
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)



The Science Source for Food,
Agricultural, and Environmental Issues

CAST is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization composed of 37 scientific societies and many individual, student, company, nonprofit, and associate society members. CAST's Board of Directors is composed of 38 representatives of the scientific societies and individual members, and an 8-member Executive Committee. CAST was established in 1972 as a result of a 1970 meeting sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council.

The primary work of CAST is the publication of task force reports and issue papers written by scientists from many disciplines. The CAST Board of Directors is responsible for the policies and procedures followed in developing, processing, and disseminating the documents produced. These publications and their distribution are fundamental activities that accomplish our mission to assemble, interpret, and communicate credible science-based information regionally, nationally, and internationally to legislators, regulators, policymakers, the media, the private sector, and the public. The wide distribution of CAST publications to nonscientists enhances the education and understanding of the general public. Recent publications include an issue paper entitled *Bioenergy: Pointing to the Future* and a CAST Commentary on *Crop Biotechnology and the Future of Food: A Scientific Assessment*. More information about CAST projects and publications is available on the website at www.cast-science.org.

In addition to strong efforts in the areas of plant science and plant pests, involving plant pathologists, entomologists, weed scientists, and nematologists, CAST addresses issues of animal science, food safety, and biotechnology with inputs from economists, social scientists, toxicologists, and legal experts.

Plant Protection Sciences:

- Research to understand the impact of management practices for weeds, diseases, and insects and how they affect agricultural and natural resources, urban environments, and society is critical.
- CAST's role in explaining the state of knowledge and elucidating policy issues regarding the impacts of pests, pest management, and biotechnology on production agriculture, natural resources, and urban environments is important for policymakers and the public.
- A CAST-sponsored symposium on "Nondietary Exposure to Organophosphates and Carbamate Pesticides: Reporting and Estimation of Exposure and Risk" is being planned for 2006.

Plant and Soil Sciences:

- Communication of credible information about plant and soil sciences is of vital importance to those involved in U.S. agriculture: agricultural specialists, policymakers, and farmers.
- Important current topics include water quality and runoff issues; the inadvertent presence of transgenic seeds or other material in conventional and organic crops; agriculture's role in the development of bioenergy resources; and the preservation of genetic resources. Through its Work Group discussions, CAST is actively pursuing these and other topics for publications.
- A workshop entitled "Water Quality and Quantity Issues for Turfgrasses in Urban Landscapes" will be held January 23-25, 2006 in Las Vegas, NV. Full details about the workshop are available at www.castwaterquality.info

Youth Agricultural Essay – In 2002-3 an essay contest was conducted by CAST, in cooperation with CSREES and several stakeholders, for sixth–eighth grade students. The purpose was to educate youth about the science of agriculture. Seven topics were selected for the contest such as "Using Science to Create a Safe and Healthy Food Supply" and "Using Lasers, Robots, and Computers in Agriculture." It is CAST's desire to reinstate and broaden the project to include a larger number of students and supporting organizations. Local, State, and National winners would be chosen.