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Cal Poly Helping Gauge Economic Impacts of Invasive Pest Quarantines

SAN LUIS OBISPO - Cal Poly's Sustainable Agriculture Resources Consortium is aiding a statewide coalition in its efforts to battle harmful invasive insects and other species in California.

With funding from the California Agricultural Issues Forum, the state Invasive Pest Coalition has asked Cal Poly to gather and analyze data to determine the economic impacts on growers who are placed under quarantine for harmful, non-native pests. The work is looking at all growers, though the coalition is particularly interested in impacts on organic growers.

"For the council, I think Cal Poly's expertise in agriculture and work in sustainability make a good combination," said Hunter Francis, co-founder of the Sustainable Agriculture Resources Consortium. "Additionally, we have a lot of friends in the organic community."

David Headrick, a co-director of the consortium and a professor of pest management in Cal Poly's Horticulture and Crop Science Department is working with graduate student Maria Murrietta on the analysis.

The two will gather and examine data on economic impacts of quarantines on growers in Sonoma and Kern counties hit by either the light brown apple moth or the glassy winged sharpshooter. Headrick and Murrietta will also examine how growers are impacted by the quarantine process and how manageable the regulations are for clearing quarantine.
"We want to quantify the impacts of quarantine," Headrick said. "How much product is lost? Does the grower have to lay off staff? Or do they have to hire additional employees to clear the quarantine?"

The Cal Poly work will be done quickly, with Headrick and Murrietta gathering data and developing a document in the next month.
"Growers and others in the industry would say this is the type of thing that needs to be done yesterday," Headrick said. "We have a network in place, because of the Sustainable Agriculture Resource Consortium, and we're ready to go."

The Agriculture Issues Center at UC Davis is conducting a similar project. Results of the analyses will become the basis for more comprehensive, statewide economic impact studies, according to the Invasive Pest Coalition. They will also serve as a blueprint on legislative outreach and will provide the coalition with a means of personalizing the potential implications of invasive pests on California.

Headrick believes this could be the beginning of a long-term relationship between Cal Poly and the Invasive Pest Coalition.
"I think we will probably work with them for years down the road," he said.

About Cal Poly's Sustainable Agriculture Resources Consortium

The consortium was founded in 2000 to advance sustainable food and agricultural systems through Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences. Since that time, the consortium has served as a catalyst for cutting-edge ideas and projects offering solutions to pressing needs in agriculture. This has involved curricula development, continuing-education programs, professional development seminars, and a critical role in the establishment of the Cal Poly Organic Farm. For more details, visit: http://sarc.calpoly.edu/.

About the Invasive Pest Council

The IPC comprises a broad range of farming organizations committed to supporting efforts to prevent the introduction of invasive pests in California. The coalition works with government officials, local farmers and residents when eradication of an invasive pest is necessary, to ensure the program is not only effective but also safe for communities and environmentally friendly and protective of organic farms. The coalition has existed for a little more than a year.

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