

New pest management center based at UC Davis

One of four centers launched nationwide by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), UC Davis' new Western Region Pest Management Center is bringing together diverse stakeholders with the ultimate goal of marshalling federal research funds more effectively.

"We'll be working to establish a good communications network and identify pest management problems that need research funding or other attention by the USDA or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)," said Rick Melnicoe, center director. He will work with stakeholders including growers, researchers and cooperative extension advisors.

The center, housed in the environmental toxicology department at UC Davis, will receive \$1.15 million annually for the next three years; the first installment arrived last September.

The UC Davis center will serve 13 western states including Alaska and Hawaii. The other centers are headquartered at Michigan State University and University of Illinois (North Central region), Pennsylvania State University and Cornell University (Northeast), and University of Florida (South).

The pest management centers will assist USDA and the EPA with implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), and pro-

mote better coordination between the two agencies. Passed in 1996, FQPA required EPA to re-evaluate existing pesticides for possible impacts on children, as well as the cumulative effects of various chemicals in the environment.

"FQPA has not had its full impact yet," Melnicoe said. "As we lose broad-spectrum pesticides, IPM (integrated pest management) and sustainable agriculture are going to be key players in replacement strategies for pest control."

During the first year, the center plans to develop 20 new crop profiles — detailed monographs of major pest issues for particular commodities, and will update 20 to 25 existing crop profiles. "UC personnel have been instrumental in reviewing, drafting and prioritizing 47 crop profiles that have been completed already. I foresee UC's continued active involvement in crop profiles," Melnicoe said.

The center will also develop two strategic pest management plans to be determined by an advisory committee or commodity group. These plans involve bringing together a commodity's stakeholders to outline a complex matrix of pest problems and solutions. "We then create a big 'to do' list of research, educational and regulatory needs," Melnicoe said. "This gives USDA and EPA a good handle on where they need to focus resources, and provides a solid foundation for decision-making."

The strategic planning process is grower-driven, Melnicoe said. "If it's not important to the grower, it's not important."

Melnicoe urged researchers, farm and extension advisors, growers and others to communicate their concerns and needs to the center. "I'd like to know what they're working on, in order to identify pest management issues as they arise."

For more information, go to www.wrpmc.ucdavis.edu, or call Melnicoe at (530) 754-8378 or assistant director Linda Herbst at (530) 752-7010.

— Janet Byron

The new Western Pest Management Center at UC Davis will advise federal agencies on research needs. Innovative strategies, such as broadcasting oats to prevent weeds in alfalfa, below, will be explored.

