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Food labeling lacks consistency

A study of international approaches to genetically modified (GM) food labeling by AIC Associate Director Colin Carter and Agricultural and Resource Economics Ph.D. candidate Guillaume Gruere reveals that there is little consistency among major producing and importing countries.

They point out that the European Union has strict GM labeling guidelines, whereas the United States, Argentina and Canada oppose mandatory labeling. Such countries as Japan, South Korea and Australia all have mandatory labeling, but the threshold for unintended GM material varies, ranging from one to five percent. New proposed EU regulations would set the threshold for maximum GM material at 0.9 percent.

The researchers also explore the rationale behind these differences, their effect on consumers, and trade issues associated with GM labeling. They note that GM labeling also is becoming a political issue within the United States. Last November, 27 percent of Oregon’s voters supported a ballot initiative calling for labeling of GM foods. A similar initiative may be on California’s ballot in 2004.

The research is being published in an upcoming issue of *Choices* and is posted on the AIC website. Carter and Gruere also shared their results at a poster session of the Sacramento Regional Biotechnology Summit 2003 in February. The Summit brought together leaders from the academic and private sector in the greater Sacramento area, and drew participants from the Bay Area and the UC system.

Study explores pest management and farm labor health/safety relationships

A new AIC study is analyzing injury and illness statistics for California farmworkers to determine the economic impact that UC pest management research and development has had on farmworker health and safety. The statistics—compiled by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, the

Worker Health and Safety Unit of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics—show high and or increasing illness and injury rates related to pesticides throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. These rates have fallen since the mid



An air blast sprayer moves pesticide droplets high onto trees.

AIC loses a friend and supporter

Much has been written and said about Dick Lyng's many contributions as an agriculturalist serving California and the nation. I would like to add a personal note about Dick's interest and early support for AIC at a critical startup period. The Center was launched without much fanfare in late 1985 after a protracted struggle in the legislature for funding.

James B. Kendrick, the late UC vice-president for Agriculture and Natural Resources was aware of concerns of the agricultural community about the appropriate role of the Center in agricultural policy analysis. Kendrick commissioned Dick Lyng, then a partner in the consulting firm Lyng and Leshner, Inc., to undertake an informal survey of California agricultural leaders and make recommendations as to priority areas of work and organizational structure of the Center.

Dick's report identified priority areas for the AIC—e.g. pesticide regulations, water quality, trade, and urban interface problems—that became an integral part of our activities for the next several years. Dick also recommended the selection of an advisory board of leaders with diverse interests in agriculture and public concerns. Probably even more important for the Center was Dick's personal reputation. He could convey to industry leaders that the University had expertise and an important impartial role to play in policy analysis and in bringing together diverse points of view on controversial issues.

As an interesting aside, Dick confided that completion of the Center consulting report on January 17, 1986 delayed by a few days his appointment by President Bush as Secretary of Agriculture.

Dick continued to follow the activities of the Center after retirement and expressed to me many times his satisfaction with our progress. He will be missed.

—Hal Carter
AIC Director, 1985–1996

1980s. While the increase in illnesses is inarguably linked in part to the development and introduction of more toxic pesticides, the cause of the more recent decrease is less clear. While UC pest management research has certainly played a part, there also have been such contributing factors as increased government regulation, better recording methods, and increased employee safety training.

The complexity of isolating UC's role cannot be understated. UC researchers have been involved in a variety of pest-related activities over the last three decades. These activities have played different and

sometimes unclear roles on the health and safety of farm workers. For example, at first glance it would seem that UC pesticide, related actions have had a detrimental effect on human health and safety. UC labs developed and introduced compounds that were toxic to humans, other animals, the environment, or all three. In the early 1970s, in an effort to reduce the use of environmentally toxic pesticides (such as DDT), other compounds, such as organochlorides, were developed. While organochlorides were less toxic to the environment, they posed a greater health risk to humans.

However, UC researchers have also led the way in developing and implementing integrated pest management practices, replacing harmful pesticides with more benign chemicals and cultural practices to rid orchards of pests. They have created pest-resistant cultivars and conducted research into using natural enemies to target pests. In addition, UC researchers have served on the boards of regulatory agencies, set up centers and created materials to educate pesticide applicators, conducted studies to determine appropriate re-entry periods (the time interval before workers can reenter a sprayed field), and designed improved spraying equipment.

The study hopes to determine the net effect of UC pest management research and development on farm worker health and safety. Changes in the health and safety of farm laborers affect the quality of life in rural communities, the size of public health expenditures and worker compensation claims, and the costs of hiring and training personal in the agricultural industry. How pest management activities have affected these areas is an important question in terms of both evaluating past efforts and in deciding future areas to pursue.

AIC helps host Ministerial Conference

In support of the U.S. commitment to strengthen global food security, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman is hosting an international Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology, June 23-25 in Sacramento. Ministers from more than 180 nations have been invited to attend.

The conference and expo will focus on the critical role science and environmentally sustainable technology can play in raising agricultural productivity, especially in developing countries. The AIC is helping to arrange science and technology visits that will give participants a first-hand look at advances in California agriculture.

One AIC role has been to help coordinate the science and technology agenda of the site visits with the rest of the conference. Ministers will visit a variety of sites in Northern California that show cutting-edge agricultural science and technology in both development stages and in operation. The range of visits will cover food processing, animal agriculture, and plant breeding among other topics.

China book publication date set

AIC Director Dan Sumner and Associate Director for China Programs Scott Rozelle, coeditors, have brought together the best research available in the soon-to-be-published 332-page volume, *Agricultural Trade and Policy in China: Issues Analysis and Implications*. In addition to writing the introduction and overview, Sumner and Rozelle contributed to several chapters in the book.

Hailed as a “prominent and commanding volume” by Ashgate Publishing, London, the book critically analyzes the agricultural supply and demand factors that underlie China’s trade patterns. It also explores implications of China’s agricultural and trade policies for China and the rest of the world. The slate of authors combines the leading established scholars in the field and the best of the next generation.

Publication is scheduled for September. More information on contents and purchasing details can be obtained at www.ashgate.com.

2002 AIC Annual Report online

For an overview of the AIC’s accomplishments during 2002, you can access the Center’s 2002 Annual Report at www.aic.ucdavis.edu. The online report replaces the hard copy version produced in previous years.

Conference explores farmland options

An invitation-only research and policy conference on Compensatory Options for Conserving Agricultural Land was held April 14-15 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Sacramento.

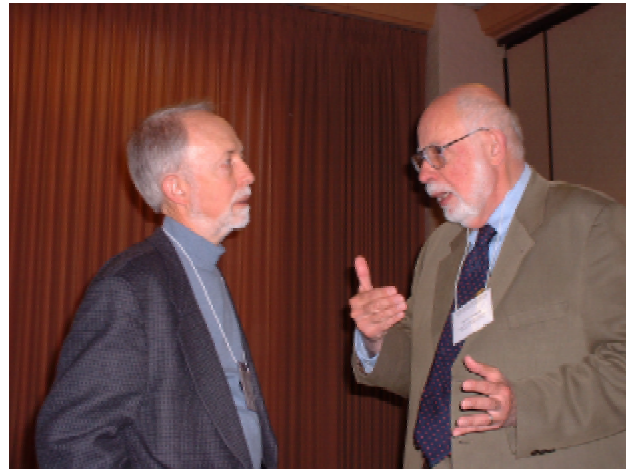
The conference, presented by the AIC and UC Davis Department of Human and Community Development, examined landowner preferences, evaluated existing programs, and considered new ideas in funding, duration, and participation requirements. AIC Associate Director for Rural-Urban Issues, Al Sokolow, was conference chair, as well as a presenter.

Long-term scenarios for California agriculture explored

What will production agriculture be like in the year 2030? The AIC is developing half a dozen scenarios based on analyses of supply and demand forces that are driving global markets and on the comparative advantage of California farm production. The results will become part of the 2003 California Water Plan Update being prepared by the California Department of Water Resources.

Specifically, the AIC is forecasting production resources, crop yields, market prices, demand, farm labor costs, effects of commodity policies and a variety of other factors, including projected consumption by an expected 48 million consumers within the state, that will help shape the picture of California agriculture in 2030.

The resulting scenarios will take into account the degree of competition from foreign suppliers and California agriculture's likely response to this competition.



Conference organizer Al Soklow discusses land trust ideas with Walter Armbruster, President, Farm Foundation

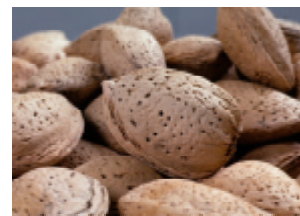
Presentations

AIC director Sumner gave two presentations at the International Temperate-Rice Conference, Punta del Este, Uruguay in March. One dealt with rice subsidies and the economics of rice trade and trade negotiations and the other with China and the global economics of Japonica rice.

Sumner also addressed a legislative roundtable luncheon in March, talking on the future of agriculture and implications for water use.

Analysis shows another difficult year for exports

The 2001 calendar year was another difficult year for California agricultural exports, with low export prices reflecting a strong dollar and low commodity prices, according to the AIC's annual analysis of California's international agricultural exports.



Almonds again lead California's exports.

The 2001 data and analysis published in an *AIC Issues Brief* (No. 19, Jan. 2003) by AIC post graduate researcher José Bervejillo and director Dan Sumner show that while the \$6.5 billion value of California's 2001 exports remained unchanged from 2000, California exports declined slightly as a share of U.S. agricultural exports, decreasing from about 12.8 percent to 12.3 percent.

Rankings for the top 10 commodities did not change from 2000 to 2001, with almonds toping the list, followed by cotton. Relative to 2000, 21 of the 50 commodities analyzed increased in export value and 27 decreased. Because prices were low for many of the export commodities in 2001, increases in volume were not necessarily reflected in increased value.

The year 2001 marked the fifth year that the AIC has been measuring data on California's international exports. The complete report can be reviewed online at <http://aic.ucdavis.edu/pub/briefs/brief19.pdf>.

Preliminary indication for 2002, based on a decline in the value of the dollar late in the year, large crops, and stabilized prices, is that export values may have increased.

Spring outlook seminar features AIC expertise

Approximately 200 farmers, policy professionals, managers, appraisers and others interested in California agriculture participated in the day-long forum at the 2003 Spring Ag Outlook Forum on April 25 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Sacramento.

AIC joined the California Chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers in presenting the Forum. The morning program featured presentations by AIC director Dan Sumner on commodity and issue outlooks, associate director Scott Rozelle on trade with China, associate director Karen Klonsky on cost of production trends, and Cooperative Extension specialist Roberta Cook on global trends in horticultural product retailing.

The afternoon sessions began with a panel on hired farm labor issues that included UC Davis professor Phil Martin; Bert Mason, California State University, Fresno; and Martha Guzman, legislative coordinator for the United Farm Workers.

In the final session, Tony Correia of Correia-Xavier, Inc. and Mark Clarke of Lend Lease Agri-Business, Inc. presented highlights of recent trends in California farmland prices in the Central Valley and the coastal and southern inland valley regions.

The presentations and background material will be posted on the AIC website soon. ■

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