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Courtesy of Calif. Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program

California Citrus Mutual president Joel Nelsen talks to growers during a meeting in Ventura County on the Asian citrus psyllid earlier this year. The state and Citrus Mutual are planning another series of meetings to train crew bosses on how to train their workers to stop the spread of the psyllid, which can carry the deadly citrus disease huanglongbing.

## Meetings to train crew bosses on preventing spread of psyllid

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

Farm labor contractors and crew bosses who work in California citrus groves are invited to attend a series of training workshops on measures to control the Asian citrus psyllid.

Two-hour sessions are offered Oct. 3 in Mecca and Oct. 4 in Thermal, both in Imperial County, and a separate meeting for growers and packing-house managers is slated for Oct. 3 in El Centro.

Other training sessions throughout Southern and Central California will be scheduled, noted officials from the state Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program.

The sessions for crew bosses will aim “to teach them how to train their field crews to stop the spread” of the psyllid, event spokeswoman Jessica Northrup said in an email. The psyllid can carry the

deadly citrus disease huanglongbing, which has devastated the citrus industry in the Southeast and has been found in nearly two dozen trees in California.

The afternoon session will cover enforcement and effectiveness of the trainings out in the field, according to the state citrus program’s website.

The trainings were developed by the state program and California Citrus Mutual, a growers’ group with more than 2,500 members.

The meetings are only the latest hosted by the state as the quarantine for the psyllid has grown to cover nearly one-third of California’s total land mass. Officials from the state program met earlier this year with growers and packers about a proposed regional quarantine structure under which fruit moving between regions within California would have to undergo a wet wash.

As it is now, fruit in the state’s quarantine zone simply has to be clear of leaves and debris before it can be sent out.

Industry leaders have described the psyllid as a “hitchhiker” that can latch onto vehicles, storage bins and equipment and move from region to region. Past meetings have instructed growers on how to avoid bringing psyllids home if they travel, such as by washing vehicles and equipment.

The Imperial County meetings for crew bosses will be held at 10 a.m. Oct. 3 at Gless Ranch, 95300 Avenue 70, Mecca, and at 10 a.m. Oct. 4 at Youngs Nursery, 68461 Harrison St., Thermal. The Oct. 3 meeting for growers and packinghouse managers will begin at 3 p.m. at the Imperial County Farm Bureau, 1000 Broadway St., El Centro.

For more information or to RSVP, call (559) 592-3790.

## UC endowed chair to boost rice research

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

DAVIS, Calif. — An industry group has joined the University of California in setting up a \$1 million endowed chair to pay for research into improving rice production and quality.

The UC and the California Rice Research Board are splitting the cost of the endowed chair, which will have five-year terms.

The earnings from the endowment — which will average \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year — will help UC Cooperative Extension and UC-Davis rice researchers who focus on such issues as weed, disease and pest management, nutrient management and water conservation, officials said.

“There’ll be a process where different academics can submit proposals on what they would intend to utilize those resources over a period of five years,” said Chris Greer, the UC’s vice provost for Cooperative Extension. “In most cases, we’re going to expect some sort of collaborative project.”

“My guess would be we’re going to have one person who’s the chair-holder and the funds will be utilized to support collaborative, multidisciplinary work on a specific issue,” he said.

Endowed chairs are fixtures at Harvard University and other top institutions as a way to fund specific types of research. UC President Janet Napolitano announced in 2014 that she would seek endowment partners for all of the university’s campuses and for Cooperative Extension.

Last fall, the UC and the California Pistachio Research Board established two en-



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Different types of rice grow at the industry-supported Rice Experiment Station in Glenn County, Calif., which often collaborates with the University of California on projects. The UC is setting up a \$1 million endowed chair for rice research.

dowed chairs of \$1 million each to fund studies on tree nut genetics, soil science and plant-water relations.

Glenda Humiston, the UC’s vice president for agriculture and natural resources, said at the time she was having discussions with several other groups about establishing similar funding streams for other areas of agriculture.

Getting the highest quality and yields and dealing efficiently with pests and disease could be critical for a rice industry whose acreage has declined in recent years because of drought-related water shortages.

Rice growers in California have long been committed to research, having established the Rice Experiment Station in Biggs more than a centu-

ry ago and investing more per unit on research than other rice-producing states. The Rice Research Board is funded through a grower assessment of 8 cents per 100 pounds of harvested rice.

Dana Dickey, the research board’s manager, said he hopes the endowed chair will help the industry respond to issues that arise.

“Over the long term, this provides a constant source of research funds that we can use for things that concern the industry,” Dickey said. “We’ve specifically narrowed the field of people who can apply ... to farm advisers and specialists who work on rice. It’s a fairly small group of people who we are already committed to funding. This is an additional funding source for them.”

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