

MELON RESEARCH UPDATES, SEPTEMBER, 2009

Dr. James McCreight, Research Horticulturist

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service
Salinas, CA

Dr. McCreight notified me that the Salinas research facility was one of only two USDA/ARS facilities that were not targeted for any staff reductions from the federal government. In fact, the facility may receive an increase in funding for research staff and new buildings. He also stated that he may be retiring in the next year and so he wanted to see if the industry was interested in some outreach activities to show melon grower and industry support for research.

He sent the following message: "Melon growers/shippers interested in supporting a food safety position at Salinas in the near future or as part of the planned new research center should contact Congressman Sam Farr, 202-225-2861. They may also talk with him about increased funding for the virology, melon breeding, and organic research projects." Grower input is advised.

Center for Produce Safety - UC Davis <http://cps.ucdavis.edu/>

The center has finished the review of research proposals that were submitted for the next round of funding with total funds available of up to \$2,000,000.

Public Partners:

California Department of Food and Agriculture – Specialty Crop Block Grant
University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources

Industry Partners:

Almond Board of California
California Melon Research Board / California Cantaloupe Advisory Board
California Pistachio Research Board
California Walnut Commission
Florida Tomato Committee
Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission

When I was contacted on August 14 to discuss the review, I was told that the technical committee had already made decisions on whether to accept or reject the two proposals that included melons. I have been asked to withhold release of funding decisions until all researchers have been notified. The process seems awkward in that industry partner representatives are interviewed after technical committee recommendations have already been made.

Dr. Florence Negre-Zakharov - UC Davis

A proposal was not submitted to the Melon Board earlier this year because a grant proposal was submitted to the US Department of Agriculture - Specialty Crop Research Initiative. I heard from Florence last week that the project titled: "Increasing Consumption of Specialty Crops by Enhancing their Quality and Safety" got funded.

Florence stated that "We got the good news a couple of weeks ago. We have not officially started the project since we are still processing paperwork with USDA - but I can certainly be in touch with you early next year if the Board is interested in learning more about our progress. We will be working on a few different commodities, including melons. I also wanted to share more good news with you: I had submitted (as the sole Principal Investigator) a separate proposal on melon aroma biochemistry to the USDA-CSREES-AFRI program, and just learned a few days ago that it got funded as well! This project will investigate the breakdown of certain amino acids into aroma precursors - which eventually give rise to aroma volatiles in melons. A graduate student in my lab will be starting on this project this Fall".

Increased Melon Production with Drip Irrigation

Four trips have been made this summer with Trevor Suslow's research team to collect water samples from various melon fields and irrigation canals throughout the westside melon growing region. I have taken the collection team into numerous farms where drip irrigation was being used for both cantaloupe and honeydew production. From what I have seen, there has been a significant increase in the use of both sub-surface and surface laid drip irrigation equipment. With that in mind, I thought I would pass on some information about a 19-page publication titled "**Diagnosing and Avoiding Damage to Drip Tape**" that is available off the Internet at the following site:

<http://www.DripIrrigation.org/troubleshooting.html>

The document with color illustrations was prepared for the Irrigation Association by the Irrigation Training and Research Center at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

Dr. Pete Goodell - Cucumber beetle management

No requests for assistance with control of cucumber beetles were received by the research team this spring or summer, so no money from the melon board was requested by the research team for payment during 2009. Dr. Larry Godfrey at UC Davis has an on-going research project on cucumber beetles that is being funded by the UC IPM program. Please contact the Research Coordinator directly or the local county Farm Adviser with the UC Cooperative Extension when you need assistance in looking at melon production problems.

Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) Alternatives: 2nd Draft

Prepared by: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

This draft proposal provides a summary of 1) the overall goals of the Central Valley Water Board's ILRP, 2) the process that was used to develop the proposed alternatives in collaboration with stakeholders, and 3) the range of draft ILRP alternatives that were developed by the Long-Term ILRP Stakeholder Advisory Workgroup (Workgroup) and Central Valley Water Board staff. All alternatives must be consistent with program goals and meet minimum statutory requirements. To this end, each alternative advanced for evaluation in the EIR will be reviewed by Central Valley Water Board staff and may be subject to modifications.

However, any such modifications will be done only after discussion with Workgroup members. The objectives of the ILRP are to: 1) Restore and/or maintain appropriate beneficial uses established in Central Valley Water Board Water Quality Control Plans by ensuring that all state waters meet applicable water quality objectives, 2) Implement management practices that improve water quality in keeping with the first objective without jeopardizing the economic viability for all sizes of irrigated agricultural operations in the Central Valley or placing an undue burden on rural communities to provide safe drinking water, 3) Provide incentives for agricultural operations to minimize waste discharge to state waters from their operations, 4) Where third-party groups would be working with the Central Valley Water Board on behalf of irrigated lands owners (growers) for program compliance, minimum requirements need to be instituted that a) ensure that the roles and responsibilities of growers and the entity(ies) comprising the third-party group are clearly described, b) ensure revenue and expenditures for the third-party group are transparent and have appropriate fiscal oversight mechanisms, and c) ensure participants are made aware of Central Valley Water Board requirements and the third party group's compliance with program requirements, 5) Coordinate with other Central Valley Water Board programs, such as the Grasslands Bypass Project waste discharge requirements for agricultural lands, the Westlands Water District's effort to develop waste discharge requirements for agricultural lands, total maximum daily load development, CV-Salts, and waste discharge requirements for dairies, and 6) Promote coordination with other regulatory and non-regulatory programs associated with agricultural operations (e.g., the California Department of Pesticide Regulation [CDPR], the California Department of Public Health [DPH] Drinking Water Program, the California Air Resources Board, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Resource Conservation Districts, the University of California Extension, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service) to minimize duplicative regulatory oversight while ensuring program effectiveness.

Please see the melon web site for the entire 43 page report in pdf file format.

Dr. William Wintermantel - USDA Salinas

A letter of support was sent out for a new proposal for Cucurbit Yellow Stunting Disorder Virus (CYSDV). The research grant was submitted by Wintermantel and Dr. Judy Brown from the University of Arizona through the Western Regional IPM program. Wintermantel stated that "I am following our recent identifications of new hosts with studies to determine which of these hosts are actually reservoirs for virus transmission back to melon and which are simply infected, but unlikely to serve as sources for virus transmission (what we call a dead-end host). The proposal will also be requesting funds for in-depth studies on this. I believe our results will provide insight into better methods for managing CYSDV disease and knowing which hosts are really impacting movement into the crop."

2010 Request For Proposals

The next RFP for the 2010 funding cycle will be sent out by the UC Liaison Dr. Mike Stanghellini on September 18, 2009. To date, I have only received one written response to add a new topic to the list of research priorities. A big thank you goes out to Daniel Andrews from Bakersfield for taking the time to respond to my request for updating the list of research priorities.

Respectfully submitted,

John LeBoeuf
Research Coordinator
September 7, 2009

Office phone and fax: 559.431.2360