

Fall 1988

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Premier Issue

The UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is proud to present the first issue of its newsletter. We believe it will be an important tool as we collect and disseminate information about farming practices that are both environmentally sound and economically profitable.

We want this newsletter to assist those in the agricultural community seeking more sustainable farming practices. We encourage you to send us information on presentations, workshops, conferences, meetings, notices of grants and awards and other items which will help us create a network of sustainable agriculture information. We would like to thank Patricia Allen and Debra Van Dusen of the UC Santa Cruz Agroecology Program and Jenny Wardrip of UCSC Graphic Services for allowing us to use the symbol they developed for the 1986 Sustainability of California Agriculture Symposium for our logo.

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What is the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program?

The UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program was established in 1986 at the request of the California Legislature to address concerns about the economic viability of farming and the effects of current farm practices on the environment and on human health. Public and technical advisory committees advise the program on goals and make recommendations on the award of competitive grants. The program has three main responsibilities: the administration of competitive research grants, the development and dissemination of new and existing scientifically-based knowledge, and the coordination of long-term farmland research.

In the last two years 29 research, demonstration, planning and information projects were funded for a total of \$461,000. Our newsletter will carry announcements of Requests for Proposals as more money is available for competitive grants. (See "Sources of Funding," p.3)

Information gathering and assessment are high-priority program activities. Information advisory groups of researchers, advisors and other experts are being asked to assess the existing knowledge on a variety of topics and production systems. Work is now underway on citrus, almonds and grapes, on soil quality aspects of tomato-based rotations, and on cover crops and green manures in all production systems. Individuals and groups interested in working on other topics are encouraged to contact Jill Auburn at 916/752-7557. The newsletter will announce workshops, publications and other activities on these topics.

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1987-88 Research Summaries, Program Publications Available

Copies of UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program publications have been mailed to all University of California agricultural departments and Cooperative Extension county directors. Additionally, every county farm advisor has been mailed project summaries and several other program publications.

Major farming and agriculture-related organizations and University departments are being mailed complete copies of the same publications, which include: a program overview, a copy of the legislative act which created the program, the UC President's Report to the California Legislature (a summary of the program's first two years), a description of the information program, a Sustainable Agriculture Guide, a description of the grants program, and summaries of the 29 competitive grant projects funded in 1987 and 1988.

We would be happy to give this set to any other organization that will make it available to the public. Individuals are encouraged to examine the publications at any of these locations and copy whatever they like, or request individual copies from the program. Information request forms can be copied from the sets in the county offices or may be obtained by sending your name and address to the program.

If you received a copy of our program overview with a duplicate page 3 instead of page 4, let us know and we'll send you a correct one.

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Revamped Cover Crops Bulletin

Bill Williams and Rick Miller of the UC Davis Agronomy and Range Science Department and Walt Graves of the San Diego Cooperative Extension office are updating the Cooperative Extension cover crops bulletin, which will now include summer as well as winter cover crops. They expect it to be completed early next year, at which time it will be available through Cooperative Extension offices. It was last updated in 1951.

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Cover Crops Group Forming

There has been an explosion of interest in cover crops, green manures and living mulches among California growers and researchers. Ten of the 29 projects funded by the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program involve cover crops in some way, a bulletin that hasn't been updated in 37 years is being revised (see previous article), and growers are experimenting with new and old cover crops.

A statewide group of researchers and farm advisors is forming to compile what is already known about specific cover crops in California: identification, environmental requirements, growth and management, and positive uses and effects. After a preliminary meeting in Davis, the group concluded that the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program should start a database of these characteristics based on a few publications, and then let the group review the results and add missing information. The information could be adapted to particular cropping systems and local conditions by researchers, farm advisors, growers and consultants throughout California. If you would like to participate as a reviewer of this material, contact Jill Auburn at (916) 752-7557.

Organic Soil Amendments

Stuart Pettygrove of the UC Davis Land Air and Water Resources Department and Laurie Drinkwater of the UCD Vegetable Crops Department are writing an Organic Soil Amendments bulletin. It will explain how organic matter affects structure, chemical properties and the biology of the soil, and will include the state's definition of "organic" fertilizers and amendments. Also included will be sections on manures, compost, the addition of sawdust or straw and various mineral amendments, including liming materials. The publication is sponsored by the Small Farm Center at UC Davis. Anyone who has written about organic soil amendments or fertilizers for farm management is encouraged to contact the writers, who will cite other sources of information in the bulletin. The bulletin is expected to be completed by the end of the year and will be available through the Small Farm Center, University of California, Davis, CA 95616. Contact Drinkwater at (916)752-9097 or Pettygrove at (916)752-2533.

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Poster Display Opportunity

Jill Auburn is coordinating a poster session at the Ninth Ecological Farming Conference at the Asilomar Conference Center in January. Conference coordinators have asked for scientific information from the University to present to their diverse audience, including growers, consultants, students and activists. UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program grant recipients have been contacted about participating in the session, and displays of other low-input research projects are welcome. For more information, contact Jill at (916) 752-7557.

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Low-Input Farming Projects Receive Federal Funds

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded \$3.9 million to 53 low-input/sustainable agriculture research and education projects throughout the country. Funds were available through the 1985 Food Security Act, which included provisions for agriculture productivity research. Each of four regions, Northeast, North Central, Southern and Western, received \$836,000 for projects. Technical committees from each area evaluated more than 400 proposals, selecting 11 each from the Northeast and Southern regions, 21 from the North Central region and 10 from the West.

Among the Western projects is a comparative study of established low and high input vegetable production systems in California, investigated by Carol Shennan and Laurie Drinkwater of the UC Davis Vegetable Crops Department, Ariena van Bruggen of the UCD Plant Pathology Department, Deborah Letourneau of the Environmental Studies Board at UC Santa Cruz, and Phillip LeVeen of the California Institute for Rural Studies in Davis. The only other California project funded was a small planning grant awarded to Lundberg Farm of Richvale for investigation into low-input/sustainable methods of rice production in Northern California.

A list of projects funded in all four regions is available from the office of Patrick Madden, LISA Coordinator, USDA-CSRS-SPPS, 14th and Independence Ave. S.W., Aerospace Bldg. Room 342, Washington, D.C., 20251-2200. For information about the next round of funding, see "Sources of Funding."

Two Workshops Address Low-Input Production Methods in Perennial Crops

Citrus

A one-day workshop "**New Directions in Citrus Production and Management**" is scheduled Nov.16 at UC Riverside. The workshop is intended to bring growers, researchers, extension workers, private consultants, and others together for presentations and panel discussions. Alternatives in fertilization, vegetation management, and pest management are scheduled topics. The UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program and University Extension are co-sponsoring the event in cooperation with UC research and extension people in Riverside and surrounding counties. John Freeman is working at UCR's Dry Lands Research Institute under John Menge's direction to prepare information for the workshop, including alternative practices being explored by California growers. If you would like to contribute information, call John Freeman at (714) 787-5797. For registration (\$35) and more information, contact Mollie Carpenter, University Extension, at (714) 787-5804.

Grapes

"**Growing Grapes with Reduced Inputs,**" a one-day workshop covering site and variety considerations, floor management systems, selection and handling of cover crops, manures and composts, and pest management, is scheduled Dec. 6 at the Visalia Holiday Inn. UC specialists and farm advisors from the lower San Joaquin Valley organized the day of presentations and open discussion, which will conclude with a grower and industry panel. Registration (\$25) information is available from Norma Ray at the Kearney Agricultural Center in Parlier, (209) 891-2500. The workshop is co-sponsored by the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program and University Extension.

Sources Of Funding

Meet "LISA": Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture

A call for proposals for the next round of funding of the Western Regional Section of the USDA's LISA (Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture) program will be sent out soon. If you received a call for proposals for the last round of funding, you will automatically be sent the next request. If you were not on the mailing list and would like to be, contact Dr. David Schlegel, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California, 300 Lakeside Dr., 6th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612-3560 or call (415) 987-0033.

UC Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program Grant Funding

All of the current competitive grant funding for the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program has been allocated to multi-year projects. As a result, no new money is now available for competitive grants. As these projects are completed, or if additional grant money becomes available, a Request for Proposals will be developed and widely distributed throughout the research and farming communities. If a new cycle of funding is available, the Request for Proposals may differ from previous years, since the program consults with both public and technical advisory committees in both the development of the guidelines and the review of the proposals.