

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

At our last annual meeting (29 Oct. 1997, in Anaheim, CA) the *Agronomy Journal* (AJ) Editorial Board acted upon several proposals regarding review and content of the journal. We made these changes to benefit our contributors and subscribers, and to maintain AJ as the premier agronomic journal. In particular, we approved changes in the following areas: (i) electronic submission of papers; (ii) fast-track review of papers; (iii) a forum for opinion and exchange on agronomic issues; and (iv) an outlet for reports of unique phenomena.

**Electronic submission.** As an experiment late in 1996, we put one manuscript through entirely electronic submission and review. Our goal was to shorten the time required for a complete review. We found that text and illustrations could be viewed on screen, or printed on location, as needed; reviewer suggestions and author revisions were sent electronically; nothing required surface mail. The procedure worked so well that we decided to open up the option of electronic submission and review for a one-year trial. Robert J. Lascano will be the Technical Editor receiving electronic submissions, and the board's Associate Editors will serve as the reviewers. If you are interested in electronic submission, I recommend that you first contact Dr. Lascano by e-mail (r-lascano@tamu.edu). Unlike submissions on paper, which are sent to me as the *Agronomy Journal* Editor, electronic submissions will go directly to the Technical Editor.

The AJ editorial board will reassess this option when we reconvene at next year's annual meeting, in Baltimore. We believe that electronic submission will lead to shorter times to complete reviews and for final acceptance of manuscripts.

**Fast-track review.** To provide another avenue for shortening time in review, we agreed to assign up to 12 papers this year for review by Associate Editors directly. (If none of the Associate Editors have the appropriate background to complete the critique, or if only one does, outside reviewers may still be called upon.) Authors may request such acceler-

ated review; however, assignment to this type of review will be at the discretion of a Technical Editor. As with electronic submission, we will conduct this experiment for one year and then evaluate its effectiveness at our next annual meeting.

**A Forum section.** To provide a venue for discussion and presentation of current agronomic issues, we have added a Forum section to AJ. Authors will submit Forum papers to the Editor, who in turn will consult with the Technical Editors before acceptance. We encourage our readers to submit lively, thought-provoking papers that (perhaps because they ask questions more than they report results) do not easily qualify as refereed journal articles.

A first Forum paper appears in this issue. No one contribution will ever define the scope of the Forum section, as that will develop in response to reader interest. The primary criteria will be quality, brevity, and relevance.

**Unique phenomena.** Papers in the Notes section have typically been about equipment or procedures, but we also welcome reports on observations of unrepeatability or other unique circumstances. An example is reporting the results from one year of a field experiment where the environment caused unexpected but useful results. We have added flexibility for consideration of such papers so as to communicate unusual results that may have wider import for others' research. To highlight this broader scope, we have renamed the section as "Notes and Unique Phenomena." In reviewing these submissions, we will still adhere to the same standards of scientific merit that we use with other articles.

We hope that you enjoy the changes we are making. I welcome your opinion on any aspect of the journal. We strive to accommodate the needs and interests of our clientele while maintaining the scientific integrity of *Agronomy Journal*.

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