

OUR INSTITUTE AT A GLANCE

Update: November 2015

Our mission is to ensure access to healthy food and to promote the vitality of agriculture today and for future generations. We do this through integrative research, education, communication and early action on big, emerging issues.

Our vision for the Agricultural Sustainability Institute. ASI will be a:

- ◆ **Convenor:** engaging diverse perspectives
- ◆ **Clearinghouse:** synthesizing, translating and communicating useful information
- ◆ **Think tank:** being the thought leader for interdisciplinary research
- ◆ **Pioneer:** taking early action on major issues
- ◆ **Incubator:** nurturing the next generation of agricultural leaders
- ◆ **Action tank:** linking science with action for sustainable solutions

Thematic areas

Agriculture, Resources, & the Environment: integration of agricultural systems at the farm/ranch and landscape levels.

Food & Society: integration of the food system, linking production, distribution and consumption.

Education & Leadership: integrated programs for sustainability education and leadership - kindergarten through post-graduate, including a **new undergraduate major in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems** and support for the **MS in International Agricultural Development** and the **PhD in Agroecology** at UC Davis.

Sustainability Benchmarks: a crosscutting activity to produce scientifically-validated frameworks of issues and indicators to benchmark trends in sustainability of agriculture and the food system.

Farmworker and Rural Community Wellbeing: a crosscutting activity to address salient issues affecting wellbeing of farmworkers, food system workers, and rural communities through research, education and extension.

Programs and facilities

UC statewide Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program (UC SAREP)

Russell Ranch Sustainable Agriculture Facility at UC Davis

Student Farm at UC Davis

Inter-institutional Network for Food, Agriculture & Sustainability (INFAS), national network hosted by ASI

Team and associates

- ◆ Director of ASI and SAREP: Tom Tomich (since 2007)
- ◆ ASI Deputy Director: Ermias Kebreab (since 2014)
- ◆ Russell Ranch Sustainable Agriculture Facility Director: Kate Scow (since 2008)
- ◆ Student Farm Director: Mark Van Horn (since 1987)
- ◆ SAREP Deputy Director: Gail Feenstra (since 2014)
- ◆ Sustainable Sourcing Initiative Director: Jim Quinn (since 2015)
- ◆ 30 other full and part-time staff of various programs and projects
- ◆ 2 postdocs, 8 graduate student researchers, 3 teaching assistants, 1 research associates, and 21 student assistants
- ◆ 9 ASI-affiliated professorships in agroecology, sustainability science, sustainability and society, economics of sustainability, plant disease management/soil microbiology, soil science, pollination ecology, invertebrate community ecology, and sustainable animal systems.
- ◆ 17 ASI fellows, including faculty from the College of Engineering and the School of Education, as well as the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at UC Davis.
- ◆ 12 academic colleagues serving on ASI's Academic Advisory Committee.
- ◆ A distinguished external advisory board of 27 leaders, representing diverse stakeholder interests.
- ◆ UC Davis CA&ES Dean's Office support in fundraising, events, administration, IT.
- ◆ An expanding network of partners, including UC Cooperative Extension specialists and farm advisors, and other partners in various sectors.

Current annual budget: over \$3.4 million; campaign underway to increase to \$6 million.

Our Operational Principles

Practicing sustainability: we strive to enact sustainability principles and practices in our own activities.

- **“Walking the talk”:** we work to use sustainable practices in our own operations and actively strive to embody our core values: creativity, inclusiveness, integrity, and partnership.
- **Community:** we embrace and enact the UC Davis Principles of Community in our daily work.
- **Respect for all:** we affirm the inherent dignity in all people and endeavor to relate to all with respect, fairness and justice.

Legitimacy: we set our priorities and design our programs in response to concerns and aspirations of stakeholders representing the diversity of California

- **Spanning boundaries:** we serve the entire state, and all segments of agriculture and the food system.
- **Science in the public interest:** we are committed to transparency in governance and priority setting; to open access to results and information; and to accountability to stakeholders.
- **Historical awareness:** we recognize the University's historic, current, and potential future roles in shaping agricultural and food systems and their effects on environment and society. We strive to make informed and responsible decisions regarding research, teaching and outreach based on this knowledge.
- **Seeking consensus, while respecting differences:** our activities employ a common set of ground rules, including respect for different viewpoints.

Usefulness: responsiveness to stakeholders' needs – the broad interests of society as well as needs of specific groups – is key to the relevance of our initiatives and provides the necessary focus on real issues and opportunities.

- **Communication for impact:** we ensure that input from stakeholders consistently is sought and used effectively and that our products are translated to reach key audiences in forms they can use.
- **Integration of knowledge:** we actively seek and recognize the value of knowledge embodied in experience on farms and ranches, in communities, in industry, and in policy arenas.
- **Commitment to experiential learning:** we recognize the value of learning-by-doing and actively seek to integrate practical opportunities in our educational programs, training, and outreach activities.
- **Creating and sustaining a learning organization:** feedback, monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment will be embedded in overall design of our activities.

Credibility: we hold ourselves to the highest standards of professional integrity and scientific rigor.

- **Forward-looking agenda:** we will create and sustain mechanisms to identify and assess emerging opportunities and threats, based on scientific analyses and stakeholder input and informed by global trends.
- **Broad scope, with multidisciplinary balance:** we integrate economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainability.
- **Scientific integration and synthesis:** our activities span big, inter-linked issues and multiple scales – ranging from molecular to global; past, present, future.
- **Open inquiry:** we promote critical analysis to challenge ‘conventional wisdom’ and to expand our understanding of technical, institutional, and policy options using the best natural and social science methods available.