulations for pesticides are non-existent unless there's a problem and no pesticide use would mean more innovation and better solutions to pest control would emerge."

In terms of lawsuits, the pesticide industry's track record in recent months has been extremely uneven, he pointed out. The results were one win (Enlist/2,4-D), one loss (dicamba), and one "to be determined" (glyphosate), he said. What this means for the status of products beyond today is anyone's guess.

"I wish I could predict how the courts will behave towards these types of policy cases in the future," said Novak. "But obviously, that's going to vary from one circuit court to the next."



The ambassador program is off and running this fall! It is wonderful to see we are still getting some requests. Although we aren't getting as many requests as normal due to things just being a little off this year. I will continue to reach out to ambassadors to fill these speaking requests – check your emails.

Fall and the start of a new school year is also a fabulous time to approach some of your colleagues about becoming ambassadors. Reach out to someone you work with about presenting. It is extremely rewarding for our ambassadors and so valuable for the children to hear the story of agriculture. Send them to the website for more information or to sign up at <http://ambassador.maca.org/> or have them email me at michelle@maca.org.

NEW AMBASSADORS

Barry Anderson, Ag Leader Technology

Keri Anderson, Corteva Agriscience

Pamela Cuffee, Corteva Agriscience

Alysia Diffendal, Corteva Agriscience

Ashleigh Frank, Corteva Agriscience

Katelyn Lichte, Corteva Agriscience

Brad Syltie, Valent USA LLC

Hygie Starr, Corteva Agriscience

Think about CAN the next time you're with one of your coworkers that is passionate, energetic or enthusiastic about agriculture, and refer them to us. Direct them to our website and click on "Become an Ambassador." It's easy! This is a perfect time to refer new ambassadors so they are ready for the upcoming school year.

Michelle Kilper,

CropLife Ambassador Network
Program Manager

314-849-9446

michelle@maca.org

<http://ambassador.maca.org>



CropLife Ambassador Network- CAN

Our Mission...

To provide scientific based accurate information to the public regarding the safety and value of American agricultural food production by placing agricultural professionals in the classroom of K-12 students in 13 Midwest states.

2020

AMBASSADORS OF THE YEAR

MACA presented the 2020 Ambassador of the Year award to two wonderful ambassadors at the MACA Annual Meeting virtually in September.

The CropLife Ambassador of the Year Award was first presented in 1993. It is designed to recognize an ambassador for their efforts in promoting the crop protection industry through presentations to students or consumers.

MACA would like to congratulate the two 2020 Ambassador of the Year, Deanna Smith with MFA, Inc., and Brian (Mac) McDaniel with Bayer CropScience. Both recipients have spent a great deal of time educating students and so were recognized as co-recipients. Deanna Smith developed a love for agriculture in high school FFA. She attended college at the University of Missouri where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Plant Genetics, Master of Science in Agriculture Education and Doctor of Philosophy in Plant Science. In 2015, she joined MFA Inc. in the Wholesale Distribution – Crop Protection Division. She became an ambassador in 2017.

Brian "Mac" McDaniel is with Bayer CropScience and is a Certified Crop Advisor, plus he's a honeybee keeper in his spare time. Mac earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University. Mac became an ambassador in 2013. He brings his bee suit to 'The Buzz about Bees' presentation and is a hit with the students, so he is requested to come back to schools for additional presentations.



MACA Young Leaders 2020:

Embrace Agriculture & Market Changes in 2020



Eleven recipients of the MACA scholarship program reflect on what they learned this past year.

Now in its eighth year, the Young Leaders Scholarship Program sponsored by the Mid America CropLife Association is designed to help students looking to pursue a future in agriculture at Land-Grant universities around the country. Recipients are given a \$2,000 scholarship to aid with tuition and usually attend the association's annual meeting.

Speaking virtually, all 11 of this year's Young Leaders were pleasantly surprised to realize how the industry works. "What I really learned was how interdependent everything in agriculture is," said **Ashley Nelson** from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

In part, this connectivity was one of the reasons **Lily Woitaszewski** of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, switched her internship this past summer from crop protection to seed. "I thought it would be important to have some experience on the seed side of the industry, because seed is such a large part of agriculture," said Woitaszewski.

Another Young Leader, **Brendan Hanson** of North Dakota State University, has taken a similar path, working with plant genetics and breeding. "I think we can continue using genetics to battle issues faced by today's farmers, to help them save money in the end," said Hanson.

Students also learned about some of the challenges from the general public. "For people that didn't grow up in agriculture, they have different perceptions on things like genetically-modified crops and organics," said **Darren Kulicamp** of Michigan State University. "I would have conversations with them, to try to understand their perspective and give them mine."



Of course, a few Young Leaders learned about being adaptive in 2020, because of forces from within and without. According to **Maddie Weninger** of South Dakota State University, her internship at Corteva AgriScience saw a major re-branding take place. "At the beginning of my job, the company changed from Mycogen Seeds to Brevant Seed," said Weninger. "So, I quickly had to learn how to get the word out to growers about the change."

From without, virtually every agricultural company in 2020 ended up dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. According to **Liz Bland** of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, this forced many changes at the Cass-Morgan County Farm Bureau in Jacksonville, IL where she worked.

"Obviously, COVID-19 changed everyone's plans for the past several months,"

said Bland. "My duties completely changed, so I had to learn how to use social media to be interactive with my customers."

Still, as **Abby Bertz** of the University of Missouri-Columbia, all the Young Leaders are likely to continue to keep their eyes on agriculture going forward because of their shared ultimate goal. "The last three summers, I've really enjoyed interacting with farmers," said Bertz. "These are the people I hope to work with right after college, providing them with the solutions they need for the challenges they face."

Thanks to the 2020 sponsors including: Aceto, Albaugh, LLC; AMVAC; Bayer CropScience; Corteva; FMC; GreenLeaf; GROWMARK; IEDS, KALO; MFA; MMI; Morris Bixby Group; Nufarm; Nutrien Ag Solutions; Rosen's; Syngenta Crop Protection; Valent USA and Wright Distribution.

2020 Award Recipients Named

Six individual were recognized for their work this past year. The recipients include:



Jaime Yanes, *Albaugh, LLC*, who received the **Dean Roy Award**. The award is presented for “Exceptional Service to MACA and the CropLife Industry” for contributing the most by their selfless service. The award was named in honor of Dean Roy, a past member who served as president for two terms. Jaime is the 39th person to receive this prestigious honor.

Ivan Wells, *Rosen’s Inc.* received the **Industry Vision Award**. It’s presented to an individual who’s shown exemplary vision on the issues affecting Midwestern agriculture.



Deanna Smith, *MFA, Inc.*, and **Brian ‘Mac’ McDaniel, *Bayer*** were named **Co-Ambassadors of the Year**. This year two individuals were selected as they both had done so many things. They were recognized for the number of presentations as well as quality.



Dr. Charles Rice, *Kansas State University*, received the **Educator of the Year Award**. The award recognizes a person who has demonstrated evidence of significant contributions to American agriculture, especially in MACA region through published works, documented public appearances, region-wide recognition, evidence of consistency in educating the public on the values of production agriculture

Margy Eckelkamp, *The Scoop*, received the **Ruth White Media Award** which is presented to an individual who’s demonstrated an evidence of consistent, objective, and accurate reporting on American agriculture and the myriad of issues involved in modern agriculture, including the crop protection industry.



MACA UPDATE

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IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT Tim Riley

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/EDITOR Bonnie McCarvel

INDUSTRY COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN David Bartine

MACA NEW MEMBERS:

Epogee

Russell Associates

MACA INFO

Be sure and check out the speaker presentations and photos from the MACA Annual Meeting which have been posted on the MACA Socio App, LinkedIn and Facebook.

Follow MACA on Facebook.



MACA MEETING

November 9-12, 2020

MACA QUARTERLY MEETINGS

Virtual

EXECUTIVE REPORT



Bonnie McCarvel
Executive Director

2020 will be one for the history books! While the coronavirus has turned everything upside down, we all have learned some things.

First, like many of you, the need to be with people is important, because we enjoy people! From working with them, to discussing issues, as well as doing things with them like a baseball game or a meal. It doesn't make any difference – we simply enjoy people. MACA provides various opportunities to network and learn, while working on industry projects – but also, provide an opportunity to get to know others on a more personal level and share some of our skills and talents with others.

Second, don't take things for granted. Again, don't take your family and friends for granted. COVID has given us new tools so that we can stay in contact with family and friends, but it's not the same as being with them in person! The new technology tools also mean we must stay up to date with technology, no matter your age. The 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting is a perfect example of what we can do if we put our minds together and work together as a team. The featured speakers took a little more time, as we coordinated the recording with a small live audience to make it more interactive, was well worth the time. It was an added bonus that all the member companies who contributed to the meeting thru sponsorship or registration, were then able to share it with their entire company. That's added value! We also used the new platform as an opportunity to record presentations on the work of the committees, value of membership along with the Young Leader Scholarship Program

training. Thanks to MACA's new President Lindsey Jackson, there was a lunch and learn session which included trivia and a chance to learn about MACA's past and current members!

The third point, change will continue as we all realize things can be done differently. It's exciting to think about having speakers participate in a meeting virtually – and actually be able to see and hear them as if they are in the meeting room with you. While it's a great idea, I don't want all speakers to be virtual, but there are times that it will be beneficial! So, let's continue to look at different ways we can do things as well as the "why" things are done. Not everything needs to be changed, but there are times in which the question should be asked and discussed to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Finally, there have been many people who have helped MACA along the way. The journey has been filled with many obstacles from sticks and stones to boulders. Yet, every time I asked for assistance, a MACA member stepped forward and volunteered to help. I know MACA leaders are an amazing group of people who are creative and resourceful. We will survive and continue to move forward. Please continue to stay safe and be well. I look forward to seeing you in 2021!



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www.maca.org

Access the Platform to Review the Virtual Annual Meeting!

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