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Greetings Teachers,

After participating as a judge at the National Agronomy CDE and speaking with several other state superintendents, I've reflected upon our Maryland contest elements that align with an entry level agronomist's desired skillset and functional knowledge bank for a position in Maryland. As many of you know, the National contest includes a much broader set of skills and content knowledge as a National contest should. My team is adding the Agronomy Issues component to the contest this year as there are valuable public speaking and social skills that many professionals in the field have noted to me as highly desirable functions in an entry level agronomist's job. Quite simply, our students need to be able to distinguish highly credible sources of information, synthesize that information and dialogue with others through civil discourse. These oral and non-verbal communication skills are also imbedded in other areas of the national competition not included in our state competition. I encourage teams to prepare for this event by examining print media from the narrowed list of topics below. Practice dialoguing with others to hone your social skills. Additionally, the grain grading event will continue to be a modification of the national competition. Our team is working to assemble reference items for students to examine as they rank the contest samples.

Thus, the Maryland Agronomy CDE will be individual events consisting of crop, weed, insect, disorder, grain grading, machinery identification, a written exam and the new addition of agronomy issues.

The crop plants/crops seeds Weed plants /Weed seeds (150 points)
- The crop identification will include a mixture of live specimens (plants), seeds and color photographs.
- The weed identification will include a mixture of live specimens (plants), seeds and color photographs.

Insect identification (100 points)
- Identification will be according to insect name, life cycle, economic impact and mouth parts. Color photographs will be displayed.

Disorder identification (100 points) [10 samples]
- Identification will be according to category, causal agent and damage location. Color photographs will be displayed.

Equipment and Machinery Identification (100 points total)
- Identify 20 samples of equipment (5 points each). Samples may appear as actual equipment, scale models, toys or pictures. Major components that are unique to a certain piece of equipment may also be used. Large machinery will be represented by small scale models.

Grain Grading –from the commodity evaluation section (100 points)
- Two grain groups (Red Wheat and soybean) will be evaluated by reviewing test weight, moisture, etc. The four samples will be ranked by students.

Written Exam (100 points)
- The written exam is 50 multiple choice questions that cover a wide range of agronomic areas including crop production, soils, pest management, forages and environmental issues.

Agronomy Issues (100 points) (see page 7 of the national handbook)
- Each student will dialogue with an agricultural industry representative about an issue that is important to crop production. The student will be provided with print media on a single topic area the day of the event. Each student will be given 10 minutes and 2- 5x7 index cards to prepare their discussion. The student will then be given a maximum of five minutes to present their views and will be asked questions for an additional maximum of five minutes.
- Potential topics: 1) use of robots or drones in agriculture, 2) decrease in available farm ground and associated zoning challenges, 3) Urban/Agriculture interface (drift, dust, crop dusting, noise, smells), 4) conventional crops vs organic crop production, and 5) invasive species.

Event scoring will be as follows. Individual participants scores are the total sum of each participant's correctly scored responses within each section. The team scores will be the compiled scores of participants according to the declared team members at the start of the event. Once the event starts, team members can't be altered. In the event of a tie the written exam scores will be used to declare the winners. For team ties all written scores will be compiled to achieve one score to compare across the tied teams.

I encourage coaches and advisors to reach out to me with questions. We are looking forward to another outstanding group of students at this year's competition.

Respectfully,

Melissa Leiden Welsh

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Maryland Agronomy CDE Superintendent