

Hello, and welcome to CAST!

We're happy to have you as an author. Whether this is your first time writing with CAST or you're a seasoned volunteer, we wanted to share some information about our organization, the typical writing process, and the publication you've agreed to contribute to.

First, what is CAST?

The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology is a nonprofit that publishes non-biased, science-based, agricultural manuscripts geared toward policymakers and the general public. These publications are a bit shorter than the average scientific publication and are oftentimes written in layman's terms to ensure individuals without a background in science or agriculture can still understand the content. CAST has been around for over fifty years, and Dr. Norman Borlaug was the author of CAST's very first publication in 1972.

You will see the 2024-2025 CAST Activities Report linked below. This document gives you a nice overview of what CAST has been doing lately, has the official mission and vision statements, and is a good resource to use if anyone ever asks "What is CAST?"

 [2024-2025 CAST Activities Report](#)

We have a unique membership structure, as we are supported by both Individuals and Organizations. When it comes to organizations, we span across agriculture; educational institutions, nonprofits, industry, and societies.

Below is a link to our website, we encourage you to explore it! You can find past publications, webinars, podcasts, as well as information about our governance, awards, membership, and more. Please note that the website is actively being updated, and we can make mistakes. If you see any issues, feel free to let us know.

 [CAST Website](#)

We've also included a link to the staff page on the website, as we feel it's important that you know who you're working with. We currently have three full time staff and four part time student assistants. Each and every one of us are more than happy to help you should you ever need us.

 [CAST Staff](#)

The CAST Publication Process

Many of CAST's ideas come from our three work groups, Animal Agriculture and Environmental Issues, Food Science and Safety, and Plant Agriculture and Environmental Issues. These work groups are composed of representatives of our member organizations and some legacy members of CAST. They meet regularly to discuss issues they see in their sector and what they think CAST should be focusing on for future programs and publications.

Every now and then, one of these ideas will become an official publication proposal. Once a proposal is submitted, it is either approved or sent back for edits by the corresponding work group. After work group approval, it is then sent to our Board of Directors. Here, it is again either approved or sent back for edits.

Once approved, we begin Task Force formation. This is where you come in! Potential contributors are contacted, and we figure out exactly who will be doing what.

Over the next few months, writing begins. CAST will schedule check-ins to address any questions, discuss progress, and inform the Task Force of next steps. We encourage Task Forces to meet outside of these official check-ins to ensure that progress is being made.

Once a draft is completed and all authors are happy with their work, we send the manuscript off for peer review. These reviewers are chosen from a list suggested by authors or CAST work group members, and we have a minimum of three reviews for each manuscript.

After the reviews are completed and comments are gathered, the task force chair will make the final edits. Some chairs choose to involve authors at this stage, and others feel comfortable making the final decision themselves. This is up to the chair and oftentimes depends on the comments from the reviewers.

Once final edits are made, the manuscript is sent to our design team to make everything look nice. The final product comes back within a few days, and we are ready to roll out the publication!

While rollouts traditionally took place in person, we saw a shift in attitude surrounding in-person events after 2020. Because of this, CAST changed the primary rollout format to webinar releases. With this style of rollout, we ask 2 to 4 authors to join us on a webinar, present the publication for about 30 to 45 minutes, and then round out the hour with a live

Q&A session. The publication is made available on our website, and that's where the process ends for most task forces!

Even though our primary rollout format has become virtual, if there is an event, conference, or meeting taking place with a captive audience who is interested in the topic of the publication, we are more than happy to do an additional in person event. This gives us the opportunity to reach a slightly different audience and hand out physical copies of the publication. Just like the webinar, there would be a panel discussion featuring the authors with a Q&A session taking place after the discussion concludes. These events can take place up to a year or two after the webinar release as long as there is a passionate audience and task force.

CAST Publication Roles, Types, Timeline, and Other Notes

Specific Publication Task Force Roles Include:

- Task Force Chair
 - Develops a list of potential authors and reviewers, including individuals in their network who are not CAST members
 - Leads task force coordination and meetings
 - Develops paper outline and oversees content integration
 - Manages reviewer feedback and final revisions
 - Authors or delegates key sections and summary documents
 - Collaborates on promotional materials development and design
 - Approves final publication and is an active participant in rollout
- Author
 - Contributes original content to assigned sections
 - Reviews and provides feedback on full manuscript
 - May be asked to contribute during rollout
- Reviewer
 - Joins during manuscript review phase
 - Provides detailed feedback within a 2-week timeline
 - Submits comments via CAST Project Manager

All publication roles, including yours, receive a complementary CAST individual membership for one year after the release of the publication and complimentary published copies on request.

Publication Types

- Commentary or Policy Brief: 1-7 pages, smaller task force, response or follow-up to past CAST papers, USDA outputs, etc.
- Issue Paper: 8–24 pages, focused topics, light visuals, brief citations (most common type of publication)
- Special Publication: 25–150 pages, often workshop-based, collaborative projects
- Task Force Report: 40–200 pages, comprehensive analysis, extensive visuals and citations

Issue Paper Timeline Overview

Six Month Goal

- Initiation (Days 1–30): Project setup and coordination
- Taskforce Formation (Days 31–60): Member selection and documentation
- Kickoff (Days 61–75): Scope and timeline review
- Development (Days 76–145): Content creation, review, and revisions
- Finalization (Days 146–180): Final edits and formatting
- Launch (Day 180): Release and distribution

If the publication is a Commentary or Policy Brief, we expect the timeline to be much shorter, 1.5 to 5 months. If the publication is a Special Publication or Task Force Report, we expect the timeline to be longer, 7 to 24 months.

To track the progress of any publication, we offer Notion for accessible and efficient real-time updates. Using this resource, you can see information on all CAST publications currently being worked on. You can view the various topics, notes from the last meetings, which workgroup the manuscripts correspond with, the stage of the writing process, individuals involved, and the link to the proposal document.

 [Notion Publications Tracker](#)

You will begin receiving emails from CAST to schedule task force check ins shortly! In the meantime, here are some important documents related to the policies in place for CAST authors we suggest you read before beginning the writing process.

 [CAST Bylaws](#)

 [AI Use Policy for CAST Volunteer Authors](#)

Each task force check in will be recorded by CAST, and the notes will be uploaded to Notion in case you need a refresh on what was last discussed. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to working with you on this paper!