**Field Crops IPM Program in Central Arizona: Partnering with Academic Units of UA**

The goal of the field crops program in central Arizona is to provide timely, unbiased, science-based information, in collaborative efforts, to help stakeholders solve problems, increase economic viability and address natural resource use issues. I would like to broaden and expand the reach of my agricultural Extension work by collaborating with an equivalent counterpart at the University to transfer technology from different research programs to growers, pest control and crop management advisors and ag industry representatives; and to seek related research and Extension grants for the field crop program. An expanded relationship between Cooperative Extension and academic units at the University can bridge a gap between what is needed and what is available of applied research and technologies for field crop clientele in Arizona.

There is over 700,000 acres of field crops in central Arizona and it is valued at nearly 1.5 billion dollars (USDA-NASS 2011). A Majority of 1,125 growers, 204 registered Pest Control Advisors (PCAs) and 866 certified private and commercial pesticide applicators are managing these acreages (AZ Department of Agriculture 2011).

Arizona’s agricultural producers and professionals face significant challenges producing high quality food and fiber in desert agroecosystems, including water and irrigation issues, crop and pest management questions, and fluctuating markets. They rely on the timely, unbiased, science-based information provided through UA Cooperative Extension to remain productive, profitable, and competitive. Recently, higher commodity prices for cotton, alfalfa, and wheat have caused many growers to switch their operations to crops that they are less familiar with or have not produced for a long time. Also, new PCAs have entered the market with less experience than seasoned veterans.

I started my job on April 15, 2011. To plan, develop and implement the Field Crops IPM program, I conducted needs assessment surveys in 2011 in central Arizona (Maricopa, Pinal and Pima counties; and some PCAs in Yuma and La Paz counties who operate in central AZ). The results of the needs assessment surveys indicated interests in education and/or research opportunities on pest management and agronomic topics like insect sampling, pest biology and identification, economic treatment thresholds, pest resistance, pesticide efficacy, biological control, nutrition management, crop rotations, water use management, equipment and new technologies. The survey indicated a high level of concern about number of insect pests in cotton and alfalfa, to a lesser extent for corn, and barley / wheat. Respondents indicated a high level of concern about nematodes, broadleaf and grassy weeds in alfalfa, cotton, corn, barley and wheat.