

## **Crosscutting Initiative**

### **Farmworker and Rural Community Well-Being**

The UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is launching a new effort to promote research, education and outreach that address California farmworkers' living and working conditions.

"A sustainable food system is healthy and safe for everyone, including all those who work the land," said Tom Tomich, director of SAREP. "As SAREP continues to support sustainable agriculture research, we look forward to identifying research opportunities that will improve farmworker conditions."

California farmworkers face many challenges at work and in their communities. Nearly a quarter of California farmworker families live in poverty, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. While farmworkers play a crucial role in feeding Californians, food insecurity is among the many challenges they face daily. Farm work is one of the most hazardous occupations in the state, but nearly 70 percent of California farm workers have no health insurance, according to a California Institute for Rural Studies report.

SAREP aims to help researchers add context to these numbers by surveying farmworker groups and other stakeholders to help determine the types of research, education and communication projects they would find most helpful as they work to improve farm laborers' working and living conditions. The survey is scheduled to be completed by September, 2012.

"Projects such as this – creating a research agenda from the ground up by asking those in the field what types of research would be helpful to them – is inspired by the University of California's land grant mission to serve society," said Gail Feenstra, SAREP Food Systems Coordinator. "SAREP was founded to help ensure all California agricultural interests, particularly the underserved voices, are supported through scientific research, education and outreach."

Research regarding California farmworker issues has been conducted, but there is more to do. SAREP aims to assist both researchers and farmworkers by identifying research that workers and community organizations would find most useful.

In addition to identifying research topics, key stakeholders and potential partners and funders, SAREP is forming an advisory committee to guide its farmworker research and outreach efforts.

SAREP is a statewide program that joined with the Agricultural Sustainability Institute at UC Davis in 2007. SAREP provides leadership and support for scientific research and education in agricultural and food systems that are economically viable, conserve natural resources and biodiversity, and enhance the quality of life in the state's communities.