



The Value and Impact of FFF Research

By Dale Leikam, President, Fluid Fertilizer Foundation

Wow! What a program at the recent Fluid Forum held in Scottsdale this past February.

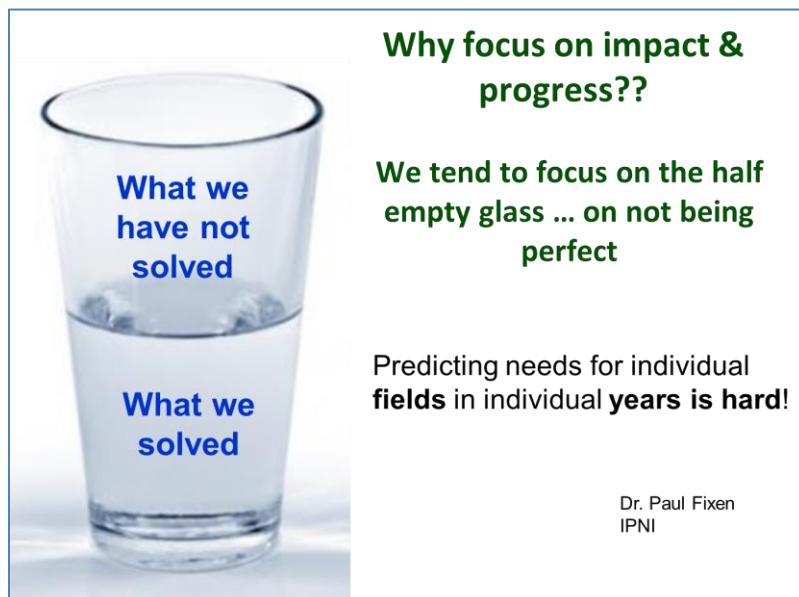
While we sometimes hear that there really isn't anything new in crop nutrition anymore and that we are often funding 'more of the same' research – the research updates presented at the Fluid Forum say otherwise.

From research trying to better understand why we now consistently observe potassium responses on soils with potassium soil test levels far above what we previously considered fully adequate – to research delaying part of the overall nitrogen program for application after tasseling for corn. The results of both these research projects fly in the face of conventional wisdom in the not too distant past.

In addition, other research updates ranged from topics delving into the intricacies of identifying the interaction of soybean genetic yield gain and the need for supplying additional fertilizer nitrogen - to assessing the potential for drip Irrigation in the timing of nutrient availability for most efficient nutrient utilization. Neither of these research projects are 'more of the same' research! The remaining projects and research updates were likewise 'cutting edge' and not a repeat of past research.

What these projects point out is that the forward looking research funded by the Fluid Fertilizer Foundation is extremely important as all of agriculture continues to face

change. Additionally, as the industry continues to embrace the 4R concept of nutrient management - it becomes more and more evident that fluid fertilizers are more often than not the right source once the questions of the right place, right time and right rate are answered. And it also becomes more and more apparent that the research funded by the Fluid Fertilizer Foundation is needed more now than at any time in our industry's past.



At the Fluid Forum this past February, Dr. Paul Fixen with IPNI was asked to review the impact of the past 35 years of our efforts in nutrient management – and to speculate on what is next for our industry. One of the key take home messages I had from his remarks was that we need take credit for all the progress we as an industry have made over the past 35 years, to let everyone know of this remarkable progress and to focus on what we have solved and not on what is not perfect. Too often we focus on the glass being half-empty rather than the fact that that the glass is actually half-full.

Large, consistent improvements in crop yields, remarkable improvements in nutrient use efficiency and marked reductions in soil erosion are just a few examples of this progress. But too often we compare where we are now in 2017 with what a perfect crop production system might look like – and we find that we are not perfect. Indeed, predicting nutrient management needs for an individual field in an individual year is hard, if not impossible!

As we look to the future and develop our plans for meeting future challenges and changes, let's make sure that we remember that past research such as historically sponsored by the Fluid Fertilizer Foundation has provided the foundation for dealing with the change and opportunities facing all of us today. Likewise, the forward looking research presented at the 2017 Fluid Forum is laying the groundwork for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. I can't hardly wait for the 2018 Fluid Forum!