

The other day, as I desperately searched the cupboard for something remotely healthy to feed my two young sons for lunch, I came across a can of my old childhood favorite, alphabet soup.

I cracked it open, dumped it into a bowl and was just about to stick it in the microwave when I noticed something odd: The soup's letters seemed to be forming into recognizable words.

Gradually, the letters came to a halt and there they were, the acronyms of three of the industry's most important but least understood organizations: RISE, ITODA and ASIC. Clearly, this was a sign from the Soup Gods that I should try to help you better understand these key groups.

RISE is alphabet soup for Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, the national association that represents the interests of pesticide manufacturers and users, like you. RISE has a pretty simple message for environmental activists, concerned citizens and others who view pesticides as a problem: It's the pests that are the problem. This summer's West Nile virus outbreak illustrates that as vividly as any pest-borne health threat we've experienced in recent times.

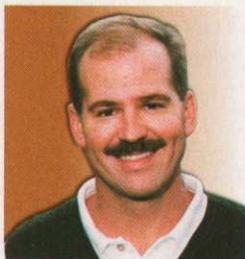
RISE lobbies and communicates on the federal level, but it also is active on the state and local battlegrounds where the real war over your use of pesticides and combination products is fought.

Unfortunately, many superintendents tend to ignore the threat of products being withdrawn or cancelled, thinking the manufacturers will just come along with something new. That is rapidly becoming a myth as consolidation, R&D costs and the downturn in the ag market — which traditionally drove secondary-use products into turf — have narrowed the new product pipeline dramatically.

To help RISE in its battle to keep current products on the market, superintendents must make the organization aware when local problems flare up, and use its resources and information. Finally, when you're asked by RISE, write and speak out in support of your right to responsibly use products that are unfairly threatened by overzealous attempts to "protect" the public.

Soup Gods Spurred My Mission

BY PAT JONES



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ITODA is alphabet soup for the Independent Turf & Ornamental Distributors Association, the organization for local and regional businesses that — along with national suppliers — support your agronomic needs with products and services.

Distributors are sometimes viewed as a nuisance ("Those *#\$@%! salespeople!"), but ask yourself where you'd be without that local rep who delivers a case of fungicide at 5 a.m. because you're facing a pythium outbreak. Or how about the distributors who underwrite a lot of the costs of chapter meetings and activities? ITODA members and their national distributor counterparts are the backbone of the industry, and you should recognize them and show them your appreciation through your customer loyalty.

Finally, ASIC is alphabet soup for the American Society of Irrigation Consultants, the organization of experts who design, plan, fix and otherwise show mastery of one of your most expensive capital investments. Why should you get in touch with ASIC when you're considering a new system or a revamp?

I've lost count of the number of times superintendents have told me that good irrigation consulting will pay for itself over and over by avoiding common design and installation problems. As great as today's irrigation systems are, they're also extremely complex, and the advice and experience of an expert is a small price to pay.

Now that I have pleased the Soup Gods by heeding their message and helping shed light on these organizations, I have but one thing to add: I'm sticking to chicken noodle from now on.

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