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RE: CENTRAL COAST COTTON CONFERENCE

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The Central Coast Cotton Conference explores “New Frontiers”

Cotton was once king in the Golden State. But over the past six years, the industry has changed. Acreage has declined, production costs have sky-rocketed and now the state is in a draught. Most growers have all but given up producing a once lucrative commodity but many have not. For those who are staying the course, research, education and new technology are more critical than ever.

But with educational resources and continuing education almost as scarce as California water, where can growers, consultants and PCAs get the information and support they need to stay in business? The Central Coast Cotton Conference is the answer.

“As California’s cotton industry narrows to a strategic level, only the most efficient producers will survive,” said Bruce Roberts. Roberts is the J.G. Boswell Chair of Agronomy at California State University, Fresno and also a member of the conference steering committee.

“Staying on top of every new development in this dynamically changing industry is the only way to sustain economic viability. Cotton growers who don’t keep up with the changing times, might as well park their pickers,” Roberts added.

Roberts and others believe that the Central Coast Cotton Conference is more important now than ever. California Cotton Growers and Ginners Association president Earl Williams calls it a “must meeting for cotton growers, PCAs and allied industry groups.”

The annual conference is the only meeting that focuses on California cotton production. But to keep up with the changing times, in 2009 the meeting will expand its focus to include presentations on other field crops and topics that can be applied to other field crops such as corn, wheat, alfalfa and processing tomatoes.

The theme for 2009 is “New Frontiers: Innovative production strategies for a changing industry.” Topics will explore new technologies to help growers maximize production while minimizing costs; adapting new technologies such as precision farming; implementing integrated farming solutions; and water issues. The conference will also include sessions on production and agronomy and industry outlook and updates.

According to Lowell Zelinski – conference director and creator – the decision to address other field crops was made to increase value for participants.

“Many growers who have typically grown primarily cotton are now growing other field crops or stopped permanently or temporarily producing cotton,” Zelinski said. “By including topics on other field crops we hope to expand our potential audience as well as make the conference more valuable for cotton growers who produce other crops and PCAs who work with crops other than cotton.”

Zelinski added that since there isn't a field crop production conference, it's also a great opportunity for field crop growers to participate in a production meeting and earn continuing education credits.

New topics include presentations on:

- The biology of soil fertility
- How changes in the crop mix influence insect pests
- A farming systems approach to weed management
- Crop biotechnology update
- Precision farming technology
- Water outlook for 2009 for San Joaquin Valley agriculture
- Tips for integrating cotton production with corn, wheat and processing tomatoes

The conference also offers an oceanfront welcome reception featuring great food and Paso Robles wineries, a golf tournament at the Avila Beach Resort in Avila Beach, Calif. and a custom Ag-Venture tour featuring a tour of working farms on the Central Coast. The 2009 meeting is sponsored by Western Farm Press, Bayer CropScience, Precision Ag, Inc., Nufarm Americas, Inc., the California Cotton Growers & Ginners Association, DowAgroSciences/Phytogen, Monsanto, Oro Agri, Inc., Wilbur-Ellis Company, Calcot, Dupont, Case IH, Supima and Lakeland Dusters Aviation.

Sponsors and exhibitors are still being accepted and registration is open. For complete details about the conference or to register, sponsor or exhibit, visit www.cottonconference.com or call (805) 239-8200.