

CLIMATE ACTION AND AGRICULTURE SYMPOSIUM

May 30, 2019 • 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM • California State University-San Marcos

Speaker Titles and Biographies

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Daniel Sumner, Ph.D.

Director of the University of California Agricultural Issues Center and Frank H. Buck, Jr., distinguished Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics at University of California, Davis

Sumner was raised on a fruit farm in Suisun Valley, California. His B.S. in Agricultural Management is from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and his Ph.D. in economics is from the University of Chicago. Before returning to California about three decades ago, Sumner served at the President's Council of Economic Advisers and as the Assistant Secretary for Economics (Chief Economist) at USDA, where he supervised economics, statistics and forecasting and led USDA's economic analysis of agricultural issues.

Laurent Ahiablame, Ph.D.

*Director and Water Quality/Management Advisor,
University of California Cooperative Extension, San Diego*

Dr. Laurent Ahiablame completed his B.S. in Bioenvironmental Engineering at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in 2006. He moved to Indiana to pursue a Master's degree at Purdue University, where he subsequently took a Ph.D. position and graduated in 2012. For his graduate studies, Dr. Ahiablame was awarded the Outstanding Ph.D. Student prize in 2012. In 2013, he moved to Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, as an Assistant Professor and then to South Dakota State University in 2014 as a Grassland Hydrologist and Assistant Professor. In 2017, Dr. Ahiablame moved to his current position at the University of California, where he works as the Director of Agriculture and Natural Resources Division San Diego Office and Water Quality/Management Advisor.

Puja Batra, Ph. D.

Principal, Batra Ecological Strategies

Puja Batra, Ph.D. is an ecologist who uses integrated approaches to solve problems of sustainable development, bringing together science, markets, policy, and innovation to stem the loss of healthy ecosystems. She has worked in several countries across three continents with a work portfolio that cuts across some of the planet's most urgent and interrelated issues: biodiversity loss, natural resource degradation, local economies, food security, and climate change. She is currently working in San Diego County on mechanisms for scaling up climate smart agriculture. Puja holds a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Michigan State University, and a B.A. in Biology from University of Texas.

Speaker Titles and Biographies

Ha Dang

*Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights and Measures,
County of San Diego Department of Agriculture, Weights & Measures*

Ha Dang is the Agricultural Commissioner and Sealer of Weights and Measures of the County Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures (AWM). She works with a dedicated team of 175 staff to protect human health and safety, support a \$1.8 billion agricultural industry, and promote fair business competition and a sustainable environment by gaining regulatory compliance through outreach and collaboration. On the agricultural side, her team makes sure pesticides are safely used, verify that agricultural products leaving San Diego for worldwide markets are pest-free and that produce sold at Certified Farmers Markets are locally grown and organic as claimed. On the weights & measures side, her team makes sure a variety of commercial devices including gas pumps, scales, and taximeters are operating correctly and verify price accuracy in retail stores.

Stephanie Ewalt

Recycling Specialist II, County of San Diego Department of Public Works

After earning a Master's Degree in Environmental Anthropology, Stephanie began a career at the County of San Diego in early 2007 as a Recycling Specialist for the Department of Public Works. Stephanie currently manages the County's residential and mid-scale composting programs, food waste and donation program, Livestock and Land program, and the Construction and Demolition recycling programs. Stephanie also prepares the county's integrated waste management planning documents. These documents provide guidance on how the County is performing in meeting their State mandated landfill capacity, as well as their plans for expanding organics processing infrastructure to meet new State greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Eric Larson

Executive Director, San Diego County Farm Bureau

Eric Larson is the Executive Director of the San Diego County Farm Bureau. He has held that position since January 1997. Eric began working in San Diego County's agricultural industry in 1971 in various capacities in production and sales. Previous community experience includes two terms as a member of the Carlsbad City Council and as a director of the Carlsbad Municipal Water District, the San Diego County Water Authority, and the Encina Wastewater Authority.

Ramiro E. Lobo

Farm Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension San Diego County

Ramiro Lobo has been the Small Farm and Agricultural Economics Advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension in San Diego County since 1997. His primary responsibility is to conduct research and educational activities to educate and support small scale agricultural producers in San Diego County. As a small Farms and Agricultural Economics Advisor, Ramiro's work focuses primarily on educating small scale producers on topics related to agricultural business and risk management, new crop development and evaluation, new entry grower startup information, market development through agricultural tourism and direct marketing efforts, and farm and pesticide education. His current research and extension efforts have focused on the evaluation of several cultivars and production practices and systems for backyard and commercial production of Pitahaya or dragon fruit (*Hylocereus sp.*) and coffee (*Coffea arabica*) in Southern California; the evaluation of water/irrigation requirements for blueberries and pitahaya/dragon fruit. In addition, he has also conducted needs assessment of farmers in San Diego County and worked on the promotion of agricultural tourism and urban agriculture as viable commercial enterprise alternatives for local farmers.

Speaker Titles and Biographies

Mary Matava

Agronomist and Owner, Agri Service

Mary Matava is an agronomist and the owner of Agri Service, which operates compost facilities in Southern California. With more than 35 years of experience assessing the agronomic suitability of Southern California soils and over 20 years of experience recycling organics, Mary is a leading expert in soil assessment, sustainable soil amendment practices, green waste recycling, and facility management. To date Agri Service has processed over 1 million tons of green waste and continues to advocate for improving Zero-Waste practices.

Jeanne Merrill

Policy Director, California Climate and Agriculture Network

Jeanne Merrill has over 20 years of experience in agricultural, environmental and energy policy advocacy at the state and national levels. Since 2009, she has served as Policy Director with the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN). Prior to her time with CalCAN, Jeanne worked with Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in Wisconsin, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), Greenpeace U.S. and Pesticide Watch. She holds a B.A. in political science from U.C. San Diego and an M.S. in Land Resources from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She lives with her husband and daughter in Alameda, CA.

Martina Skjellerudsveen (Shell-eh-rude-sve-en)

Agricultural Outreach Specialist, Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County

Martina Skjellerudsveen has a MS degree in Agro Environmental Management from Aarhus University, Denmark. She moved to the US in the fall of 2016 and started working at the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County spring of 2017. She is dedicated to promoting farming as a part of solving climate change.

Larry Slominski

Owner, LTS Solar Energy

Larry Slominski is a leading solar electric industry professional with a successful record of developing, designing, and installing projects for commercial agriculture, water district and residential customers. As a professional mechanical engineer, he has a broad understanding of energy planning and engineering issues. His experience includes authoring the first 5 year National Energy Plan as the National Energy Planner for the Federated States of Micronesia and instituting a power plant energy audit program for the Massachusetts Dept. of Public Utilities. Today he will share his knowledge and experience in "Farming the Sun" – a financial and environmental win for California.