

Welcome back kacoatney@gmail.com [Logout](#)

The Weekly Newspaper for California Agriculture



- [Home](#) |
- [Contact](#) |
- [Welcome back](#)

[Visit Our Sites](#)

• [CFBF](#)

• [California Bountiful](#)

- [Archives](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [About Us](#)



Follow us on: [f](#) [t](#) [y](#)

UC Organic Agriculture Institute develops programs

Issue Date: [March 10, 2021](#)

By Kathy Coatney



Organizers say a newly established Organic Agriculture Institute within the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources division will increase the university's capacity to provide research and technical assistance to the state's organic sector.

Established last year, the institute is led by Houston Wilson, who also serves as an assistant Cooperative Extension specialist in the Department of Entomology at UC Riverside.

Wilson said the institute will be developing a research and extension program for the organic production of tree nuts, tree fruits, raisins and rice in California, and eventually intends to expand this work to all organic crops.

"Organic ag has historically been under-supported, both in terms of funding and university positions or efforts focused on organic agriculture—so there's very much a need for research and extension across multiple production areas for all of these different crops," he said.

As the institute gets off the ground, Houston said it will work to establish partnerships and collaborations with key organic agriculture stakeholders, conduct an assessment to identify and prioritize research and extension needs, and use that assessment as the basis for developing targeted research and extension projects.

"As director of the UC OAI, my role is really one of facilitating and supporting these activities," he said.

"In addition to research and extension, we also want to support educational efforts to help train the next generation of organic ag scientists, as well as provide expertise where needed for policy advocates or other groups that are looking for information on organic agriculture," Wilson said.

"These are all activities that the university has traditionally carried out for agriculture, but for the first time here, the focus is explicitly on organic agriculture," he said.

In January, Wilson submitted a proposal to a federal funding program, the Organic Research and Extension Initiative, seeking funds to support the needs assessment for organic research and extension in California.

As part of this effort, he said a series of meetings will be held in different parts of the state, involving farmers, consultants, certifiers, UC personnel and others, to identify and prioritize the research and extension needs in the initial crops the institute plans to address.

Wilson said he also hopes to establish a network of organic agriculture stakeholders, calling it the California Organic Agriculture Knowledge Network, or Cal OAK Network.

The entire process will take about 18 months, he said, and when completed, a series of targeted research and extension proposals will be generated to address the most pressing needs. The collaborative research and extension teams leading those projects will likely be formed through partnerships that stem out of connections made through the Cal OAK Network, he said.

With this information, Wilson said, the institute plans to go back to OREI and other potential funders to seek support for the collaborative projects.

The Cal OAK Network was created not only to bring people together, but as a way to facilitate sharing knowledge of all the work that's been done on organic agriculture to date and that has contributed to California's leading role in the sector, he explained.

"It's incredible how much has been achieved in California in the absence of funding and targeted UC efforts in this area," Wilson said. "As we wade into this arena, we want to find ways to collaborate to support and enhance the groups that have already been working on these issues for decades."

Glenda Humiston, vice president for UC ANR, said a UC effort such as this has been long overdue.

What UC brings to the table, she said, is research, extension and education regarding the problems of organic agriculture, as well as the ability to leverage additional funding into this area.

The UC institute was founded with a \$500,000 endowment from Clif Bar & Co., which makes organic foods and beverages, with funding matched by the UC Office of the President.

Clif Bar has also established endowed organic agriculture research positions at universities including the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Washington State University.

Humiston noted that Clif Bar needs tens of thousands of pounds of organic product to make its bars, so it started the endowments to further that goal.

"As we continue to experience funding cuts from our federal and state general funds for Cooperative Extension, it is critical that we establish endowments where anybody can donate money to them," Humiston said, adding, "Clif Bar has committed to us that they are going to work with their other partners to try to get more funding in here. We hope many others will join them."

In addition, she said, UC Cooperative Extension has retained its first official organic specialist, Joji Muramoto at the UC Santa Cruz campus.

Institute director Wilson said the new UC OAI ultimately wants to expand its work to all organic agriculture in California.

"We hope to start reaching out to partners and pulling together the Cal OAK Network sometime this spring," he said, "and, pending COVID-19 restrictions, would like to start convening people later this year in the fall, winter and spring of 2022—whenever we can start getting people together again in some form." More information about the UC OAI may be found at organic.ucanr.edu.

(Kathy Coatney is a reporter in Bend, Oregon. She may be contacted at kacoatney@gmail.com.)

Permission for use is granted, however, credit must be made to the California Farm Bureau Federation when reprinting this item.

LATEST ISSUE

Farm Bureau Extension
Rios, Johnson discuss key topics during online conversation
Page 9

Weed control in rice
Specialists say new options are coming, as new weeds emerge
Page 7

www.ahjournal.com www.ahjournal.com
APRIL 21, 2021

The Weekly Magazine for California Agriculture

AgAlert

California Farm Bureau

**FIELD CROPS
VEGETABLES**



Drought spreads water shortages throughout state

By Christine Sacco

The state of California remains locked in agricultural water scarcity, according to a report released last week. The report says that water shortages are spreading throughout the state, with some areas experiencing shortages for the first time in decades. The report also notes that the state's water infrastructure is aging and needs to be upgraded to handle the growing demand for water in agriculture.

See M7276, Page 10

Dairy farms count on food-service demand

By Christine Sacco

Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, California's dairy industry is looking for opportunities in the food service sector. Dairy farmers are seeing a steady demand for their products from restaurants, hotels, and other food service establishments. This demand is helping to offset the impact of the pandemic on the dairy industry.

See M7276, Page 10

Actions aim to broaden farmers' insurance options

By Christine Sacco

The California Farm Bureau is working to broaden the insurance options available to farmers. The organization is advocating for changes to the state's insurance laws to make it easier for farmers to obtain the coverage they need. This includes expanding the range of policies available to farmers and simplifying the process of obtaining insurance.

See M7276, Page 10

Inside

From the Editor's Desk 4-5
 Farm Bureau 7
 Field Crops 11
 Vegetables 15
 Dairy 17
 Livestock 19
 Technology 21
 Organic Farming 23
 California 25

See M7276, Page 10

OPINION

SPECIAL REPORTS

- DAIRY & LIVESTOCK
- FIELD CROPS
- TREES & VINES
- VEGETABLES

FEATURES

FROM THE FIELDS®
ASK YOUR PCA

SERIES

- COVID-19
- ANNUAL MEETING
- MOVING IT FORWARD
- CFBF CENTENNIAL
- LEADERS CONFERENCE
- STORING FOR THE FUTURE
- CALIFORNIA WATER CRISIS

SPECIAL ISSUES

- TECHNOLOGY
- IRRIGATION
- ORGANIC FARMING

SPECIAL SECTIONS

- BY THE NUMBERS
- WORLD AG EXPO

**COLUSA FARM SHOW
YF&R**

[Home](#) | [Archives](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Advertise](#) | [About](#)

[Us](#) | [Contact Us](#)

**California Farm Bureau Federation, 2600
River Plaza Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833**

Phone: (916) 561-5570, Fax: (916) 561-5695,

General Information: agalert@cfbf.com

© 2021 California Farm Bureau Federation. All

rights reserved. Read our [legal notice](#).

Website Inquiries: webmaster@cfbf.com
