

2025-2026 WSSA Standing Committee Report

Committee Name and Code: Council for Agricultural Science and Technology

(CAST) representative: Jill Schroeder

Committee Chair: Jill Schroeder

Committee Members (includes sub-committee members): N/A

Board of Directors Liaison: N/A

Committee members rotating off: Jill Schroeder

Recommended members to replace those rotating off: John Wallace

Summary of past year's activities:

1. I attended the annual meeting of the CAST Boards (<https://cast-science.org/>) virtually October 28, 2025. The meeting was held at Mississippi State University (<https://cast-science.org/2025-cast-annual-meeting/>). Several CAST weed science members attended the meeting in person. As a Board of Representatives member, I serve on the Plant Agriculture and Environmental Issues Working Group (Plant Working Group) (<https://cast-science.org/about/our-work/>).
2. I regularly attend the (virtual) monthly meetings of the Plant Work Group where we receive updates on CAST reorganization and activities, as well as discuss progress on the issue papers. The leadership of the Plant Work Group is not clear but CAST staff organize and run the meetings.
3. Greg Dahl, WSWS representative, is the liaison for an issue paper "Integrated management of fire-adapted invasive plants responsible for changing wildfire regimes". Gray Turnage was the board liaison for an issue paper on the topic of Harmful Algal Blooms Function and impact - HAB (Harmful Algal emberBloom).
4. CAST Meet the Expert series had two notable presentations by colleagues. See (<https://cast-science.org/news/?e-filter-2dcac31-category=meet-the-expert>):
 - a. Matt Baur, Director of the Western IPM Center, presented on July 31. His topic includes the summary of the Weeds and Wildfire paper. I served as moderator of the presentation.
 - b. Gray Turnage, Mississippi State University and CAST representative for APMS, presented on his background, suggestions for students, and issues in aquatic plant management. I recommended that he be asked to present at a Plant Work Group meeting.
5. I continued to work with my weed science counterparts who represent WSWS (**Greg Dahl**), NEWSS (**Randy Prostack**), NCWSS (**Tom Peters**), SWSS (**Todd Baughman**), and APMS (**Gray Turnage**) on the Board of Representatives. We met January 19, 2026 to discuss plans going forward and introduced John Wallace as the next CAST WSSA rep. Lee VanWychen has been part of our occasional conversations. I thank him for sharing his insights into issues that might be addressed through a CAST publication.
6. The organization has undergone a great deal of change since Chris Boomsma became CEO. Please see the attached slide update from CAST organization about the changes and rebranding efforts (<https://cast-science.org/programs/>).

Summary of plans for next year (changes in goals, key initiatives, plan of action, etc.):

1. John Wallace will be providing updates on the work at CAST beginning in February 2026

Recommendations for Board or Membership action:

1. Work with John to make sure weed science issues are well represented at CAST.
2. Funds requested for 2026: Reimbursement of travel expenses for John Wallace to attend the 2026 annual meeting of the CAST Boards.
3. The CAST weed science group met recently. One of the things we talked about is the current CAST effort to establish a National Academy of Agricultural Science (see attached update from CAST) that could speak with one voice on agricultural issues in areas of policy etc. A lot is still being worked out, including whether to establish a lobbying branch of the Academy, but I would like to suggest that WSSA should invite Chris Boomsma to have a conversation with the Board and/or Science Policy Committee at an upcoming meeting. I think it is important for the society board or, maybe more appropriately, the science policy committee to be aware of their efforts and discuss how we can stay engaged, especially how their work can compliment/be collaborative with Lee's efforts in DC.

READY FOR THE FUTURE.

➤ 2024–2025 Activities Report

MODERNIZED. INNOVATIVE.

THE FUTURE.



CHRIS BOOMSMA
Chief Executive Officer



THE YEARS OF TRANSFORMATION: 2024–2025

The past two years have been a defining period for CAST—marked by bold decisions and strategic investments that position us for long-term success. This era was not just about change; it was about building a stronger, more agile organization ready to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving agricultural landscape.

Relocating for Efficiency and Innovation

In 2024, CAST moved from its historic home on West Lincoln Way to the Iowa State University Research Park. This transition placed us at the heart of agricultural research and technology in Iowa, creating new opportunities for collaboration and growth. Our new facilities are designed to foster efficiency and innovation, ensuring CAST remains a trusted leader in agricultural science communication.

Modernizing Our Identity and Operations

We refreshed our branding and redesigned our website to reflect a modern, forward-thinking organization. Our membership platform was upgraded to deliver a seamless experience for members, and our publication process was streamlined to enhance accessibility and impact. To support these changes, CAST invested in advanced computer systems, digital tools, and technology upgrades across all areas of our work. These improvements have strengthened our ability to produce high-quality publications, host virtual and hybrid events, and expand our digital presence.

Expanding Communication and Engagement

From social media growth to new multimedia initiatives, CAST has amplified its voice and broadened its reach. Our efforts have connected us with a larger, more diverse audience, reinforcing CAST's role as a trusted source of science-based information.

Advancing Agricultural Research Through SoAR

In 2025, CAST proudly completed the acquisition of the Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR). This strategic move strengthens CAST's ability to advocate for robust agricultural research funding and policy engagement at the national level. By integrating SoAR's mission and network, CAST expands its reach and influence, ensuring that science-based solutions remain at the forefront of agricultural innovation.

Becoming America's National Academy of Agriculture

CAST has long been a trusted, nonpartisan voice for agricultural science, and we are building on that legacy with a bold vision: to serve as the nation's authoritative leader in agricultural science and technology. This year, we launched a Strategic Advisory Council (SAC) to guide CAST's evolution into a National Academy of Agriculture—a body that interprets science, provides strategic foresight, prioritizes research, and strengthens food and national security. By convening experts, driving innovation, and elevating science communication, CAST is positioning itself as the central platform where academia, industry, policy, and nonprofits unite to advance evidence-based solutions for agriculture's most pressing challenges.

As we close this two-year chapter of change, we enter 2026 not just as a transformed organization, but as an institution positioned to serve as the national voice and neutral convener for agricultural science and technology. We look forward to building on CAST's foundation and continuing to deliver value to our members and the agricultural community.



WHO WE ARE

MISSION

CAST convenes and coordinates networks of experts to assemble, interpret, and communicate credible, unbiased, science-based information to policymakers, the media, the private sector, and the public.

VISION

A world where decision-making related to agriculture, food, and natural resources is based on credible information developed through reason, science, and consensus building.

KEY MILESTONES

2024 RELOCATION

- Relocated CAST headquarters from West Lincoln Way to Iowa State University Research Park, establishing presence at the center of agricultural innovation and collaboration

BRAND AND DIGITAL REFRESH

- Developed new branding and visual identity
- Redesigned website for improved user experience
- Upgraded membership platform for seamless engagement

TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS

- Upgraded computer systems and digital tools
- Implemented new CRM system to improve member management and engagement
- Enhanced infrastructure for publications, events, and communications

OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

- Streamlined publication process for faster, more accessible releases
- Integrated DOI numbers into all CAST publications to ensure proper author acknowledgment and improve citation standards

ACQUISITION OF SOAR

- Expanded national influence through 2025 acquisition of SoAR, strengthening advocacy for agricultural research

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

- Expanded communication channels and digital presence
- Increased engagement through webinars, podcasts, and video series
- Strengthened CAST's role as a trusted source of science-based information

SOAR FOUNDATION JOINS FORCES WITH CAST

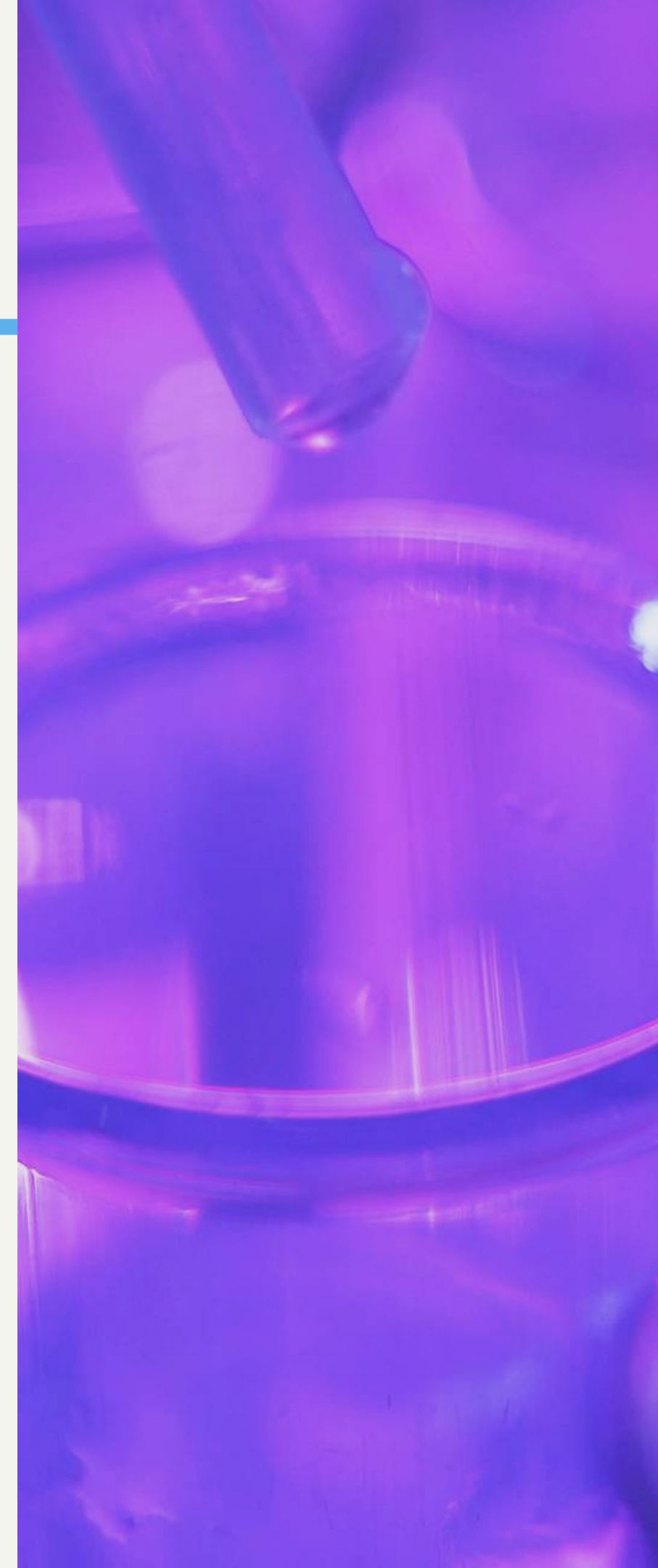


On February 10, 2025, CAST and the Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation announced a strategic integration to advance agricultural science and innovation. CAST acquired SoAR's assets, and its influential reports and advocacy work will now live on through CAST's platform.

This partnership combines SoAR's policy and research initiatives with CAST's communication expertise, strengthening efforts to champion agricultural research and innovation. Together, we will amplify the impact of science-based solutions and advocate for continued investment in agricultural research.

Founded by the late Dr. William Danforth, SoAR played a pivotal role in securing funding for USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) and produced landmark publications such as *Retaking the Field* and *Science Breakthroughs 2030*.

These achievements align seamlessly with CAST's mission to connect science with society.



PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE: CAST'S COMMUNICATIONS VISION



CARLOS VIANNA
Director of Marketing &
Communications

The past two years have marked a pivotal chapter for CAST's marketing and communications strategy—a period of deliberate transformation designed to strengthen our identity and amplify our voice. This work was never about superficial change; it was about positioning CAST as a trusted, forward-thinking institution prepared to lead in a rapidly evolving agricultural landscape.

We began by reimagining CAST's brand and digital presence, introducing a modern identity and a redesigned website that reflects clarity, accessibility, and innovation. These updates, supported by strategic investments in technology and streamlined operations, created a foundation for engagement that is both meaningful and enduring. Every element of this transformation was guided by a singular purpose: to ensure that CAST communicates with authority, neutrality, and impact.

Our efforts have extended beyond design and infrastructure to embrace a broader vision—one that elevates CAST's role as a convener and communicator of science-based knowledge. Through integrated strategies and thoughtful storytelling, we have reinforced CAST's position as a credible voice in agricultural science, fostering dialogue among policymakers, industry leaders, academia, and the public. This approach reflects our belief that effective communication is essential to advancing evidence-based solutions and shaping informed decisions.

As we look ahead, marketing and communications will remain central to CAST's evolution. We are preparing for the next chapter: to serve as America's National Academy of Agriculture, the definitive platform where science, policy, and practice converge. This vision demands creativity, adaptability, and a relentless commitment to excellence. Every message we craft and every channel we employ will strengthen CAST's role as a neutral, authoritative source of knowledge—connecting science with society and guiding the future of agriculture.

**LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD**



**AMBASSADOR
KENNETH QUINN**

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn received CAST's inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award on October 22, 2025, honoring his six decades advancing agricultural science, diplomacy, and global food security. The award recognizes individuals whose lifelong contributions have made a lasting impact on agriculture and society.

**2025
BORLAUG
COMMUNICATION AWARD**



DAVID ORTEGA

David Ortega, Professor at Michigan State University, is the recipient the 2025 Borlaug CAST Communication Award for his outstanding contributions to agricultural science communication. Recognized for bridging research and public understanding, Dr. Ortega has informed policymakers, media, and global audiences through his work on food economics, consumer behavior, and agricultural policy. The award will be presented in early 2026.

**2024
BORLAUG
COMMUNICATION AWARD**



JACK BOBO

Jack Bobo, Executive Director of the UCLA Rothman Family Institute for Food Studies, received the 2024 BCCA on October 30, 2024, for his outstanding work in communicating agricultural science. Honored for delivering over 500 keynote speeches across 50 countries, Bobo has inspired global audiences to engage with food systems and sustainability.



2024 CAST SCIENCE COMMUNICATION SCHOLARSHIP CEREMONY



2025 CAST STUDENT INNOVATION CONFERENCE

CULTIVATING FUTURE LEADERS IN AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE

Students are central to CAST's mission of advancing agricultural science and fostering innovation. Over the past two years, CAST has strengthened its commitment to student engagement through recognition programs and new opportunities for leadership.

2024

At the 2024 CAST Annual Meeting in Tampa, FL, hosted by the University of Florida, three graduate students received the CAST Science Communication Scholarship for excellence in science communication:

- Plant Science: **Galvin Alonzo Ortiz** – University of Florida (\$1,000)
- Animal Science: **Mikayla Dycus** – University of Georgia (\$1,000)
- Food Science: **Shivaprasad Doddabematti Prakash** – Kansas State University (\$1,000)

2025

At the 2025 CAST Annual Meeting, hosted in Starkville, MS by Mississippi State University, CAST introduced the Student Innovation Conference to celebrate creativity and leadership among agricultural science students. The event featured research presentations, innovation showcases, and a poster competition with \$1,750 in prizes:

- First Place: **Smruthi Mahapatra** – Mississippi State University (\$1,000)
- Second Place: **Prathiksha Raghava** – Mississippi State University (\$500)
- Third Place: **Mary Bakare** – Mississippi State University (\$125)
- Third Place: **Ruchita Bhattarai** – Mississippi State University (\$125)

LOOKING AHEAD: STUDENT EXPLORER MEMBERSHIP

Starting in 2026, CAST will launch the **Student Explorer Membership**, giving full-time students at accredited colleges and universities access to CAST programs—free at member institutions and \$49/year at non-member institutions.

Benefits include:

- CAST publications and the monthly U Bulletin with opportunities.
- Participation in student-focused Labs and free webinars.
- Discounted conference registration and CAST Academy learning tracks.
- Eligibility for \$1,000 Science Communication Scholarships.

CAST will also elevate its **Science Communication Scholarship** by presenting the next award during the prestigious **Borlaug CAST Communication Award** ceremony in early 2026. This integration underscores CAST's commitment to making student recognition a centerpiece of its mission.



PUBLICATIONS
2024-2025

RNA Interference in Agriculture: Methods, Applications, and Governance

JANUARY, 2024 | IN-PERSON ROLLOUT IN RALEIGH, NC | WEBSITE – 863 VIEWS / 164 DOWNLOADS | MEDIA REACH – 145.21K VIEWS | WEBINAR – +350 ATTENDEES

Applications, Benefits, and Challenges of Genome Edited Crops

MARCH, 2024 | IN-PERSON ROLLOUT IN ST. LOUIS, MO | WEBSITE – 713 VIEWS / 250 DOWNLOADS | MEDIA REACH – 226.54K VIEWS | WEBINAR – +220 ATTENDEES

Impacts of Soil Health Practices on Hydrologic Processes

JUNE, 2024 | IN-PERSON ROLLOUT IN AMES, IA | WEBSITE – 200 VIEWS / 84 DOWNLOADS | MEDIA REACH – 22,851 VIEWS | WEBINAR – +100 ATTENDEES

Preventing the Next Plant Invasion: Opportunities and Challenges

JUNE, 2024 | ONLINE RELEASE | WEBSITE – 171 VIEWS / 34 DOWNLOADS | MEDIA REACH – 104.01K VIEWS | WEBINAR – +180 ATTENDEES

Potential for U.S. Agriculture to Be Greenhouse Gas Negative

NOVEMBER, 2024 | PRESENTED DURING THE COP 29 – AZERBAIJAN | WEBINAR RELEASE | WEBSITE – 4,452 VIEWS / 297 DOWNLOADS | MEDIA REACH – 386.13K VIEWS | WEBINAR – +250 ATTENDEES

AI in Agriculture: Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations

MARCH, 2025 | PRESENTED DURING THE “AI IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONFERENCE – STARKVILLE, MS | WEBSITE – 2800 VIEWS | 698 DOWNLOADS | MEDIA REACH – 5K VIEWS | WEBINAR – +277 ATTENDEES

Precision Irrigation Management

NOVEMBER, 2025 WEBINAR RELEASE | WEBINAR – +150 ATTENDEES

Animal and Plant Sourced Proteins as Part of a Balanced Human Diet

NOVEMBER, 2025 WEBINAR RELEASE | WEBINAR – +250 ATTENDEES

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

 WEBSITE – 9200 VIEWS | 1600 DOWNLOADS  MEDIA REACH – 9M VIEWS  WEBINARS – +1700 ATTENDEES



FIFRA-ESA SERIES

Improving the FIFRA/ESA Process by Addressing Key Obstacles and Incorporating Better Data and Tools

JANUARY, 2024 | ONLINE RELEASE

Developing and Adopting Economically Effective Pesticide Mitigation Strategies: Critical to the Survival of Agriculture and Endangered Species

JANUARY, 2024 | ONLINE RELEASE

FIFRA, ESA and Pesticide Consultation: Identifying and Overcoming the Complexities from a Growers Perspective

FEBRUARY, 2024 | ONLINE RELEASE

State Regulatory Agencies as Conduit for Informing Local Conditions in Federal Pesticide Processes

APRIL, 2024 | ONLINE RELEASE

FIFRA, ESA, and Pesticide Consultation: Understanding and Addressing the Complexities

APRIL, 2024 | ONLINE RELEASE | IN-PERSON ROLLOUT DURING CROPLIFE CONFERENCE

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

 WEBSITE – +1.2K VIEWS | +500 DOWNLOADS

 MEDIA REACH – +10K VIEWS

 WEBINARS – +1K ATTENDEES





UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Preserving Sensitive Landscapes and Reducing Agriculture's Environmental Impact through Intensification

JANUARY, 2026

Integrated Management of Fire-Adapted Invasive Plants That Change Wildfire Regimes

JANUARY, 2026

Cyanobacterial Harmful Algal Blooms (cyanoHABs): Causes, Consequences, and Management

FEBRUARY, 2026

Spray Drift Reduction as a Result of Established Precision Ag Technologies

MARCH, 2026

Surfactants in Agriculture

MARCH, 2026

POWERED BY PEOPLE: THE HEART OF CAST

CAST's strength lies in collaboration—and our volunteers and stakeholders are the driving force behind everything we do. Over the past three years, we've worked alongside an incredible network of experts who have authored, reviewed, and contributed to publications, programs, and events that advance agricultural science. With more than 60 board members, three specialized workgroups—Animal Science, Food Science, and Plant Science—and hundreds of task force participants, CAST continues to thrive as a hub for knowledge and innovation.

This commitment goes beyond maintaining excellence—it's about shaping the future. We are actively developing new programs to launch in 2026, designed to deliver greater value and engagement for our members and partners. At the same time, we are strengthening relationships with current volunteers and welcoming new voices into our community, ensuring diverse perspectives guide our work.

Our efforts also focus on the continuous search for better engagement—creating meaningful opportunities for collaboration and enhancing the benefits of CAST membership. From improved digital tools and streamlined processes to expanded communication channels, every step we take is aimed at making CAST more accessible, impactful, and rewarding for those who support our mission.

Together, we are not just informing—we are building a future where agricultural science thrives through collaboration, innovation, and shared purpose.



KAYLEE KLEITSCH
Programs & Engagement
Manager



MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW:

GROWING AND ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY

CAST's membership base continues to reflect the strength and diversity of the agricultural science community. From individual professionals to leading organizations, our members are the foundation of CAST's mission to communicate science-based information.

MEMBERSHIP AT A GLANCE

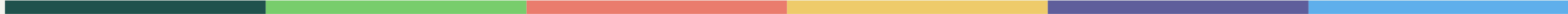
Active Members:
1,885

MEMBERSHIP BY TYPE

Individual Memberships - **1,817** | Business Memberships - **141**
Individuals under Business Memberships - **1,444**

MEMBERSHIP BY TIER

Government Courtesy - **1,012** | Individual - **658** | Student - **308** | Lifetime - **157**
Nonprofit - **46** | Education - **42** | Corporate - **24** | Society - **29**



INVESTING IN MEMBER EXPERIENCE

Over the past three years, CAST has implemented significant improvements to enhance member engagement and benefits:

- New CRM system for streamlined membership management and personalized communication
- Expanded digital tools and resources for easier access to publications and events
- Continuous development of programs and benefits to deliver greater value

CAST's commitment to its members is unwavering. We are focused on creating meaningful opportunities for collaboration, recognition, and professional growth—ensuring that every member feels connected and empowered.



NEW PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

INTRODUCING CAST 3.0: PROGRAMS THAT DELIVER VALUE



INFORM

CREATE AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE

- **CAST Publications** – 4–6 peer-reviewed papers per year with public webinar rollouts.
- **CAST Labs** – Rapid innovation sprints producing briefs, infographics, and mini-documentaries.
- **CAST Voices** – Member essay platform with 2+ monthly reflective pieces.
- **CAST Academy**: Self-paced learning platform for science communication skills
- **CAST Studio** – Multimedia hub for webinars, podcasts, interviews, and “Ask the Expert” videos.
- **CAST Newsletters** – Integrated program delivering CAST content across audiences:
 - [CAST Pulse](#) – Weekly newsletter and podcast
 - [CAST Insights](#) – Policy and regulatory briefs
 - [CAST U Bulletin](#) – Student-focused updates
 - [CAST Connections](#) – Public-facing newsletter for subscribers



CONVENE

ENGAGE AND BUILD COMMUNITY

- **CAST Summit Series** – Quarterly hybrid convenings with strategic dialogue and reports.
- **Annual Meeting & Student Innovation Conference** – Governance, networking, scholarships, and awards.
- **CAST Awards** – Borlaug CAST Communication Award, Lifetime Achievement Award, and student scholarships.
- **CAST Webinars** – 6–8 per year, plus member-exclusive “Meet the Expert” sessions.



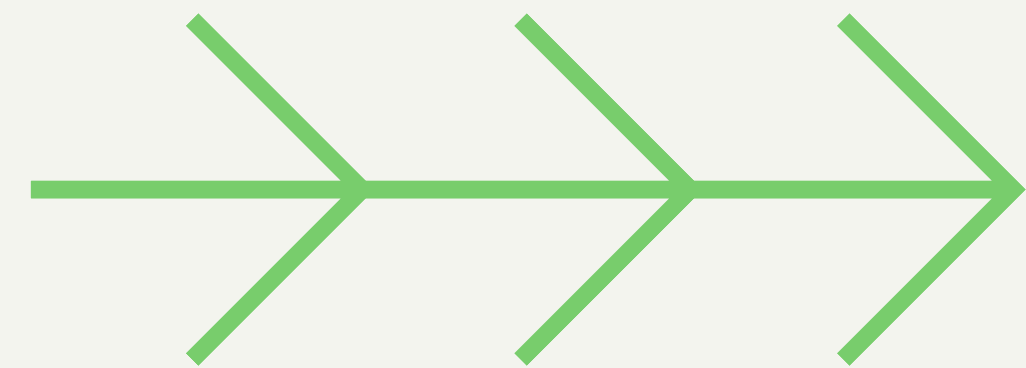
GUIDE

SHAPE DIRECTION

- **CAST Hill Sessions** – Quarterly D.C. meetings providing neutral information-sharing with policymakers.
- **Strategic Briefs** – In-depth presentations of CAST publications for policymakers and stakeholders in D.C.
- **CAST Workgroups** – Expert volunteer networks organized by discipline that propose topics, contribute authors, and provide peer review for CAST programs.

LOOKING

AHEAD



VISION FOR 2026 AND BEYOND

CAST enters the next chapter with a clear vision: to serve as the National Academy of Agriculture—a trusted, neutral platform where science, policy, and practice converge. Built on our recent transformation, we are committed to innovation, engagement, and leadership.

In 2026 and beyond, CAST will expand opportunities for dialogue across sectors, strengthen our role as a convener of scientific expertise, and deliver insights that inform evidence-based decisions. We will embrace emerging technologies, foster diverse perspectives, and lead conversations on agriculture's most pressing challenges.

This dynamic vision reaffirms our mission to connect science with society and ensure that agricultural innovation serves the public good. Together, we are building a future where CAST stands as the definitive voice for agricultural science—modern, inclusive, and ready to guide the next generation of solutions.





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STAY CONNECTED

We are **@castagscience** on

