The New Frontier: Exploring the Evolving Landscape of Agriculture Inputs in the 21st Century

Co-Moderators

Ross W. Johnson
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Ross Johnson is an experienced agribusiness litigator and a member of the firm’s Food and Agriculture Industry Team. He has represented national agribusiness companies in numerous product liability, toxic tort, class action and general commercial matters throughout the United States. Ross has also counseled clients regarding product and marketing risks, product labeling and packaging issues, and regulatory matters. Ross understands the industry trends that shape the agribusiness market, enabling him to help clients identify, evaluate and mitigate risks associated with their products, services, and operations. Ross is an active member of the Agricultural Retailers Association.

Ryan P. Howell
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Ryan Howell is a trial attorney handling various litigation matters for some of the firm’s largest clients. From multinational corporations to small, family-held businesses, Ryan regularly represents clients in venues across the country—state and federal courts. Ryan has extensive experience in the crop nutrient/fertilizer segment. Ryan has litigated on behalf of, and counseled, companies in agricultural product liability, agricultural and food contracts and related litigation, crop nutrients and crop protection product disputes, product defect and warranty claims, and personal injury and wrongful death accidents. Ryan drafted the ARA Fertilizer Trade Rules and attends events hosted by The Fertilizer Institute.

Dave Downey, Center for Agricultural Business/Purdue

Dr. Dave Downey founded and serves as the Executive Director of the Center for Agricultural Business (CAB) at Purdue University. He has responsibility for the development of executive and management education programs. The CAB has become recognized as the leading agribusiness executive educational program. Dave's primary focus is on marketing and sales to farmers. He has been deeply involved in many studies of farmer buying behavior for many years. Dave has also been a professor of Agricultural Marketing at Purdue University—teaching courses in Ag Sales and Ag Marketing Strategy, among others. He has published three widely accepted books in his field. He is a co-author of a new book, AgSelling: A Professional Approach to Selling in Agriculture and Other Industries. The book, now in its sixth printing, is used extensively by colleges and universities across North America and beyond. He has authored other books including, AgBusiness Management, and the second, AgSelling: Principles and Practices.

Dave works with all sectors of the farm input supply industry, including many fertilizer, crop protection, seed, animal nutrition and health, farm insurance, and farm equipment manufacturers and dealers. He works extensively with cooperatives, independent agricultural, and distributors. He also works frequently with the National Ag Retailers Association (NTRA), the Fertilizer Industry Round Table, and the American Fertilizer Industry Association.

Dave is widely recognized as an agribusiness consultant. Dave has spent time studying agribusiness and the changing markets in Europe, including a six-month stay in The Netherlands and working in New Zealand, South Africa, and China. Dave has conducted a lecture series and training courses with agribusinesses in Canada, Australia, Brazil, and Europe.

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Ken Isley, Dow AgroScience

Ken Isley is Global Leader, Dow AgroSciences Legal Department and Ethics & Compliance, and Dow AgroSciences Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary. Isley also serves as Chair of the Dow AgroSciences Ethics and Compliance Committee. He also has oversight of Dow’s Latin America Legal group. Isley’s career with Dow began in 1989 as a Business Law Attorney in the company’s Plastics division. In 1992, he transferred to Dow AgroSciences as a Commercial and Litigation Attorney, moving to corporate and financial law in 1995. In 1996, he was named a Section Manager in the Dow AgroSciences Legal Department with responsibilities for commercial, human resources and environmental, health and safety (EH&S) law. Isley returned to the Dow Legal Department in Midland, Michigan, as Senior Counsel in financial law in 1998. He was named Manager of Corporate and Financial Law in 2004, named to the Legal Management Team in 2005 and appointed Assistant General Counsel in 2006. He assumed legal responsibilities for litigation, corporate risk management, EH&S regulatory, operations and Latin America in 2009 and was named Associate General Counsel later that year.

Isley is a member of the American Corporate Counsel Association, the Michigan Bar Association and the Indiana Bar Association, and serves on the Starfish Initiative Board of Directors.

He graduated from the University of Iowa College of Law and the College of Agriculture at Iowa State University.

Bill Robinson, Nufarm Americas, Inc.

Bill Robison serves as General Counsel for Nufarm Americas Inc., a global agricultural chemical firm, as well as Nufarm’s subsidiary Nuseed, a global seed and seed technology business. Prior to joining Nufarm, Bill was a senior lawyer with Cargill, supporting their North American meat production businesses in Wichita, Kansas.

Before going in-house, Bill worked as a litigation partner at Reed Smith in Chicago and a litigation associate at Dechert LLP in Philadelphia.

Bill was a law clerk to the Hon. Stephen N. Limbaugh, Sr. of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

Bill graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and Duke University.

Bill lives in La Grange, Illinois with his wife Jennifer and their four children.

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