

FUTURE OF EXTENSION WEED SCIENCE PROGRAMS – AN INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE.
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This paper discusses the future of Extension Weed Science programs from an industry perspective. The ag-chemical industry has gone through significant changes in the past 5-7 years and that trend is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. The US herbicide business has changed significantly and, as a result, significant changes have occurred in industry interactions with the extension weed groups. Fewer people, fewer companies, fewer new compounds, and decreased funding have resulted.

A survey was sent to 24 different companies to determine opinions on the future role of Extension Weed Science programs. The survey results indicated that in regard to communications with industry that web-based tools, crop conferences, email updates and print materials were the most effective methods of communication. The survey also indicated that Extension Weed Science does an excellent job of handling current weed related issues, providing useful websites, and hard copy recommendations; and the areas needing improvement were better economic support for weed control recommendations, being more proactive on key topics and improving communication in a time of decreased funding.

The survey also identified weed resistance, economically based weed control recommendations, weed biology and inter-disciplinary weed control approaches as the top research topics for the immediate future. The top clients that should be addressed were identified as the very large farmer, crop consultants, and part-time farmers.

There are still many issues that require Extension Weed Science attention, but there has been a paradigm shift. Extension Weed Science should focus their efforts differently than what has been done in the past. The first major task should be to define the new vision of Extension Weed Science. Because funding is reduced in many areas, reliance on other “influencers” (retailers, consultants, county extension personnel) is critical. There may be an even greater need for Extension Weed Science now than in the immediate past. The same number of acres is being farmed with a greatly reduced number of agronomic and pest management advisors. Weed Science Extension programs have the opportunity to be firmly established as the center for information for the network of individuals working in applied agriculture in the US.