

The Scientific Advisory Panel—What Are You Guys Up To Anyway?

Bill Atwell, AACC International Scientific Advisory Panel Chair
Cargill, Inc., Plymouth, MN, U.S.A.



AACC International has existed for more than 90 years. In that time, many things have changed and our society has changed as well. Any organization needs to change with the times to remain relevant. It is important also for that same organization to stay within boundaries where its resources can be effective. Growing too fast and changing too much can be as detrimental as not changing at all and stagnating.

The scope and objectives of AACC Intl. are clearly stated in the constitution governing our society and are easily found on *AACCnet*:

“The objectives of this association as stated in the Articles of Incorporation are to engage in those activities that will advance and encourage scientific and technical research on cereal grains and related materials, their processing and utilization, and to provide, on a nonprofit basis, a means of bringing this information together, reviewing and organizing it on the basis of its scientific merit, and making it available, through its technical conferences and such publications as best serve the purpose of doing so, to its members as a part of the privileges enjoyed by such members, and to other interested scientists, scientific groups, foundations, and institutions throughout the world.”

Each standing committee and panel of AACC Intl. is defined in the by-laws, which are also posted on *AACCnet*. All committee objectives are subservient to the AACC Intl. objectives stated above. I chair the Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) and the following statement defines our purpose:

“The Scientific Advisory Panel is responsible for identifying and monitoring scientific and public interest issues facing cereal and cereal-related industries worldwide, making recommendations to the Board of Directors or other panels concerning any AACC International response, and otherwise to strengthen the scientific stature of the association.”

To meet the SAP responsibilities, the AACC Intl. Board of Directors has assembled a group of 16 people who represent a cross section of the society’s membership, including academic, governmental, and industrial representatives from all over the world.

The 2009–2010 SAP membership includes Theresa Cogswell, Sean Finnie, Sathya Kalambur, Bob Gilbert, Stephane Guilbert, Rob Hamer, Perry Ng, and Monika Okoniewska. Also included in all of our activities are members of staff (Steve Nelson and Susan Kohn), a Board of Directors liaison (Craig Morris), the Annual Meeting Technical Program Planning Committee chairs for future meetings (Christophe Courtin, Deirdre Ortiz, and Art Bettge), and our representative to CAST (Larry Johnson).

Identifying emerging issues involves an educated prediction of what will happen in the future. This is not an easy task and we rely on many sources to be as comprehensive as possible. These sources include the networks of our panel members, input from members through general and targeted member surveys, annual meeting abstracts, summaries from meetings of other AACC Intl. committees and task forces, input from some of our sister societies, patent literature, reports of funding agencies, and input from AACC Intl. divisions and sections. We are also looking to employ a new sophisticated media monitoring tool that will post the most relevant news within our industry directly on *AACCnet* in the coming months.

**AACC INTERNATIONAL'S
SEVEN KEY
SCIENTIFIC INITIATIVES**

- Biotechnology and Sustainability
- Cereal and Polymer Chemistry
- Engineering and Processing
- Food Safety and Regulatory
- Health and Nutrition
- Ingredients and Cost of Goods Sold
- Quality and Analytical Methods

Information obtained from all these sources by SAP members are put into a database and prioritized. In its current form, we have 66 issues and trends listed. This prioritized database, along with specific recommendations as to possible AACC Intl. actions to address them, was submitted to the board of directors last May. The top issues/trends were global warming and cereal crops, obesity, food safety, shortage of water for agriculture, and food versus fuel. Examples of actions recommended included a joint meeting with our sister society, The American Phytopathological Society, symposia to be held at the next annual meeting, theme issues for *Cereal Foods World*, recommended speakers for a keynote address, and the creation of a task force.

Can AACC Intl. directly solve issues like global warming or obesity? Clearly the answer is “no.” Solving issues of the breadth and complexity of these is far beyond the resources we have to employ. However, if we stay within the scope of AACC Intl., as defined in our constitution, we can impact these issues as they relate to cereal grains and the industries they support. We can do this by raising awareness among our members and in turn among the people that they interact with in their professional lives. By doing so, we largely expand our resource base and our chances of making progress against these seemingly overwhelming issues.

Some among our membership may believe we are tipping at windmills. Perhaps we are. Here’s another question to ponder: Have you ever met a successful pessimist?