



## WESTERN SARE SOUTHWEST SUBREGIONAL CONFERENCE

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# Economist Highlights Signposts Producers Should Heed in Future

As challenges in agriculture arise, there will be an increasing need for multiple producers to work together, coordinating their production to provide a consistent supply of quality products.

That's the observation of Russ Tronstad, University of Arizona economist, speaking to participants at the Western SARE Southwest Subregional Conference in Albuquerque June 10 and 11.



Russ Tronstad, University of Arizona Extension economist.

Tronstad cited a series of other challenges and opportunities producers and their support agencies might keep an eye on for the future.

For example, he said, crop production in the U.S. Southwest will increasingly be impacted by climate change, pathogens and insects and

water as a limiting factor. For livestock, key considerations will be processing issues and environmental impacts. In addition, producers will need to stay current with a wide range of changes in agriculture, such as technology in resistant varieties, the evolution of producer groups and changing consumer tastes and behaviors.

Tronstad, whose research interests include agricultural marketing, risk management, international trade and operations research methods, said that over the next 10 years, achieving greater economic efficiencies and the efficiencies of systems will be important as will coordinating markets with environmental issues and legal issues near urban centers.



Three basic business approaches producers might consider are:

- operations efficiencies, including low-cost strategies
- product leadership – being first with new products
- customer intimacy

If Western SARE were to receive additional funding of \$1 million, Tronstad suggested targeting mid-size producers, providing them with help figuring out business strategies and how to invest off-farm income in the farm itself. SARE might also focus on issues related to agriculture near urban areas and cross-commodity research.

And when it comes to overcoming barriers for underserved audiences, he said SARE must be aware of and acknowledge cultural differences. And it needs to provide these audiences with education, including grant writing assistance.

“They need help developing a good feel for a plan of work and an understanding of the benefits of funded projects,” he said.