



National Association for Plant Breeding EARLY CAREER SCIENTIST AWARD 2025

ZACHARY JONES
Corteva Agriscience
Memphis, TN

The 2025 recipient of the National Association for Plant Breeding (NAPB) Early Career Scientist Award is Dr. Zachary Jones, Associate Laureate, Corteva Agriscience. This award recognizes an early career individual in the plant breeding field who has exhibited the ability to establish strong research foundations (e.g., technological innovations, experimental techniques, publications, etc.), interact with multidisciplinary teams, demonstrate leadership, and participate in relevant professional societies.

As his nomination package highlights: *“Zach sets the example on how to be a successful professional in the ag industry and serves as a successful model on how to start your career.”*

Jones began his corn breeding career with Corteva Agriscience in 2018 at the Union City, TN Research Center, where he conducted a 115-118 RM yellow corn breeding program and a 113-115 RM white corn breeding program. During this time, he made significant contributions to improved breeding methods and technology in both white and yellow corn breeding, in addition to running two successful breeding programs.

Since 2024, Jones has been Evaluation Zone Lead for Corteva’s North America South Evaluation Zone, based in the Memphis, TN area, where he directs a team of breeders responsible for full season product development.

As one colleague commented: *“Zach is already a leader in technology development and deployment. His accomplishments include redesigning the breeding pipeline to implement automated kernel sorting, development of markers for key loci, aggressive implementation of genomic selection and implementation of team testing. This model resulted in a filed patent and work to expand this model to other areas.”*

In 2020 Jones was named North America White Corn Evaluation Zone Lead, and relocated to the Windfall, IN Research Center, where he directed breeding strategy for all US-based white

corn breeding programs, as well as running both white and yellow corn breeding programs. he was named a Corteva Agriscience Associate Laureate in 2022 in recognition of his contributions.

Another colleague indicated: "Zach is known by others in the organization for his expertise and is highly sought after on topics around genomic selection and aggressive breeding methods. He is a good mentor and co-led the introduction to plant breeding mentoring circle in 2022 and co-led the advanced plant breeding circle in 2023."

Jones is currently serving as the NAPB Membership Committee Chair and previously served as Chair of the NAPB Communications Committee. He has been recognized as one of Auburn University Alumni Association's Inaugural Twenty Under Forty class for his professional achievements. He holds degrees from Auburn University (B.S. in Agronomy and Soils) and North Carolina State University (M.S. & Ph.D. in Plant Breeding and Genetics).

In conclusion, another colleague observed: "Dr. Jones is extremely passionate, results driven, and fully comprehends plant breeding. He is a key leader who has mastered quickly, combining the right pieces of technology to push breeding forward today and in the future. Zach is a proven leader on multiple science teams at Corteva and is highly active in external organizations such as NAPB, ASTA, and FFA."



Dr. Zachary Jones, Corteva Agriscience, is the 2025 recipient of the Early Career Scientist Award of the National Association for Plant Breeding.



Dr. Zachary Jones, the 2025 recipient of the Early Career Scientist Award of the National Association for Plant Breeding, at a recent Pioneer Research Center End User Field Day, Champaign, IL.