American Society of Agronomy’s (ASA)
International Certified Crop Adviser (ICCA) Program
Concept for Expansion of ICCA Program in Country

The International Certified Crop Adviser (ICCA) program validates the credentials of professional crop advisers by establishing standards for knowledge, experience, ethics and continuing education. The program is part of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA) and is currently operating throughout the United States, Canada, India and Mexico. There are over 13,000 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA). The ICCA program is self-sustaining financially and it is a goal of ICCA for any new program to achieve financial self-sustainability within the first five years of getting started.

ASA and the ICCA boards are interested in working with government agencies and organizations, both private and public sectors in Country to expand and develop the ICCA program suitable for Country institutions and culture. This will be a collaborative effort between ASA, public and private sectors in Country and international centers where the existing ICCA structure and quality measures will be adopted. ASA will ensure standards that maintain the CCA creditability. Local accountability and responsibility are equally important to the success of the ICCA program. A feasibility study as outlined under “functional steps 1 and 2” needs to be completed prior to a final decision being made to develop the program.

Structure: The ICCA Program is part of the ASA. The CCA – International Council (Council) with representatives from the United States, Canada, India and Mexico is the standards setting body for the program. The Council establishes and oversees the policies and procedures for the Program. The CCA – National Board (NBoard) implements the policies and procedures within their country. The NBoard ratifies changes to the International Standards recommended by the Council. Depending on a country’s scope, the NBoard will delegate responsibilities to CCA – Local Boards (LB). The LBs have a defined geography that consists of a state, a province or a group of states or provinces as a region. Each LB would have a voting member on the NBoard and the NBoard has a voting representative on the Council. The Council will add representatives as new programs are started, first as a non-voting member when the program begins development then to voting member once the program is established and the first group of CCAs are certified.

Each certifying board consists of representatives from government agencies for agriculture and environmental quality; academia and research institutes; and industry. This approach builds a network that fosters close working relationships between the different segments that serve and support agricultural production. It is critical that all three segments, i.e., government, academia and research institutes, industry, are represented when the Country program is started. Cooperative efforts from all three segments are strengths of the ICCA program.

The certifying boards review credentials, grant the certification, develop and maintain the board exam and implements the policies and procedures set by the Council as well as
deal with situations where credentials must be revoked. Certifying boards are responsible
deal with situations where credentials must be revoked. Certifying boards are responsible for
managing the program in their jurisdiction according to the ICCA policies and procedures with support from a local office and from the ICCA office.

Guiding documents:
1. Policies and Procedures Manual – outlines all policies and procedures of the program. All certifying boards follow the same overall policies and procedures. This keeps consistency and standards in place so a CCA in Country is similar to a CCA from another country. Minor modifications can be made for Country conditions.
2. Exam Performance Objectives – establishes what every crop adviser needs to know to practice the profession. The performance objectives guide the development of the international exam. Each certifying board in Country will have its version of the performance objectives that guide the development of the local board exam. Each exam question must link to a performance objective to be valid. The CCA - NBoard would need to assist the ICCA staff in establishing fair and realistic prices for Country conditions. As a comparison, the current price for the US version of the ICCA exam is $175.00 or (local currency) (1 US $ = x local).
3. Credential Booklet – contains the requirements and forms that an applicant needs to complete in order to become certified. The ICCA staff would need help from the CCA - NBoard to modify this document where necessary to meet Country conditions.
4. Educational Areas Booklet - describes potential continuing education topics. The ICCA staff would need help from the NBoard to modify this document to meet Country conditions.

CCA Requirements:
a. Exams: pass two comprehensive exams – international (general), local board (region specific) – each covering nutrient management; soil and water management; integrated pest management and crop management;
b. Experience: a minimum of two years work experience in crop advising with a bachelor of science degree or four years work experience in crop advising post High School; plus two supporting references – one from an employer and one from a client;
c. Education: minimum based on experience (the ICCA staff will need help from the NBoard to establish the appropriate, equivalent education minimum for Country), continuing education once certified is 40 credit hours every two years (continuing education is conducted in the US by universities, extension service, government agencies, private companies and ASA. ASA can help the NBoard inventory existing programs and identify what additional programs are needed in Country, ASA along with other organizations can also help develop continuing education with Country expertise based in Country and/or delivered electronically from world experts); and

d. Ethics: sign and agree to uphold the code of ethics.

Functional Steps for Developing a Program:
1. Identify key stakeholders from within the three segments, i.e., government, academia/research institutes and industry, (private sector companies; the government
agency responsible for agriculture; the government agency responsible for environmental quality; farmer organization; the agriculture college/university that could help with the exam development and continuing education process; the agriculture trade organization or major agriculture employers; and the agriculturally oriented institutions/centers who are willing to help develop the program in Country. These individuals need to understand the production agriculture practices within Country and/or the specific province/region and how their segment (government, academia/research institute, industry) is engaged in the process of supporting agricultural production.

2. Convene a meeting of the key stakeholders to review what is required to establish the ICCA program in Country and to determine the feasibility of getting the NBoard started. The exploratory process should cover the following:
   a. market analysis – determine the need for CCAs, the potential number of CCAs and the potential growth in CCAs in the future based on personnel already working to support agricultural production
   b. average educational level of individuals working in industry
   c. benefits to and needs of the individuals and industry to adopt and support the program in the short and long term
   d. economic considerations – pricing, costs, grants, proforma budget (based on conditions in Country)
   e. Goal – the program is to be financially self-sustaining within five years of getting started, number of potential CCAs must be considered and pricing must we set accordingly to achieve this goal
   f. identify potential start up funding, any funding provided by ICCA must be repaid to ICCA within seven years from when the program starts development
   g. local administration
   h. ASA’s and ICCA’s role
   i. identify the jurisdiction where a pilot test could be conducted.

If steps 1 and 2 indicate a CCA program should be developed:
1. Performance Objective development – identify a group of technical experts in nutrient management; soil and water management; integrated pest management and crop management who could use the current ICCA performance objectives as the starting point and modify the existing performance objectives to meet the needs for the NBoard.

2. Exam development – identify a group (could be the same as in #1) of technical experts including some with exam development expertise to use the newly created performance objectives document to develop the exam questions. Questions on the ICCA exam can be used for the Country version of the ICCA exam if applicable.

3. Conduct and grade initial exams. Validate questions with standard statistical analysis techniques and determine if changes are needed for the exam questions.
4. Credentials – identify a group that could evaluate the credential documents (university transcripts and diplomas, work experiences, and references) to meet standards developed by the Council.

5. Certifying Board – identify seven to eleven people from the local Country CCA region who could serve on the first certifying board as outlined under “structure” above. The minimum size of the board must represent the appropriate number of agencies, institutions, companies and individuals but not be too large as to not be functional. This board will establish the local administrative process including the credential review, continuing education, communication and promotional efforts. The promotional efforts must clearly identify the value to producers, industry, and extension organizations of using Certified Crop Advisers to deliver technical advice to the agricultural community. The certifying board is responsible for managing the CCA program in their geographic area according to the ICCA program policies and procedures.