Partners on irrigation and crops management
By Ron Rosati, NCTA Dean

Water efficiency and technologies for irrigation management are keys to crop success, particularly to the farm’s bottom line.

The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is continually seeking methods for cost savings in our farming operation here at the college in Curtis. Cropping systems and irrigation management methods are key components to the curriculum for our agronomy and irrigation technician students.

Producers, students, agriculturalists and policy leaders are invited to an on-farm field day August 4 near Sutherland, Nebraska, called “Real Farmers, Real Experience Field Day.”

NCTA is a partner in this field day which is hosted by the Nebraska Water Balance Alliance (NEWBA). The field day will be the outdoor, summer-time version to a similar workshop NCTA hosted here in February on soil probes, water measuring devices and new technologies for irrigation management.

NCTA and NEWBA had about 150 producers, vendors and attendees at NCTA’s Nebraska Agriculture Industry Education Center for the winter-time workshop. Also last winter, NEWBA shared information in a seminar along with our University of Nebraska partners at the West Central Research and Extension Center at North Platte.

So, it’s fitting that early next month, farmers will see get to see part two of this educational outreach in action. Agricultural producers from the region, including host Roric Paulman of Paulman Farms, will share success stories and lessons learned in implementing new technologies.

“Our goal is to give producers that opportunity to have frank discussions and see actual results,” explains Larry Umberger of Grant, NEWBA vice-chairman. Umberger is general manager of Midwest Electric Cooperative Corporation (MECC), and has been an active part of the NEWBA group since its inception.

He says the field day discussions should point to economically feasible, water-saving insights.

“I think one of the most important things that we learn from farmers in water restricted areas is balance,” Umberger shared in a NEWBA news release. “Irrigators rotate crops based on their allocations of water for the year. One year they may raise beans, the next maybe corn or wheat.

“They also know what's going on below the surface in their fields. That is why many of these farmers use moisture probes and know what the water holding capacity is in all of their fields. This is how they can successfully farm well into the future.”

Consider spending a day at the “Real Farmers, Real Experience” NEWBA Field Day. An agenda, map and RSVP link are featured at www.nebraskawaterbalance.com. Organizers are asking for your reservations by Tuesday, July, 28. I know this will be an outstanding educational opportunity with our partners at NEWBA. I look forward to seeing you there!

Additionally, on the topic of irrigation, NCTA again is offering classes and a one-year certification for irrigation technicians. The partnership with Reinke Manufacturing provides scholarships to students in conjunction with local
Reinke dealers. There is strong demand in the industry for skilled technicians in the workforce. For more details, see ncta.unl.edu or call us at 1-800-3-CURTIS.

**NCTA Mission:**

*The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is devoted to a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology, food and related industries. The college provides open access to innovative technical education resulting in associate degrees, certificates, diplomas and other credentials.*

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*Media inquiries to:*
Ron Rosati, PhD, Dean of NCTA, 308-367-5200
Mary Crawford, NCTA News, 308-367-5231, Mcrawford@unl.edu
Dean's.Column.07.20.15