USU Extension Specialist Receives Grant for Agricultural Water Conservation Research

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USU EXTENSION SPECIALIST RECEIVES GRANT FOR AGRICULTURAL WATER CONSERVATION RESEARCH

Matt Yost, a Utah State University Extension specialist, recently received a New Innovator Award from the Foundation for Food and Agriculture. This award is designed to give early-career faculty members the investment needed to establish scientific research projects.

The grant will fund the establishment of three long-term research and demonstration sites where agriculture water optimization can be studied. At these sites, over 150 different combinations of pivot irrigation technology, irrigation rates, crop genetics, tillage and crop management practices will be evaluated to identify winning combinations that will help optimize water use in agriculture. The three research sites will be located in Cedar City, Logan and Vernal.

According to Yost, several technologies and practices have shown potential in conserving water, but there are few studies that examine the results when multiple technologies and practices are combined or “stacked.” “In most cases, it is impractical for all of these practices to be implemented simultaneously,” he said. “This project is important because identifying individual practices or combinations of practices that produce the greatest water savings is of high importance for irrigators in Utah.”

According to Yost, if certain combinations of these technologies and practices prove economical, effective and feasible, applied water in agriculture could be reduced by nearly 20 percent, resulting in annual savings of nearly 20 billion gallons of water.

According to the Foundation for Food and Agriculture, this project was selected for funding because it is a holistic approach to studying agriculture water optimization, and the knowledge and insights that could be gained will likely have a significant impact on water use efficiency for agricultural systems across the western United States.

The Foundation for Food and Agriculture awarded $300,000, matching the $300,000 that Yost and USU Extension were able to raise in collaboration with several organizations, including two conservancy districts, two soil and water conservation districts, Senninger Irrigation and the Utah Division of Water Rights.

For more information about USU Extension projects, visit http://extension.usu.edu/.

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