

Draft 1

ASA's ICCA Program International Expansion Plan

Background: International expansion of the ASA ICCA certification program up to this point has been from a passive approach. Countries where certification has expanded came by invitation from a member or someone who had firsthand knowledge and experience with the certification program in the USA. That approach though passive was very agreeable since ASA ICCA was not pushing its way into a new market. The host who invited the program could speak in favor of it and help explain why it would be beneficial.

Although having an invitation and citizens speaking in favor of the certification coming to their country is very positive, it still raises the question, what would it look like if ASA ICCA took an active approach to expanding certification internationally or had a plan in place when the invitation came? Up until now, ASA ICCA did not have a formal plan to expand their certifications to other countries. ICCA leadership with Board support has expressed a desire to do so and has designated part of their reserve funds to be used as “start-up” funding for new countries. The funding would be similar to a no interest loan with the expectation that the new program would repay the funds as the program grew.

The plan is a framework for how certification could expand to new countries with the understanding that it will not be exactly the same for every location. It also assumes an active role for ASA and ICCA. All estimates are based on US currency and experiences building the program over the last 20 years. Projections would need to be modified based on specific country conditions.

The focus of this plan is on certification but it could easily be considered as complimentary to membership, publications via the DL and educational offerings. It ties directly to ASA's core purpose: food, feed, fiber, fuel for everyone, everywhere and one of the core values to have a global perspective. To fulfill the “everyone, everywhere”, implies a truly international approach. The ASA grand challenge to double global food, feed, fiber and fuel production on existing acreage will take a collaborative, global effort.

Can we truly reach this vision if we do not unite agronomists around the world with a single purpose – to feed more people? As a result, a network would form regardless of political and geographical boundaries. Agronomy education and research would flow through this network fostering collaboration and cooperation. Where agronomy organizations already exist, ASA ICCA would approach them to collaborate and where

such organizations do not exist, ASA would help foster one. Certification becomes the infrastructure to qualify individuals to be agronomists and continuing education advances their knowledge and skills in agronomy so they remain current and performing at a high level.

The framework

Stage 1: Research - Timeline: 0 to 6th month, Duration: 0 to 6 months

- a. Inform the current membership that exists in the host country and identify interested individuals as well as technical experts
- b. Determine what types of organizations already exist that are similar to ASA for collaboration or potential competition
- c. Determine if and what type of certification and/or licensing programs already exist
 - a. If they do exist, is there the opportunity for partnering/collaborating?
 - b. What are the existing and/or potential government regulations?
- d. Determine the potential size of the market
 - a. 1,000 is the minimum sustainable size of certified people so the market should be about 8 to 10 times that (8,000 to 10,000 potential)
- e. Determine how agriculture/agronomy is viewed in the culture
- f. Identify the key players/companies/universities with the number of potential CCAs that are employed in each area
- g. Share the “concept” paper (Addendum A) with interested parties so they have a better understanding of what is being proposed and what would be expected if ASA proceeds and evaluate the responses that are received
- h. Identify potential start up funding resources (bonus item)

Milestones: the CCA – International Council will review the research data to determine if it is feasible to proceed with planning and organizing, if any one of the items is not favorable and an acceptable solution cannot be identified the project ends here

Budget: \$9,000, 60 to 70 hours of staff time, if an outside firm is needed to determine market data, add \$25,000, if travel is needed, add \$4,000 for one trip/one person

Stage 2: Planning -Timeline: 3rd to 9th month, Duration: 3 months

- a. Identify an exploratory team of agricultural experts in country that are willing to help determine the feasibility and complete the planning process
- b. Validation of the research data by the exploratory team

- c. Identify a potential business partner for ASA, this partner must be able to conduct financial transactions and agree to all items listed on the “partner requirements” document (Addendum B) and are willing to sign the licensing agreement
- d. Alternative to business partner: Everything would be done over the Internet directly with ASA ICCA staff.
 - a. Internet connectivity needs to be high enough for those in the rural communities that would become CCAs
 - b. The majority of the target audience would need to be able to do business over the web – credit cards that work outside of their home country
 - c. Exams would be delivered via computer at testing centers

Milestones: all items above must result in a positive outcome for the process to proceed, the ASA business partner must be identified before operations can proceed even if a and b are positive, the business partner must be identified prior to moving to stage 3, no business partner = project stops here, an alternative to a business partner would be for all transactions to be completed online directly with ASA ICCA

Budget: \$9,750, 20 to 65 hours of staff time, travel – one week in country if needed, add \$4,000

Major Milestone: Stage 1 and 2 are completed successfully, the commitment is made to build the certification program

Total Budget at this point: \$18,750 to 51,750, with two trips potentially

Stage 3: Organizing – Timeline: 6th to 12th month, Duration: 3 months

- a. Identify and establish the members of the National Board, it can be members from or the entire exploratory team
- b. Identify and establish the members of the Exam and Procedures Committee
 - a. Technical expertise in the four core module areas: nutrient management; soil and water management; integrated pest management; and crop management
 - b. Utilize as much of the international POs and exam questions as possible
- c. Develop a performance objective and exam development plan
- d. Identify and establish the members of the Communications and Promotions Committee
- e. Develop a communications and promotions plan
- f. Establish a training plan for the business partner staff and begin the training process, involves one trip to ASA to train with ASA certification staff

- g. Organize the Board into functional committees

Milestones: all items are completed successfully, any one item that is not completed successfully will delay the process or jeopardize the entire plan, challenges must be resolved before proceeding

Budget: \$11,500, 40 to 50 hours of staff time, travel for primary staff person to USA to train on systems and procedures, add \$4,000 – partner should pay this amount

Total Budget through Stage 3: \$30,250 to 67,250

Stage 4: Implementation – Timeline: 9th to 30th month, Duration: 18 months

- a. Set up web pages, Protech database, communications, partner operations electronically linked with ASA
- b. Develop Performance Objectives document
- c. Develop Exam Questions and Exam document
- d. Board training – how to function, responsibilities, how to review credentials, budgeting, ethics
- e. Board will establish pricing, set exam dates and implement communications and promotions plan
 - a. Minimum pricing is \$75.00 US for exams and \$50 US for annual renewal fee
 - b. These amounts will return to ASA ICCA
 - c. The national board working with the business partner organization will have the option to add to these prices to raise funds for their operations and services
- f. Establish a continuing education committee
- g. Develop education programs as identified to prepare for the exams
- h. Develop study materials
- i. Adapt all ICCA documents for host country conditions and language
- j. Conduct the exam with a pilot/test group, based on the exam statistics, edit the exam so it can be offered to the general public

Milestones: all items must be completed successfully to proceed, if all items have been successfully reached then the program is established

Budget: \$47,000, 260 to 300 hours of staff time, at least one trip for one week for two staff people, translation of documents if necessary add \$5,000

Total Budget through stage 4: \$77,250 to 119,250

Major Milestone: it will take approximately 2.5 years (30 months) to reach the point of offering the exam for the first time to the general public, revenue generation will be approximately \$1,500 (\$75 x 20 examinees) for the pilot test group, outside funding is optional

Stage 5: Review & Adjust – Timeline: 30th to 60th month, Duration: 30 months

- a. Review and evaluate all procedures and systems to ensure they are functioning properly
- b. Exam review process will be repeated at least twice
- c. Train continuing education (CE) committee
- d. Develop CE plan, inventory existing programs and implement the CE plan
- e. Marketing and promotions must be in full swing at this point
- f. The exam should be offered at least five times
- g. POs will need to be reviewed and edited at least one time

Milestones: the program must reach 1,500 examinees and 1,050 CCAs by the end of year 5 (60 months from when the processes started), if the program has not reached these numbers then the decision will be made to end the program unless reasonable justification is made to continue for a set time period

Budget: \$64,750, 350 hours of staff time, 2 trips for 2 people

Total Budget through stage 5: \$142,000 to 184,000

Projected revenue: \$112,500 (1,500 examinees x \$75) + \$90,000 [(100 x \$50) + (600 x \$50) + (1,100 x \$50)] renewals = \$202,500

Summary:

The ICCA Board agreed that it wanted new countries to join the existing program and in doing so, make it truly international. In that approach they would help start new programs but wanted those new programs to remain connected to the ICCA Program. ICCA supported the commitment with a change to their structure. Replacing the ICCA Board with the CCA – International Council and CCA – National and Local Boards. They designated \$100,000 of their reserve funds to be used as start up, matching funds for new programs who would then repay that amount to replenish the fund for future use.

The commitment from the ICCA Program does exist but it cannot be assumed that people in new countries understand what certification really means. It will require certification staff to invest time in educating board members, business partner staff and potential CCAs in the new country about certification, its benefits and how it works. Stakeholders need to reach that understanding by the end of this five year development plan so the program can function and grow. The projected numbers measure the physical or tangible infrastructure and are one goal but the intellectual (intangible) infrastructure supporting the certification process is just as important. The intangible is harder to measure but it too must be considered when determining to proceed with development or not.

It will be very hard to end a program that has some CCAs but not enough to have reached the 1,000 goal. That makes the commitment to proceed at the Stage 2 point very critical. Resource investment through stage 2 is at 13.2% of the total through stage 5. One of the key factors at this stage is the identification of a business partner or the Internet based option is deemed feasible. We should not proceed even if all indicators are positive if we do not have an adequate business partner in place at Stage 2. The same could be said in the event that we do have a strong business partner but it is determined that we will have a continuing struggle to engage the stakeholders.

In the event that interest is high – volunteer leadership fully engaged, projected CCA numbers will reach expectations – the internet based option would be the plausible alternative to the business partner. This could be a start up strategy until a business partner is identified.

Exit Strategy: There are CCAs in country but not 1,000 and the decision is made to exit. The CCAs that do exist would have to be able to conduct their certification requirements directly with ASA ICCA to maintain it. This could be done via the Internet, otherwise their certification would end. No new certificates would be issued. The National Board for the country would be dissolved.

Total timeline:	5 years
Total estimated investment:	\$142,000 to 184,000
Total estimated revenue:	\$193,500