Welcome aboard to several new faculty in the ESSM and SCSC departments. Dr. Xue-jun Dong started as our cropping systems Assistant Professor in Uvalde on September 3rd. Dr. Tim Steffens is transitioning to his new role in a joint range science position with West Texas A&M with a 40% assignment in our department as Assistant Professor and Range Specialist in Extension with an office at Amarillo as of October 1st. James Jackson, Extension Program Specialist I, started at Stephenville on Oct 1st. Dr. Anil Somenahally will be starting as Assistant Professor of Soil Science at Overton in late October. Dr. Morgan Russell, will begin her work at San Angelo as Assistant Professor and Range Specialist beginning in January and Jourdan Bell will start as Assistant Professor and Extension Crops Specialist at Amarillo on January 1st. Thanks to the search committees for their diligent efforts and to the participants in the search process. Please make sure you take a bit of time to help each get acquainted with your work and A&M as they arrive.

We are recruiting for ESSM Spatial Sciences and will be conducted a second interview with Dr. Lawing in October. Dr. Claudio Casola interviewed for the Forest Genomics position during that same time. We are also recruiting for a Spatial Soil and Water Management faculty member in SCSC, a Weed Scientist in SCSC, and Extension Turf Specialist position at Dallas. As you can tell we have been busy recruiting to refill our capacity. We still have much to accomplish as Dr. Dan Fromme has announced his plans to retire from his Extension Specialist Role in Corpus Christi in January. We also are actively recruiting for a new Department Head for ESSM. The search committee has been actively recruiting candidates from the best around the world and we expect to begin reviewing candidates in mid-October.

Thanks to the promotion and tenure teams for both departments. Dr. David Stelly and Dr. Brad Wilcox led the charge for four mid-term reviews, five promotions with tenure and four promotion packages between the two departments. All have been forwarded to the Dean/Director and AgriLife Committee. This is one of the most important decisions that a department makes and the efforts toward a professional evaluation are greatly appreciated.

We are working through the internal process for budgeting in AgriLife based on a 10-90 guideline rather than an 80-20 guideline that has been in effect for the past several years. This will require more interaction with other departments and administration as we fill future positions and allow AgriLife to be more strategic in the allocation of resources. This will allow for increased emphasis on water issues and other high priority areas. Future hires at the College level will be based on a 9 or 10 month appointment.

It was great to host our new faculty and the recent tenure recipients and promotion recipients form both Departments. Congratu-(continued next page)
lations to all that were promoted or tenured on Sept 1st, along with our new faculty members. We were well represented by award recipients at the annual Dean’s Awards ceremony. Congratulations to all!

This month I had the opportunity to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the High Plains ARS research facility at Bushland and to view some of the ongoing research and outreach in collaboration with our faculty. It is amazing to see the impact that research in that region has had on agricultural productivity there and in similar climatic zones around the world. Congratulations to all that have set such high expectations for our future efforts at Bushland. I was also able to participate in the SICNA meetings in Lubbock and get a feel for the future of the sorghum industry and how our research in being incorporated in solving problems.

From a national perspective, I have had the opportunity to work with several organizations this year to organize symposia on major issues. As President Elect of Crop Science Society of America I am coordinating special topics on hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico and politics in Science for our National meetings in November where I will become President. I am also coordinating a D.C. symposium sponsored by the Council of Scientific Society Presidents on meeting population challenges in the future. I will be providing a keynote talk on the future of plant breeding at Texas A&M at the International Plant Breeding Meetings in Turkey in November. Along with representatives of our forestry accreditation team I will be presenting our case for reaccreditation to the SAF committee in Charleston in October. I participated in SACNAS national conference in San Antonio October 4th, to connect with potential students and scientists with Hispanic and Native American background.

Preparation for our College of Agriculture Tailgate has been going full steam. It is always rewarding to see our various student organizations step up and make these such wonderful events. See you there! For ESSM the fall picnic is Oct 22 from 5-7. The Aggie Mixer at the Tri-Societies meetings in Tampa will be on Tuesday at the Green Iguana. See the note for getting registered for our Harvest Festival at the Wellborn Community Center Friday evening October 18. Join in dancing and reminiscing and great food. Recent rains across the state have not solved the drought, but certainly made for a more pleasant start to fall. Wishing you all the very best as you work to make a difference for Texas and the World.

John Blake
DOD: 9/18/2013
Beaumont, TX
AGRO

Department Head, Soil and Crop Sciences
dbaltensperger@ag.tamu.edu
Xuejun Dong
Assistant Professor of Crop Physiology
Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension, Uvalde, Texas

By: Lauren Thompson – 979.458.4044 – lauren.thompson@ag.tamu.edu

Xuejun Dong
The Soil and Crop Sciences Department at Texas A&M University is happy to announce that Dr. Xuejun Dong has joined the department as an Assistant Professor of Crop Physiology.

Dr. Dong will be based at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension center in Uvalde, Texas.

“While my work is based in Uvalde, I have enjoyed communicating with my colleagues in College Station,” Dr. Dong said. “I am looking forward to use the excellent facility at the Uvalde center to further my research on plant-water relations, which has been my central research interest since my studies in the ‘90s.” he said.

His current research is focused on the fundamental understanding of soil-plant water relations for row crops like corn, wheat and cotton. The work has direct relevance to optimal irrigation scheduling and sustainable crop management in southern Texas and beyond.

Dr. Dong was born and raised in rural China. He received his B.A. in Plant Physiology from Lanzhou University, an M.S. in Ecophysiology from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and then his Ph.D. in Ecophysiology from the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

He and his wife, Chunyun Zhang have three children and were excited to make the move from North Dakota to Texas.
Researchers identify light quality effects on genes regulating branching

AMARILLO – The naked eye might not be able to discern the difference between red and far-red wavelengths of sunlight, but plants can, and they use the light to alter their overall architecture, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Research scientists.

Dr. Scott Finlayson, Texas A&M AgriLife Research scientist, examines plants in the red and far-red light study.

The study capturing these findings will be featured in the journal Plant Physiology in October, and the researchers also outline how this knowledge could help in designing crops in the future to adapt to variable growing environments, such as drought, high temperatures and grazing.

The study identifies the role of the plant growth regulator, abscisic acid, in suppressing axillary bud outgrowth in response to reduced red to far-red light ratio, which plants usually sense under dense canopies, said Dr. Scott Finlayson, the principal investigator and Texas A&M University soil and crop sciences associate professor in College Station.

Finlayson said not much is known about the branching or tillering process at the gene level and the study has practical applications to modify plant architecture, specifically tillering and biomass production in wheat, sorghum, forage grasses and other economically important crops.

The study was part of dissertation by Dr. Srirama Krishna Reddy, AgriLife Research assistant research scientist at Amarillo, under the supervision of Finlayson, also with AgriLife Research. The study also includes contributions from Dr. Jorge Casal, from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Srinidhi Holalu, a doctoral candidate at Texas A&M.

The research was supported by the National Science Foundation through a grant and also through AgriLife Research funds.

The entire article may be viewed by clicking on this leaf 🍃
While attending ASA, join us at the SCS Mixer

TAMU Soil & Crop Sciences Mixer

The Department of Soil & Crop Sciences invites you to join us for food, fun, and fellowship!

1708 East 7th Avenue * 813-248-9555
Street Car stop: 7th Ave and 17th Street
Street Car service until 10:30pm * $2.50 each way
SOIL & CROP SCIENCES

FALL HARVEST BASH 2013

WELLBORN COMMUNITY CENTER
WELLBORN, TX

October 18th
6:30-10 pm

JARROD STERRETT AND THE HIRED GUNS

Playing Texas and classic country, Rockabilly, and Americana/folk music.

J.Cody’s BBQ, BEER, LIVE MUSIC, DANCING

Tickets
$12 Per Person
$10 TAMU Students
$5 Children

Sponsors:

Aggie Turf Club

BUY TICKETS ONLINE at soilcrop.tamu.edu

More Information: 979.845.3041

This event is hosted by the Soil & Crop Sciences Department in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences at Texas A&M University.
You and your guest are invited to a Retirement Celebration honoring

Dr. Dan Fromme

Fish Fry
Friday, November 1st
6:00 pm
ASTREC Center
7707 Raymond Stotzer Parkway
College Station, Texas

Please RSVP by October 28th, 2013
dsutherland@ag.tamu.edu or 979-845-3041

2013

Oct. 13-16  AAIC Conference - Washington DC
Oct. 15-19  World Food Prize - Des Moines, IA
Oct. 17 & 18 COADC Fall Meeting
Oct. 18    SCSC Fall Harvest Bash at Wellborn Community Center
Nov. 3-8    ASA, CSSA, & SSSA International Annual Meetings - Tampa, FL
Nov. 10-14  Plant Breeding Congress
Nov. 17-19  Texas Seed Trade Association - Ft. Worth, TX
Nov. 28-29  THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
Dec. 9-13   American Seed Trade Association - Chicago, IL
Dec. 10-11  TPPA Conference - Brazos Center
Dec. 23-Jan.1 Christmas/New Year’s Holiday
Tailgate Time!

We will join the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences tailgate this Saturday.

Date: October 19, 2013
Tailgate Starts: 11:30am
Kickoff: 2:30pm
Location: The AgriLife Center, 556 John Kimbrough Boulevard
College Station, TX 77843
RSVP by Oct. 15

CLICK HERE TO RSVP