

Valerie J. Mellano, Ph.D.

UC Cooperative Extension, San Diego County

March 22, 2012

THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AG/ URBAN INTERFACE ISSUES

UC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AS AN ORGANIZATION:

- ✘ Is a partnership between the University of California, the USDA and the county government (Farm and Home Advisor Dept.)
- ✘ Almost every county in the United States has Cooperative Extension
- ✘ We are part of the Land Grant Institutions, and also have campus-based faculty
- ✘ In San Diego County, we were established in 1914.

WHAT DOES COOPERATIVE EXTENSION DO?

- ✗ Most visible programs to the public:
 - + 4-H-youth development program
 - + Master Gardeners provide information to home gardeners and provide other gardening activities for the general county population
- ✗ Most of our programs are directed toward agricultural production
 - + Research
 - + Outreach
 - + Education
- ✗ All of our programs are funded through competitive grants/grant funding

IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY:

- ✖ We have 11 Cooperative Extension “Advisors”
 - + About 40 additional staff
- ✖ Most are assigned to specific crop types or topic areas, assist in grower production and other issues
- ✖ All have graduate degrees in a specific area (such as Entomology), and much research experience
- ✖ It is a big part of our job to be the local problem-solvers as part of the UC Division of Ag and Natural Resources as well as the County of San Diego

AS PART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA:

- ✖ We have direct access to and work closely with campus-based faculty
- ✖ 100 years ago, Advisors were supposed to take research generated on the campus and help farmers apply that to their own farms
 - + This is still used where appropriate
- ✖ Currently, Advisors primarily conduct their own research on local issues
- ✖ We also coordinate and cooperate with other universities and researchers in the US and around the world

AG/URBAN ISSUES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY:

- ✖ We have continuous and numerous issues in San Diego because of conflicts between Agriculture and the Urban Areas
 - + Cooperative Extension is involved in finding solutions for many of these through research-based efforts
 - + Research receives the same level of peer-review scrutiny as any campus-based research

HOW DOES COOPERATIVE EXTENSION GET INVOLVED WITH AG/URBAN ISSUES:

- ✘ Generally there is a complaint from one or several individuals regarding an ag/urban issue
 - + Complaints can be brought to the county government, the city governments or other entity
 - + Most complaints are vs. an agricultural operation
- ✘ Often the advisor will be contacted by the county or city department receiving the complaint, asking for assistance in solving the issue
- ✘ Depending on the issue at hand, we will provide a research-based program if necessary, to assist in solving or mitigating the problem.

WHAT ISSUES ARE IMPORTANT?

- ✗ Most common issue is pesticide use, concerns about drift, assumptions that pesticide applications are illegal
- ✗ Other farming practices that do not coexist well with neighborhoods
 - + Lights early in the morning
 - + Dust
 - + Presence of farmworkers
 - + Machinery noise
 - + Big trucks on small roads

ADDITIONAL POINTS:

- ✘ In almost all cases, individuals who move into rural areas did not fully expect any impact from a farming operation, and had a very different expectation for living in a rural area
- ✘ In almost all situations, the farms were there first, and the residential areas followed
- ✘ In almost all situations, neither of the above points matters much when an ag/urban interface issue arises!

SOME EXAMPLES: (BESIDES THE EYE GNAT)

- ✗ Poultry Manure Management project:
 - + Large poultry farm (1 million birds) was unable to maximize the management of their manure
 - + During the time of E. coli outbreak, was difficult to market dried manure to large growers of vegetable crops
 - + Manure accumulated, stayed very wet for an extended period of time
 - + Flies, odors, etc. in the neighborhood area

RESEARCH PROJECT:

- ✖ Tested different manure management methods that would minimize fly breeding, odors and problems with manure absorbing too much moisture
- ✖ Came up with a solution to the problem that has minimized complaints and legal issues
- ✖ Before: 38 complaints/month
- ✖ After: <1 complaint/month
- ✖ Grower saved \$150k the first year in legal fees

SOLAR PROJECT:

- ✗ There are several potential solar installations that have requested permits from the county.
- ✗ The plan is to install them on farmland
 - + Is that an appropriate use?
 - + Will we be losing farmland permanently?
 - + Can we farm and have the solar installation in place at the same time?
 - + Can changes be made to the installation plan to preserve farming?
- ✗ This was a short-term review project.

WHAT WE DID TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE:

- ✘ Reviewed other solar installations in various locations
- ✘ Contacted researchers who are working in this area (UC Davis and University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
- ✘ Answered specific questions that will allow county to make decisions based on research programs

IMPORTANT TO NOTE:

- ✖ Our research programs designed to solve the local issues depend on the joint efforts of all involved:
 - + UC Cooperative Extension
 - + UC campus-based researchers
 - + Sometimes researchers from other states, countries
 - + The grower/farmer
 - + The Farm Bureau
 - + The local regulatory agencies
 - + The residents in the area affected

KEEP IN MIND:

- ✘ It is our job to provide unbiased research-based information on issues that arise
- ✘ We will tailor a research program to the situation to answer questions, or utilize research based information to address questions if the information already exists

CONTACT INFORMATION:

✕ San Diego Office:

- + 9335 Hazard Way, Suite 201, San Diego CA 92123
- + 858-694-2845

✕ North County Office:

- + 151 E. Carmel, San Marcos, CA 92078
- + 760-752-4724

- + www.cesandiego.ucdavis.edu