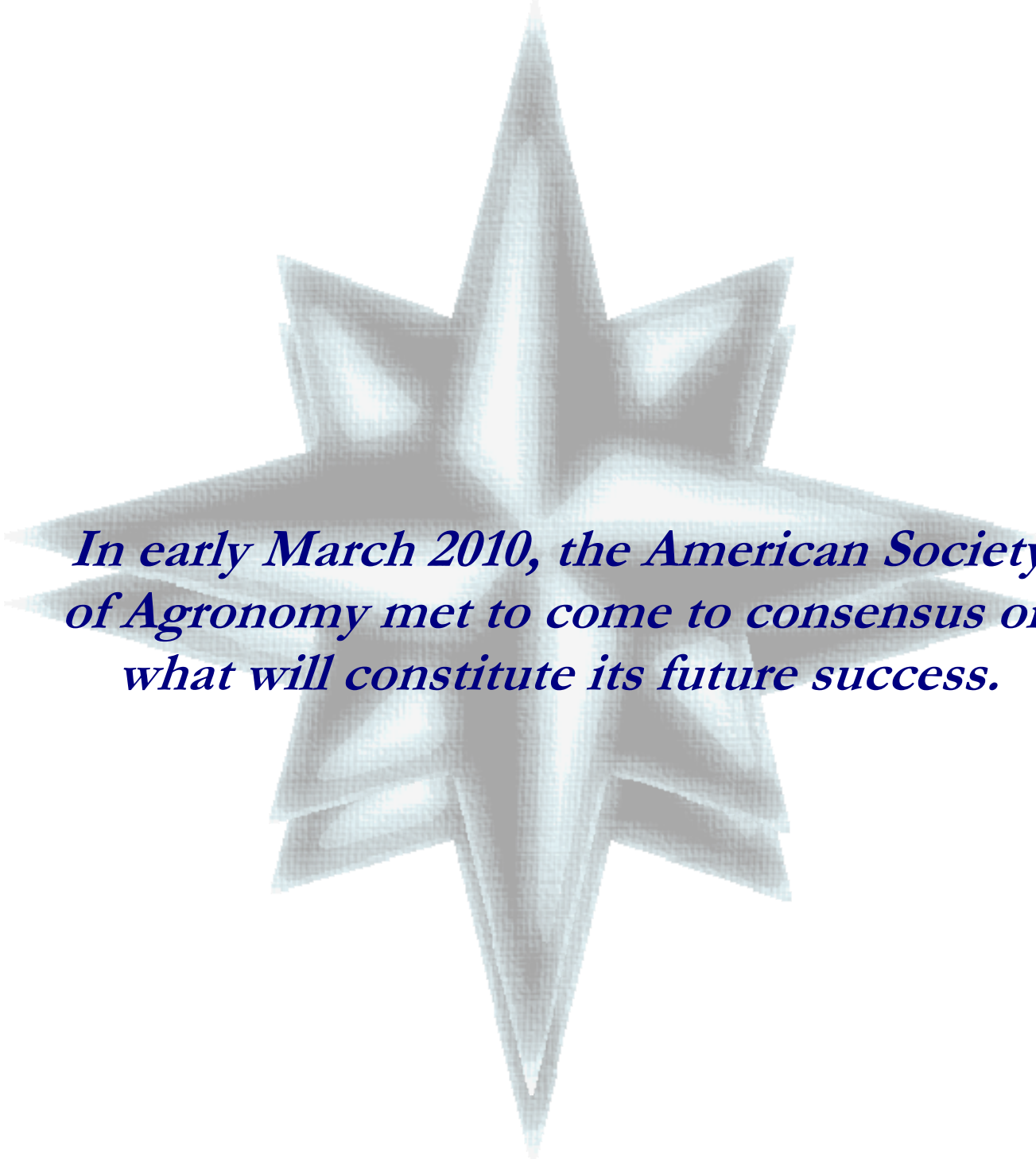


# *THINKING & PLANNING STRATEGICALLY*



*In early March 2010, the American Society of Agronomy met to come to consensus on what will constitute its future success.*

*This is that direction...*

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## OVERVIEW



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On March 10, 2010, a strategic planning group consisting of Board members and senior staff of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA) met to update its long-range strategic direction. Bud Crouch, a principal partner of Tecker Consultants, LLC and president of Innovations Plus led this ASA leadership team through the planning process.

This planning document defines ASA's clear strategic direction. It is the leadership team's consensus on what will constitute the Organization's future success. It answers the following two fundamental strategic questions:

1. Why will ASA exist in the future? *Its reason for being and core purpose.*
2. Where is ASA going? *Its future direction and goals.*

### ***Planning Strategically:***

The existence of this strategic direction and its successful implementation signals the leadership team's desire to lead ASA strategically. Developing a strategic direction is not a one-time event, but an ongoing commitment and process. The strategic direction represents a compass that will guide and focus ASA's future strategic decision-making and ongoing operational work.

### ***Strategic Focus:***

Organizational strategic focus or intent is very important. One of the challenges for ASA is that there is more to do than resources to accomplish. The temptation to do everything can lead organizations to try to be all things to all people. Planning strategically is the counter to the all-things syndrome. It is about identifying a limited number of goals that ASA must undertake to move successfully into the future.

### ***Strategic Approach/Philosophy:***

The approach in defining the new strategic direction was not to identify what ASA wants to continue doing today (its current operational plan). Rather, the team determined what the organization is not doing today, but must engage in to be successful in the future.

This strategic direction is not about business as usual — ***it is about the change needed to stay relevant!*** This separates the strategic plan from the operational plan. Both are important. The strategic direction is a constant reminder, as the leadership team oversees the development of the annual operational plan, of what must be changed to stay relevant to what members are seeing in the real world.

### ***Updating the Strategic Plan:***

A strategic plan can only stay current and relevant if ASA insures that the plan is inspected regularly and then updated. It is the leadership team's *working document*. Therefore, the governing body has both the right and the responsibility to:

- 1) Change the strategic plan anytime it needs to be changed based on sound reasoning and assessment; and
- 2) Update the plan regularly.

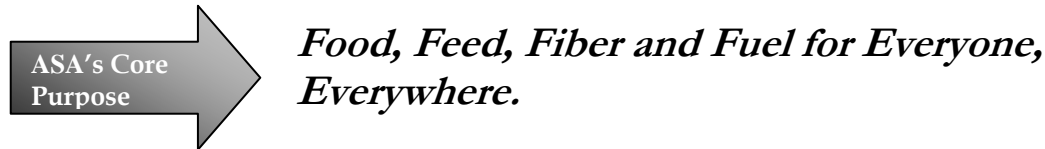
## 10 TO 30 YEAR Long-Range Strategic Planning Horizon

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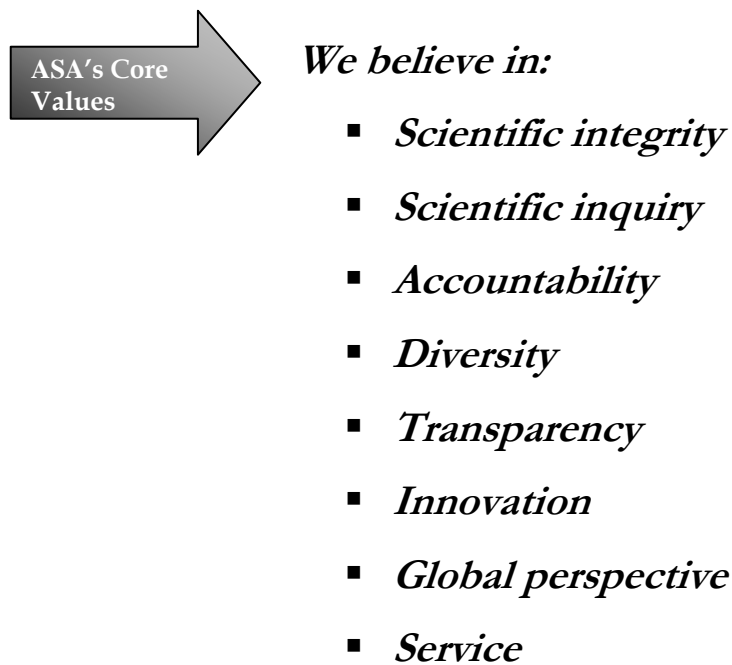
A 10 to 30 year planning horizon was developed, which consists of ASA's core ideology and 10 to 30 year envisioned future.

**Core Ideology/Purpose and Values** clarifies what must be preserved in an environment of increasing rapid and unpredictable change. Core ideology consists of ASA's core values and core purpose.

The **core purpose** describes ASA's very reason for being — *why the ASA will or should exist into the future* (10 to 30 years). What would be lost if it ceased to exist? What sense of purpose will motivate members to dedicate their creative energies to ASA and its efforts over a long period of time?



**Core values** are a small set of timeless, guiding principles that do not require external justification. They only have intrinsic value and importance to ASA. Core values are so fundamental that they seldom change — *if at all*. They define the behavior required in order for the organization to achieve its core purpose. Core values are so deep-seated and valid that ASA would preserve the core values even if it were admonished for having these values.



The **Big Audacious Goal** is the *10 to 15 year envisioned future or Vision*. The B.A.G/vision is a goal (that is ASA's vision statement) that stretches beyond ASA's current three to five year goals. Because it is "audacious" it represents a significant challenge and its achievement will require ASA to move outside of its comfort zone. It is clear and compelling to all members. It has a clear finish line which will take both time and hard work to accomplish. The goal should stimulate leadership activity, commitment and participation beyond ASA's present leadership. It helps to set the direction for the succession of future three to five year strategic plans.



***ASA will integrate and apply science to double global food, feed, fiber and fuel production by 2050***

A vivid description helps to clarify what is intended by the B.A.G. It describes what Agronomy and ASA will look like when the Society successfully completes its B.A.G. It also provides measureable achievements (milestones).

#### **Agronomy:**

- *There is a smaller percentage of the global human population that is hungry.*
- *Doubled yields are occurring globally.*
- *There are more people who understand agronomy.*
- *Agronomists are valued in the quest to address world food issues.*
- *There are new industries defining and solving the increased environmental? d issues.*
- *Adequate federal funding exists for the agronomic sciences.*
- *There are economically viable production systems with substantially improved efficiency (resilient to and mitigating climate change; improved soil-,water-,air quality; and ecosystem health).*
- *There are new locally adaptable and sustainable bioenergy resources.*
- *Crop management has made great headway in adapting to climate change.*
- *There are more diversified agricultural products in the world.*

#### **ASA:**

- *has substantially increased membership.*
- *is financially secure and stable.*
- *is widely recognized and branded worldwide.*
- *has significant influence on the success of global agriculture.*

## ***Strategic 3 to 5 Year Goals***



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The following represents ASA's goals that encompass its 3- to 5-year direction. These goals are outcome-oriented statements that lead ASA towards its envisioned future. These goals are not in any order of priority. All of the goals will need to be accomplished if ASA is to fully achieve its 3 to 5 year quest.

### **In 2014:**

***Goal A. ASA will be financially secure and viable. (Diversified Revenue)***

***Goal B. ASA will enhance its value proposition. (Increased Knowledge)***

***Goal C. The integrated science of agronomy will be recognized by key audiences as a major source of science-based knowledge. (International Influence)***

***Goal D. ASA will improve its integrative role by collaborating with other scientific fields and societies. (Outreach)***

# ***STRATEGIC LONG-RANGE GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND MILESTONES***



Strategies indicate how ASA will organize, focus and expend its resources and actions to maximize its effectiveness and efficiency in achieving its 3 to 5-year goals. The strategies must be reviewed and updated annually.

The strategies were rated in importance of when they should be undertaken (implementation timing). The three ratings include:

**High:** *Work on this strategy must be undertaken in the next program/fiscal year.*

**Medium:** *Work on this strategy should be undertaken in the next program/fiscal year if at all possible.*

**Low:** *Work on this strategy can wait until a subsequent program/fiscal year if necessary.*

Indicators of Achievement are used to determine the overall progress toward a goal. They indicate how close ASA is to achieving a goal as it executes the individual strategies for each goal. ***The indicators of achievement measure goal achievement, not strategy achievement.***

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## **Goal A: *ASA will be financially secure and viable. (Diversified Revenue)***

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### **Strategies:**

- A1. (High) Develop broad-based endowment funds in support of education, advocacy and outreach.
- A2. (High) Increase non-dues revenue from current and new programs and services that are aligned with ASA's mission.
- A3. (Medium) Increase grant, foundation and contract support for ASA initiatives (eg. Mississippi River Basin Initiative).
- A4. (Medium) Expand/diversify membership to non-traditional areas (scientific disciplines).

### **Indicators of Achievement:**

An increase in:

- ⇒ diversified sources of non-dues revenue.
- ⇒ endowment funds which support education, advocacy and outreach.
- ⇒ grants, foundation and contract support.
- ⇒ membership diversification from non-traditional areas.

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## **Goal B: *ASA will enhance its value proposition. (Increased Knowledge)***

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### **Strategies:**

- B1. ASA will increase its value proposition to current and future members by:
  - (High) continually enhancing the quality and innovation of publications,

- (High) enhancing programmatic content and delivery through Meetings, and
  - (High) enhancing scholarship programs.
- B2. ASA will increase the value proposition to current and future CCAs by:
- (High) improving the relevance, quality and content of Crops and Soils magazine,
  - (High) expanding continuing education offerings and online education, and
  - (High) enhancing policy advocacy on behalf of CCAs.
- B3. (High) Continue expanding ICCA internationally.
- B4. (Medium) Survey members and nonmembers to establish a baseline of value and collect data to measure success against the baseline.

### **Indicators of Achievement:**

An increase in:

- ⇒ the quality and innovation of publications.
- ⇒ impact factors and citations within publications.
- ⇒ an increase in book, CD, and special publications by 50%.
- ⇒ the number and diversity of meetings, meeting participation and meeting revenue.
- ⇒ diversified speakers and content at meetings.
- ⇒ use of modern IT for virtual meetings, including virtual poster offerings.
- ⇒ enhanced content in Crops and Soils magazine.
- ⇒ the number and diversity of educational programs.
- ⇒ advocacy on behalf of CCAs.
- ⇒ international CCA programs.
- ⇒ an increase in international memberships and participation in Annual Meetings
- ⇒ member satisfaction based on both member retention and survey results.

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**Goal C:** *The integrated science of agronomy will be recognized by key audiences as the source of science based knowledge. (National/International Influence)*

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### **Strategies:**

- C1. The integrated science of agronomy will be recognized by key audiences as the source of science based knowledge through:
- (High) developing educational materials on agronomic themes for policy makers.
  - (High) proactively influencing/enhancing legislation and regulation.
  - (High) developing educational materials for the media, K-12 and general public.

- (High) creation of a highly visible “Agronomists Making a Difference” program.
- (Medium) developing/expanding online educational materials and offerings.

**Indicators of Achievement:**

An increase in:

- ⇒ world-wide recognition of ASA as a source for science-based agronomic knowledge
- ⇒ ASA’s strategic position (image, recognition, public understanding) as a powerful advocate and voice for agronomy.
- ⇒ ASA position papers, educational briefings and interactions with legislators.
- ⇒ more favorable legislation and funding for agronomy.
- ⇒ coalition involvement and grassroots advocacy efforts.
- ⇒ ASA’s interaction with media as the voice of, and for, agronomy.
- ⇒ expanded web-based information.

**Goal D: *ASA will improve its integrative role with other scientific fields and societies.***  
***(Outreach)***

**Strategies**

D1. (High) Increase mutually beneficial linkages with other groups by:

- (High) pursuing mutually beneficial (scientific and financial) opportunities with other organizations,
- (High) developing educational offerings of benefit to ASA members (who also have linkages with other professional organizations),
- (High) reviewing the “society and association” landscape to determine if there are successful integrative models that exist,
- (Medium) sponsoring an NSF workshop on the role of agronomy in managed ecosystems, and
- (Low) developing workshops, webinars and publications on building successful multi-disciplinary research and implementation teams.

**Indicators of Achievement:**

An increase in:

- ⇒ mutually beneficial linkages with other groups.
- ⇒ joint activities, partnerships and coalitions.

The existence of:

- ⇒ a list of existing and potential societies and organizations and the possible beneficial linkages that could be developed.

## ***STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS***



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The respondents identified the following assumptions about the most significant, future (two to seven years) external conditions, trends and major forces that they believe will impact ASA in the future.

### ***Financial:***

1. Lack of applied agronomic funding from state and federal agencies could have profound implications for food price trends in the future as public research funds have been redirected away from applied agronomic farm productivity toward other concerns, such as the environmental effects of agriculture. Consequently, the rate of gain in productivity over this same period has waned compared to previous rates of gain and may have profound implications for food price trends in the future.
2. The paradox between decreasing state and federal funding for agronomic research and requirements for young Land Grant faculty members to secure competitive outside funding profoundly limits future advances in agricultural sciences.

### ***The World-Wide Public:***

3. More people are aware of global food security and environmental issues and understand that agricultural research has an important role in solving these global issues.
4. There is increased need for food production (both quality and quantity) in the world, and especially outside North America.
5. Increased awareness that we must develop systems that are sustainable and not simply exploit or mine our natural resources for today without adequate regard for tomorrow.

### ***Agronomy/Agriculture:***

6. Privacy rights and growth in multi-national private enterprises in agriculture will lead to much of agronomic knowledge becoming proprietary and unavailable to the public.
7. There will be a continued divergence of larger, more industrial agricultural activities and organic farming activities, which may cause conflict and competition for the public's attention and support.
8. Continuing trend for fewer farmers producing food.
9. There will be increased competition for use of water and land between food/feed/fiber and other purposes such as fuel, pharmaceuticals, starting materials for plastics, etc.

### ***Governmental:***

10. Political and social pressure for sustainable development will increase, resulting in more governmental regulation of agricultural practices perceived to contribute to non-point source pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
11. Forestry already has sustainability certification and agriculture does not. There is increasing demand for life-cycle analyses in industry product stewardship programs, and there is need and opportunity for scientific input into these analyses.
12. There is an increasing flood of agri-business information without interpretation. This will create a growing need for the "definitive summary" of the "state of the information" for decision makers in government, on the farm, and in agri-business.

### ***Education, Public, Governmental Awareness:***

13. There is a lack of public education and understanding about the role that agronomic sciences can play in providing sustainable solutions for improving agricultural productivity and food security, thereby, continuing to threaten the recognition of agricultural sciences.

### ***Environment:***

14. There is a growing shortage of water, land and energy on a worldwide basis along with simultaneous population growth which will place increasing pressure on food supply systems and food prices.
15. There will be an increased focus on the environmental impacts of agricultural production with a focus on carbon sequestration in soils and greenhouse gasses, and demand for documenting the environmental footprint of food, feed, fuel and fiber production will increase and lead to greater need for certified production systems.
16. Environmental movements attract large numbers of members. Engagement with these groups to provide credible scientific information is an opportunity to have positive impacts.

### ***Research:***

17. There will be a growing need for basic research into soil management and crop production under changing climate conditions.
18. New genetic technologies will become prevalent, but being proprietary will offer limited opportunities for involvement from publicly funded and non-proprietary research sectors.
19. The reductions in research, extension, and teaching positions for agronomic science professionals in North America will likely continue.
20. More recycling of nutrients and other agricultural inputs will be encouraged to reduce the rate at which we consume our natural resources and impact our natural resources.

### ***Technology:***

21. Technological advances in biology, genetics, precision agriculture, materials, and integrative systems level sciences will improve agricultural productivity.
22. Human population expansion and its demand for food, fiber, fuel and other bio-products will place greater stress on soil and crop production resources and increase demand for agronomic research, technology and information.

***Mega issues*** are overriding issues of strategic importance that cut across multiple goals or outcome areas. They address key strategic questions that ASA must answer, illuminating choices that the organization must make and challenges that need to be overcome to better serve its members, fulfill its mission and successfully move into the future.

### ***Strategic***

1. How will ASA increase credibility in the environmental, natural resources and organic/sustainable agricultural communities without losing its link to production agricultural and the segment of its membership associated only with production agricultural? *It's a 'clash of two cultures' which has hurt ASA in that its credibility is often questioned because of its close alliance with the fertilizer/pesticide community.*

2. How can ASA better engage and embrace women and minorities in leadership positions?  
*ASA's poor record of engaging and embracing women and minorities in the leadership positions of the Society undermines support for ASA and ultimately leads these demographic groups to go elsewhere.*

***Membership Benefits and ROI:***

3. What value propositions should ASA offer in the future to sustain current members and attract young and international agronomists?

***Competition***

4. How can the ASA deal with the increasing competition from smaller, specialized scientific Societies and distance itself from its competitors so ASA is the clear “go to” source for “anything agronomic”?

***Government Communication, Education and Advocacy:***

5. How can ASA better partner and collaborate with other organizations to extend its national and international mandate in issues related to food security?

***Agronomy's Reputation, Image, and Brand:***

6. What can ASA do to increase public appreciation for the role of agronomic sciences in the sustainable provision of their food, feed, fuel and fiber?

***Key Stakeholders:***

7. Many disciplines interface with agronomy. How does the ASA support involvement and engagement of those in related disciplines who see agronomy as a secondary interest?

(This Strategic Plan was approved by the ASA Board of Directors via an email vote on  
June 30, 2010)