



In the Field

INSURANCE VETERAN COMMITTED TO CUSTOMERS, INDUSTRY

With more than three decades of experience in the crop insurance business, Ronnie Holt has seen plenty of change in the industry. However, it would be difficult to think of a time when the fortunes of the insurance industry were more critical to the future of agriculture than today. Ronnie is committed to doing his part to help ensure a bright future for both.

Mulshoe, TX is home base for Ronnie Holt Insurance. The agency serves policyholders in nine Texas counties and a bit of New Mexico. “I started in the federal program, before private carriers were involved, back in 1978,” Ronnie recalls. “When we went to private carriers, one of my first was U.S. Ag. My relationship with ProAg eventually came out of that, and they are still one of the main carriers for my book of business. I’ve always enjoyed doing business with ProAg—they’re sort of like home folks to me.”

Seeing the bigger picture

Serving Southwest agriculture is Ronnie’s primary goal, but that’s not his only focus. He’s been involved with the Crop Insurance Professionals Association (CIPA) since the early days of the organization. “CIPA started with Bill Hanson of Kansas and Max Claybaker from Oklahoma,” Ronnie states. “They decided that crop insurance agents needed a stronger representative organization. That was how CIPA began, and it has grown through the years.”

As their website states, CIPA is now a national organization of agents—spanning the country from Florida to California, and North Dakota to Texas—who are committed to maintaining and strengthening the safety net for the American farmer and rancher through a strong Federal Crop

Insurance Program. As the organization grew and the industry evolved, Ronnie, who is the current CIPA chairman, says they realized that they would need to become more politically involved in order to protect the industry. That’s the reason they work with Combest Sell & Associates, LLC, one of the leading government affairs offices in Washington.

The legislative arena is also familiar to Ronnie. “When they were writing the Agriculture Risk Protection Act (ARPA) in 2000, we were fortunate to have our representative at the time, Larry Combest, as the chairman of that committee,” he says. “I was privileged to serve on the crop insurance committee as part of that process.”

Meeting challenges through cooperation

Ronnie stresses that the fate of the crop insurance industry is dependent on a strong agriculture. Keeping agriculture—and the support provided by crop insurance—strong in the face of repeated attempts to cut the budget is an ongoing challenge.

“As CIPA members, we’re humbled that we have this opportunity to serve American agriculture,” Ronnie states, “and we’re proud that we have been able to maintain a strong crop insurance program in the face of significant budget reductions. We’ve given up significant funding, and now we’ve reached the point where we’re saying, ‘Do no harm to crop insurance.’ When you look at the record indemnities the industry has paid in 2011, it’s not hard to see the need for a strong crop insurance program.”

An effort to work together with the AIPs has contributed to a stronger legislative impact for CIPA. “If you look back over the past five or six years, you can see what these two groups

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THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF AGRICULTURAL RISK MANAGEMENT®

INSURANCE VETERAN COMMITTED TO CUSTOMERS, INDUSTRY

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have done to move the industry forward,” Ronnie says. “Currently, we’re working in support of revising the APHs to more accurately reflect the impact of technology on yields, and also working to make improvements to the enterprise unit structure so we can insure by practice—irrigated versus non-irrigated for example.”

There’s always room for broader agent involvement in CIPA,

Ronnie concludes. “It’s critically important that we help legislators better understand crop insurance and the role the agent has in servicing the risk management portion of the agricultural business,” he summarizes. “We’d certainly encourage who’s interested to visit the CIPA website, www.cipatoday.org, and consider how you might become involved. We’ve all got a big stake in the success of agriculture and our industry.”

INTRODUCING PROAGWORKS™ SOFTWARE

CROP INSURANCE PROCESSING SOFTWARE BUILT FOR YOU

By RICHARD STINSON, OPERATIONS PROJECT MANAGER

PROAGWORKS™

Our business demands a lot from all of us. High business volumes, tight deadlines, and the complexities of ever-changing insurance options push us, at times, to our limits. Our policyholders count on us for data integrity, processing efficiency, and prompt, accurate settlements. Your policy processing system plays an integral part in your ability to deliver on those expectations.

You deserve a system you can count on to support the great work you do. Now you have one—ProAgWorks™ software.

Built on a field-tested platform and developed to precisely meet the needs of agents, company personnel, and policyholders, ProAgWorks is intuitive, responsive, and powerful. It will enable you to do what you do best more productively.

Let me highlight just a few of the benefits of ProAgWorks that I believe you’ll appreciate.

- **INTERNET-BASED**

ProAgWorks software is an Internet-based program. That means that no applications need to be installed on your hardware. Better yet, it means you can access the system from anywhere, just by using your browser.

- **STREAMLINED LOGIN**

Your login will now follow you through the system, eliminating the need for multiple logins. User security is also enhanced.

- **UP-FRONT EDIT FLAGS**

Simple errors, such as too many digits in a phone number, are automatically flagged on the entry screen for easy correction. We are introducing a new Mark Complete process, initiated during policy processing, at which time the system checks entries for accuracy. RMA error resolution issues are reduced and less time is spent correcting simple data-entry errors.

- **DASHBOARD**

The dashboard view available to agents and employees identifies suspensions to be worked, streamlines workflow, and provides an area for notifications and announcements corresponding to the login role.

- **TRANSACTIONAL LOGGING**

The transaction log provides a list of prior transactions by user, helping to eliminate discrepancies on reports. It is a tool that identifies change made to the policy.

- **PRINTING FLEXIBILITY**

Agents and employees have the option to batch print forms or print policy documents. Flexible printing makes the system easy to use, eliminates the need to be in multiple systems, and provides the option to print what you desire—blank, pre-headed, or a pre-filled form.

Improved efficiency means more opportunity

The best feature of the ProAgWorks software is the overall efficiency it will bring to our entire workforce. By reducing manual workarounds, employees will be able to spend more time doing what they do best. That means we’ll be able to handle more business. Not only that, but policies and claims will be processed with fewer FCIC errors and reduced mail and paper costs.

This article is just the first of many opportunities you will have to learn more about ProAgWorks software. We know that this has been a busy time for agents due to the volume of work associated with spring sales closing. Your ProAg marketing representative will be contacting you soon to present a short video update on the new system. Stay tuned for that and more as we roll out ProAgWorks.



MANAGING CHANGE, SMOOTHING TRANSITIONS

BY KENDALL JONES, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

The move to the new ProAgWorks™ crop insurance processing software will naturally come with its own learning curve. That's the nature of software systems. But anyone who has been through a similar transition also knows there are also other unintended, but unavoidable, consequences. We build our processes around the capabilities of the software. As we switch to a new system, those processes change for everyone.

Our goal is to minimize the normal disruption and stress caused by the transition, and to that end, we've been putting a great deal of effort into change management. The importance of this to you is not the process, but the end result—a smoother path to productive implementation of ProAgWorks.

A good thing

The first thing I want to emphasize is that the process changes—that we foresee—should be positive for everyone, from the field to the back office. These changes won't eliminate work, but they will ultimately make our workflow more streamlined, our tasks more intuitive, and our efforts more productive.

There are a number of significant differences between ProAgWorks and our current system, and one of the first and foremost has to do with the way we will be introducing it. Because ProAgWorks is built on a stable and proven platform—and created from top to bottom to meet the specific needs of our agents, claims processors, and underwriters—we know how

the system works. Everything fits together from the start. That enabled us to create coherent communication, marketing, and implementation plans in advance of the launch.

From a management perspective, we've learned from past experience. We have the knowledge and tools now to develop clear action plans and communicate those plans to all levels of our organization—including our partners. We anticipate that this change will allow us to be both more disciplined and more responsive as an organization.

Timetable for change

The change management process will be implemented, based on need, over the course of a year or more starting this spring. We'll begin by evaluating the procedural changes that will be needed, determine the best way to communicate those changes, and prepare the documentation. The rollout of ProAgWorks will follow the crop cycle, and system training will be a component of the regular training program.

Through this process, we'll use change management to help build understanding of not only the ProAgWorks system, but its impact. It supplements system training and will increase the effectiveness of the system changes.

If you haven't read Richard's article on the preceding page yet, I would encourage you to do that. You'll get a better idea how ProAgWorks will benefit you. 🍀

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THE UPSIDE OF CHANGE

By JOHNNEY TURNER, AMARILLO REGIONAL MANAGER

Some folks view change as loss. I generally see it as an opportunity, and that's certainly how I view the addition of Kansas and Colorado to the Amarillo Region. For many years, this region has consisted of Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. I'm excited about the addition of these two states to our territory, and the chance that provides me to renew some old friendships with people I've worked with in the past.

It's no secret that 2011 was a really tough crop year for all of us in this region because of all the drought-related losses. On a positive note, this is the kind of year that really highlights the quality of people we have in our organization and the excellent agents we work with. I want to say "thanks" to all the adjusters, underwriters, auditors, and agents who stuck with us and brought us through a very difficult year.

Also, 2011 was the first year for the combo policy. It was new to RMA, and we did encounter some issues. With the first year of that policy under our belt, we know what to expect.

We're looking forward to a 2012 year with, hopefully, not as many losses and the rollout of a new policy processing system (see page 2).

We have some good things going for us, like ProAgQuote, our quoting software system. We've gotten a lot of positive feedback from our agents on it. Our mapping program is also working well, and we're looking forward to more training opportunities, both one-on-one and webinars. Additionally, we're changing our claims process throughout the organization, which will streamline and speed up the process at both the company and regional levels.

Our goal has always been to pay claims as efficiently as possible. Paying claims quickly and correctly is what keeps us in business, and these system improvements will help us continue to do just that.

It's my privilege to work with some of the best staff and agents in the business—agents like Ronnie Holt. I'd encourage you to read about him and his work with CIPA on the front page of this newsletter. 🌾

