Director’s Message: Striving to Improve Agriculture
by Marcia Gibbs

Farmers and farming play a critical role in today’s U.S. economy and in the ability of our country to feed its own people as well as much of the world.

Farmers are typically hard working, self-sufficient and innovative. They figure out ways to make things work and take on the daily risks of raising a crop, mostly without a safety net. So why do they do it?

According to author Wendell Berry, “Farmers farm for the love of farming. They love to watch and nurture the growth of plants. They love to live in the presence of animals. They love to work outdoors. They love the weather, maybe even when it is making them miserable. They love to live where they work and to work where they live.” Farmers like to be independent and free to make their own decisions.

We at the SJSFP are grateful to those farmers, both to those who enroll in our project and to those in the San Joaquin Valley who seek new ways to farm and seek to improve on the old ways as well. We enjoy hosting farmer field days and grower meetings that bring area growers together to learn new concepts and interact with each other about everything from the weather to new varieties to politics. We give support to growers by offering the latest information and ideas to increase farm profits and keep growers on the land.

Our project has been fortunate to bring together crop experts from around the region, through the University of California Cooperative Extension and UC Integrated Pest Management and many others from the Ag industry. Without collaboration from the industry, our project would not provide useful information, connections and technical data on how growers can farm better. We appreciate all the support we receive.

I hope you all will take the time to read the article in this newsletter about our good friend and dedicated supporter Dr. Pete Goodell. Pete is retiring after 36 years with UC IPM and while we will feel the loss of his help on a regular basis, he will still be an advocate and speaker at our meetings. If you get a chance, thank Pete for his service to not just the cotton industry, but to California agriculture. Through his career and commitment to growers, he has truly made a difference.

Get in touch

Our website: sustainablecotton.org
Field day videos: sustainablecotton.org/videos
Facebook: facebook.com/sustainablecottonproject
Blog: centralvalleyfarmscout.blogspot.com

For more information or to enroll, contact Marcia Gibbs at (530) 370-5325 or marcia@sustainablecotton.org.

Funding for this project has been provided through an agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act, Section 319.
He Bridged the Gap between the Lab and the Field
by Gilbert Mohtes-Chan

When he drives around the wide-open back roads and state highways crisscrossing the northern San Joaquin Valley, Dr. Pete Goodell will take time to admire strips of uncut alfalfa dotting the landscape.

“This is an area where it (strip cropping) really caught on. It’s what I call the San Joaquin Mohawk,” said Goodell, a long-time University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management extension advisor at Kearney Ag Center.

To Goodell, the practice that was much talked about in the late 1960s and finally put into regular use by local alfalfa growers the past 10 to 15 years represents one of the most gratifying achievements during the four decades he spent working in the state’s agricultural heartland.

“I can’t ask for a better career,” he said on the eve of his June 30 retirement while reflecting on his two years as a pest control advisor, five years as a UC Riverside research assistant and 36 years with UC IPM.

Growers and PCAs alike praise his dedication, expertise and ability to work well with anyone.

Grower Gary Martin credits Goodell for constantly exploring new IPM practices for farmers to implement. “Pete is indispensable. He always tries to get something new for farmers to use. He’s always pro-farmer.”

Goodell said. His mission centered on taking university research out of the lab and making it practical for farmers to understand, accept and put into practice to solve real life crop issues.

“I feel I had an impact at the field level and also at the academic level,” he said.

Goodell recalls working with a large farm to set up a crop landscape plan, placing safflower in one area and alfalfa with uncut strips in another location. The farm wound up spending less money on insecticides.

“Agriculture has a social contract with Californians that says we will consider all alternatives before we use a pesticide,” he said. Over the years, technology and communication have provided more information and resources for growers to tap and go through the IPM process.

Goodell credits the Sustainable Cotton Project (SCP) and its San Joaquin Sustainable Farming program for “drawing a highly motivated community together. The project gives a place to really test out these ideas. Farmers are more adaptable than most of us.”

In retirement, he plans to mix short backpacking outings with continued work on a public policy project with the state Department of Pesticide Regulation, SCP field days and the cotton industry. But Goodell adds he will be “available, but not indispensable.”

Below: Pete talks near a hedgerow during a cotton field day tour.
Dedicated Field Scouts Bring Another Set of Eyes for Growers
by Gilbert Mohtes-Chan

They grab hats, water, and note pads, heading out the door early in the morning to beat the San Joaquin Valley afternoon heat. They drive into almond orchards and out to alfalfa and cotton fields, looking for bugs and observing the season’s progress of the crop.

“We are a valuable resource for growers. They appreciate the things we see and do for them,” says Jenna Mayfield, the almond field scout for the San Joaquin Sustainable Farming Project (SJSFP).

Jenna is a seasoned field scout, working her sixth year scouting almonds for SJSFP. This year, SJSFP has introduced a new field scout for cotton and alfalfa, Damien Jelen. Both Damien and Jenna are Dos Palos residents.

Our field scouts work with growers and their existing pest control advisors to augment field scouting. In practice, they give growers another set of eyes to see what is taking place in the orchards or fields. The scouts provide weekly field notes to growers, giving them valuable information about pest counts and other observations about their crops. Jenna and Damien also facilitate implementation of applicable best management practices throughout the season.

“It is really important to be in constant communication with growers,” Jenna says.

As a native of the Central Valley, Jenna has a family background in farming. She studied horticulture at Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz County. She has certificates in greenhouse management and sustainable landscaping.

Growers, she says, “benefit from my background in agriculture and relationships with local farmers and (University of California Cooperative Extension) farm advisors and UC agriculture researchers.”

Before joining SJSFP, Damien spent time working with Lapenta Farms and San Juan Ranch outside of classes at Merced College. “I enjoyed the farm environment. I had a good mix of jobs,” he says.

His farm experience cemented his interest to pursue a career in agriculture. “I became interested in becoming a PCA (pest control adviser) when I heard about the career while working for San Juan. I knew Ag was for me after this job I had,” he says.

His family roots, though, aren’t planted in agriculture. His father is a police officer and mother is a nurse.

“I wanted to be a police officer in high school,” Damien says. In fact, he went on police ride-alongs to get a taste for the law enforcement profession. He opted to explore agriculture, becoming an equipment hauler for San Juan Ranch and later a chemical applicator for Lapenta Farms. While working for the farms, he had a chance to meet PCAs and agricultural chemical company representatives.

Damien is intrigued by the idea of a PCA seeing the results of his pest management recommendations on a crop. He says his field scouting experience will offer good preparation for obtaining his PCA license.

“I like being outside in the fields. Having a second set of eyes out there is good for the growers. If their PCA misses something, I’m right there behind them,” Damien says. “If I miss something they are right behind me with another set of numbers.”

Rural Issues Tug at Her Heart
by Gilbert Mohtes-Chan

Tracy Manuel understands government rules and regulations can be Greek to most of us. For the past couple of years, the Shasta County native has worked on projects trying to make complicated health information and medical forms understandable and useful for patients and doctors. Her work with the University of California at Davis Center for Design in the Public Interest included spending time in a rural Shasta County community of 120.

“I think rural areas have really complex informational needs — agriculture alone comes with an overwhelming number of rules and regulations and best practices that are constantly changing. I think doctors and farmers have a lot in common that way,” says Tracy, a UC Davis graduate in design.

Tracy’s analytic skills will be a real asset as the new program assistant to the Sustainable Cotton Project and SJSFP.

“The design industry here in California is very sleek and urban-oriented. The rural stuff is really where my heart is,” says Tracy, who hails from Redding.

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“I’m really grateful for the opportunity to spend some time in the field of agriculture, since it’s so central to so many communities and so many lives here,” Tracy says. “I’m excited about SCP’s commitment to environmental justice in a way that’s both practical and profitable for the people involved. I have a lot to learn, but I’m looking forward to it.”

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Taking Steps to Maximize Your Yields

Summer is in full swing. Alfalfa cutting continues. Almonds are poised for the start of harvest. Cotton plants continue to develop. And pests are thriving during the hot weather. To help maximize yields, University of California IPM and extension advisers offer these tips:

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<tr>
<th>Alfalfa</th>
<th>Almonds</th>
<th>Cotton</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Monitor for aphids and worms.</td>
<td>- Harvest early and pick up nuts quickly from</td>
<td>- It’s a bad year for lygus already.</td>
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<td>- Consider the alternatives to</td>
<td>the orchard floor to manage for navel</td>
<td>- Monitor the fields carefully.</td>
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<td>chlorpyrifos for treating pests,</td>
<td>orangeworm, peach twig borer, hull rot and</td>
<td>- Watch square retention closely.</td>
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<td>especially worms.</td>
<td>ants.</td>
<td>- Monitor for aphid and whitefly.</td>
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<td>- Lygus populations are heavy</td>
<td>- Harvest when 95 to 100 percent of the</td>
<td>- These pests cause sticky cotton</td>
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<td>this year. Leave as many uncut</td>
<td>hulls have split to avoid pest damage.</td>
<td>problems.</td>
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<td>strips of alfalfa as possible</td>
<td>- An orchard can be harvested twice if navel</td>
<td>- Treat only when needed using</td>
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<td>to provide a habitat for lygus</td>
<td>orangeworm infestation is heavy – once for</td>
<td>targeted material for control.</td>
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<td>and keep them from migrating</td>
<td>the early ripening nuts and second times for</td>
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<td>to other nearby crops, especially</td>
<td>later ripening nuts.</td>
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<td>cotton.</td>
<td>- Sampling harvested nuts for pests and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>damage lets you evaluate this year’s pest</td>
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<td>management program and plan for the next</td>
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