

Coexistence: Role of the University

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Coexistence

- **Coexistence**
 - to exist together or at the same time
 - to live in peace with each other
 - (Merriam-Webster Definition)
- **Coexistence** is the ability of farmers to make a choice between conventional, organic, and GE production while still being in compliance with legal obligations and purity standards i.e. meet market demands.



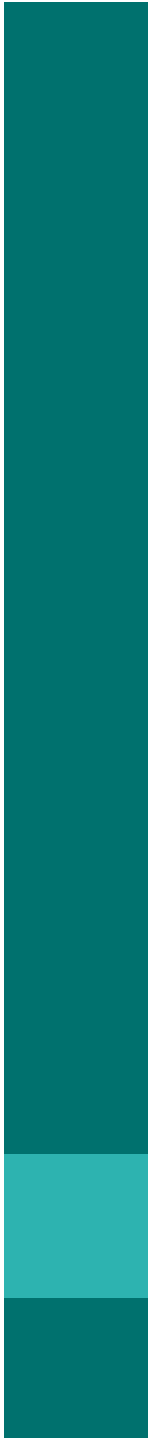
Land Grant University Mission

- Land grant universities were founded on serving citizens through research, education, and extension (outreach).
- Part of the mission is to provide **unbiased** information on which decisions can be based.
- Is this possible for an issue such as coexistence?



University Role

- Does the university have a role to play?
- If so, what is it?
 - Participate in a way that reflects the mission of the university.
 - Does not become advocates for one side versus another.
- Reality is that faculty are passionate about their research areas which makes it difficult.



Research Related to Coexistence

- Research
 - **Biology / Ecology – applied and basic**
 - **Economics**

 - Social science
 - Political science
 - Mathematics
 - Others



Teaching Related to Coexistence

- Formal classroom education
 - Many different perspectives within a university.
 - Faculty lack the background to crossover between political, social sciences and agricultural sciences to provide informed views.
 - Therefore, students graduate without exposure to the issue with understanding of all perspectives.
 - Even a greater problem at nonland grant universities where there may be no agricultural perspective.



Extension Efforts Related to Coexistence

- Outreach – general public
 - Outreach to the general public on this issue makes many educators uncomfortable because it is contentious and audiences can be disrespectful and disruptive.
 - Also, makes the administration uncomfortable.

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Extension Efforts Related to Coexistence

- Extension – agricultural clientele
 - Often extension faculty, especially at the local/county level, are aligned with a particular agricultural segment.
 - For example – conventional or organic
 - May feel the need to defend one position.



Coexistence: Recommendations

- Research:
 - Change the structure under which most research occurs.
 - Continue to provide science based information to inform the decisions but:
 - Include many disciplines not just biological sciences.
 - Form teams with diverse skills and opinions.
- Lot of the lip service for this concept but in reality not common.



Coexistence: Recommendations

- Teaching
 - Require all students to take genetics.
 - Many of the misconceptions are based on ignorance of basic genetics and biotechnology.
 - Develop courses that include faculty trained in different disciplines.
 - Allows students to challenge different perspectives but also have faculty present to correct misconceptions or misleading opinions.
 - Expose students to those impacted by the issue – growers, purchasers, etc.



Coexistence: Recommendations

- Outreach – general public
 - Develop a faculty speaker bureau from diverse disciplines but who can agree to the messages that are presented with respect for different opinions.
 - Train faculty for the situations that occur when facing a crowd that may disagree with the material presented.
- Extension – agricultural clientele
 - Develop materials that explain why coexistence is required.
 - Develop materials that will inform growers on the best management practices for coexistence.
 - These materials need to be very crop and location specific.



Coexistence: University Role

- Participating in coexistence research, education and the debate surrounding it is not for the faint of heart.
- The issues are contentious with many hidden agendas.
- It can be a mine field with negative consequences for a faculty member, so many choose not to be involved.

