# Managing Nitrogen Efficiently

A TRAV

umr

**Patrick Brown** 



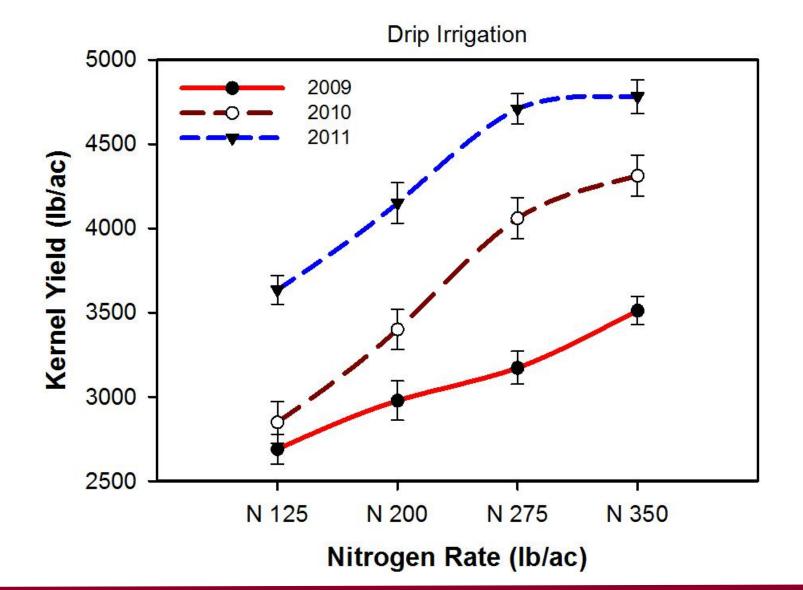


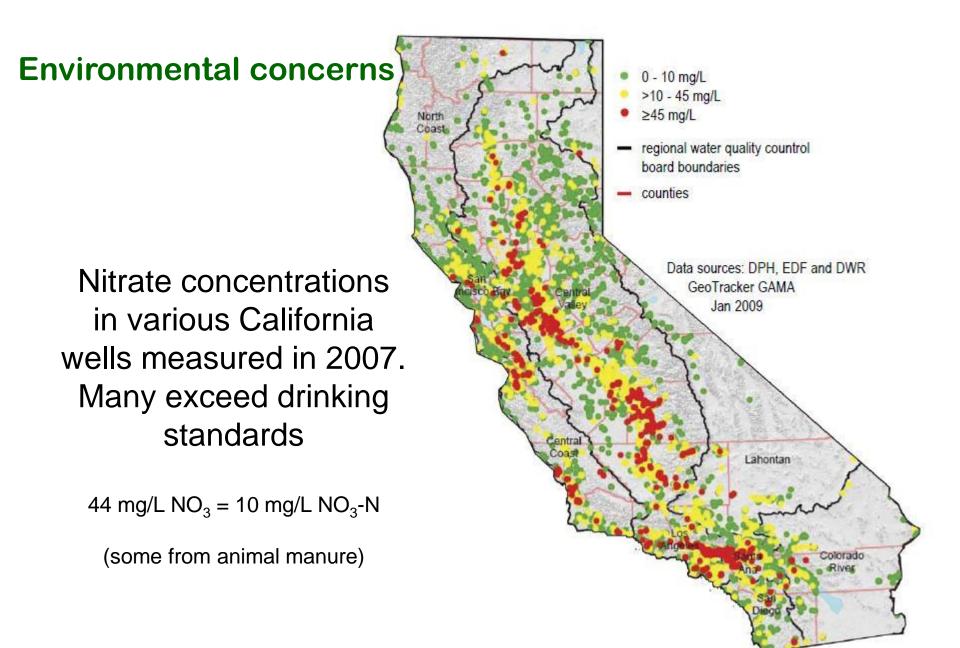
### Why the focus on Nitrogen?

- Essential for plant growth and critical for crop yield
  - N is critical for photosynthesis, protein formation and growth
  - Almonds are among the most N and K demanding of any crop.
- Nitrogen that escapes the orchard is a pollutant
  - Negative impacts of N on Californian water and air resources are well documented.
  - Regulatory controls on its use are imminent.
- Nitrogen management is complex
  - Application of fertilizer N (inorganic and organic) is a major cost
  - Current tools for monitoring and management are inadequate

#### Satisfy Demand-Prevent Losses-Maximize Efficiency?

## Nitrogen is essential for Almond yields





(Ekdahl and others, 2009)

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#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dairy Program

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-30

-70

6

Executive Officer's Report

Do I Need a Permit?

- → Next Regional Board Meeting 30 November-1/2 December 2011
- ->> New! Regional Board Meeting Dates for 2012
- ->> 12th Meeting of the Groundwater Monitoring Advisory Workgroup, 25 August 2011
- Notice of Public Hearing Proposed Non-Regulatory Basin Plan amendments
- Central Valley Dairy Representative Monitoring Program, Approval Letter and Response to Comments
- -> More Announcements...

#### IMPORTANT INFORMATION ...





Assessment Integrated Report



#### California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Coast Region

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Arnold Schwarzenegger Governor

59. The purpose of the nutrient management element of the Farm Plan is to eliminate or minimize nutrient discharges to groundwater and surface water to meet water quality standards using best practicable treatment or control, and to assure compliance with this Order. The nutrient management element of the Farm Plan must be certified by Appropriate professional certification, such as Certified Crop *Advisor to be protective of water quality...* 

60. The nutrient management element of the Farm Rian must include...

a. Average total crop nutrient demand and methods) of determination per crop;

b. Average total water demand per crop and total water applied per crop;

c. Monthly record of fertilizer applications per crop, including fertilizer type and quantity applied (including but not limited to fertilizers, compost, manufer and humic acids);

- d. Nitrate concentration of irrigation source water;
- e. Timing of fertilizer application to maximize crop uptake,
- f. Estimation of the amount of fertilizer applied in excess of crop needs,
- g. Estimation of excess or residual fertilizer/nutrients in the root zone at the end of the crop growing season;

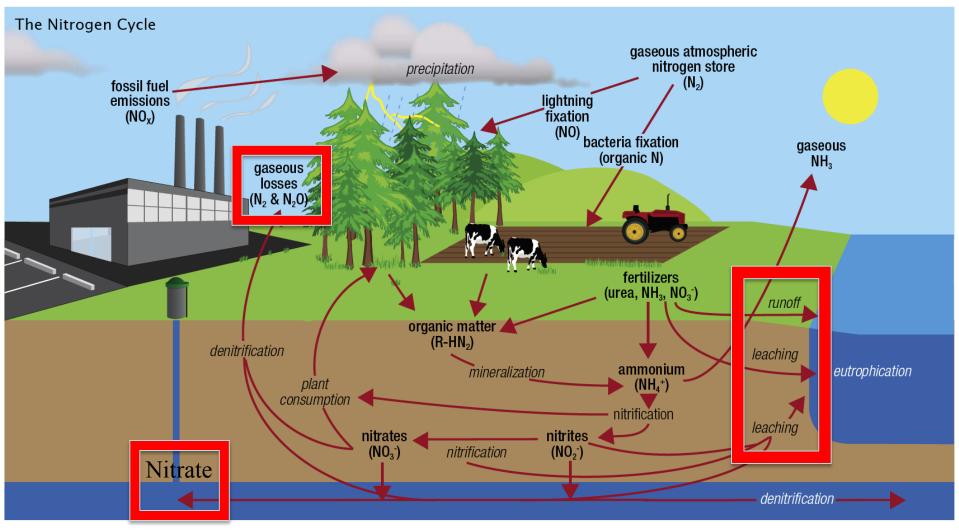
h. Identification of planned nutrient management practices (such as irrigation efficiency, nutrient budgeting, and

nutrient trapping) to eliminate or minimize nutrients in irrigation runoff or percolation to groundwater;

i. Identification of planned management practices related to fertilizer handling, storage, disposal, and mgnt



Linda S. Adams. Secretary for Environmental Protection The Nitrogen Cycle: Nitrogen is essential for all agriculture and all forms of nitrogen (N-fixation, chemical and biological) are subject to loss to varying degrees.



The nitrogen cycle illustrates the various forms and transformations of nitrogen compounds.

22 | JULY/AUGUST 2009 | Southwest Hydrology (Thomas Harter)

# Efficient Nutrient Management Approach -the 4 R's-



### Applying the Right Rate

Match demand with supply (all inputs- fertilizer, organic N, water, soil).

### At Right Time

• Maximize uptake minimize loss potential.

### In the Right Place

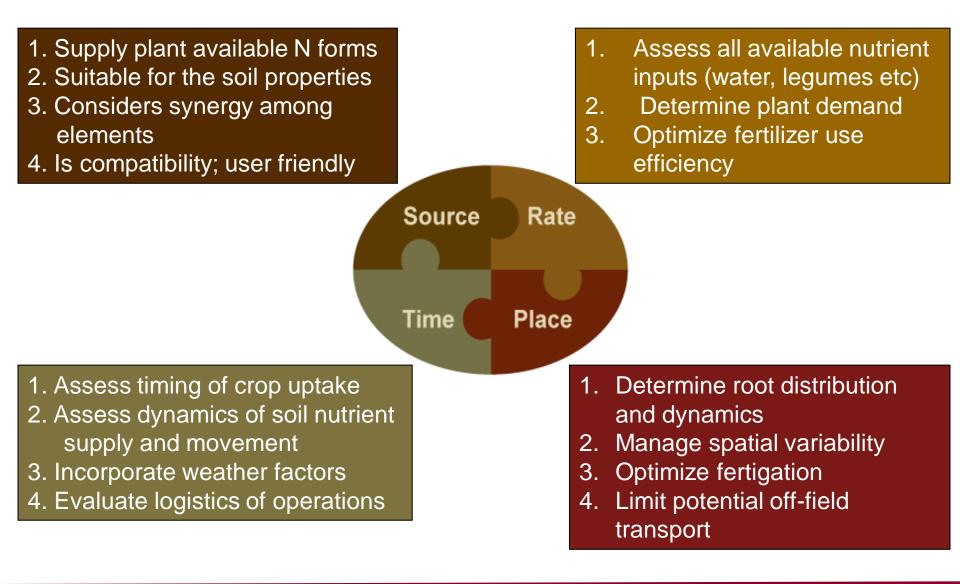
• Ensure delivery to the active roots.

#### Using the **Right Source**

• Maximize uptake minimize loss potential.

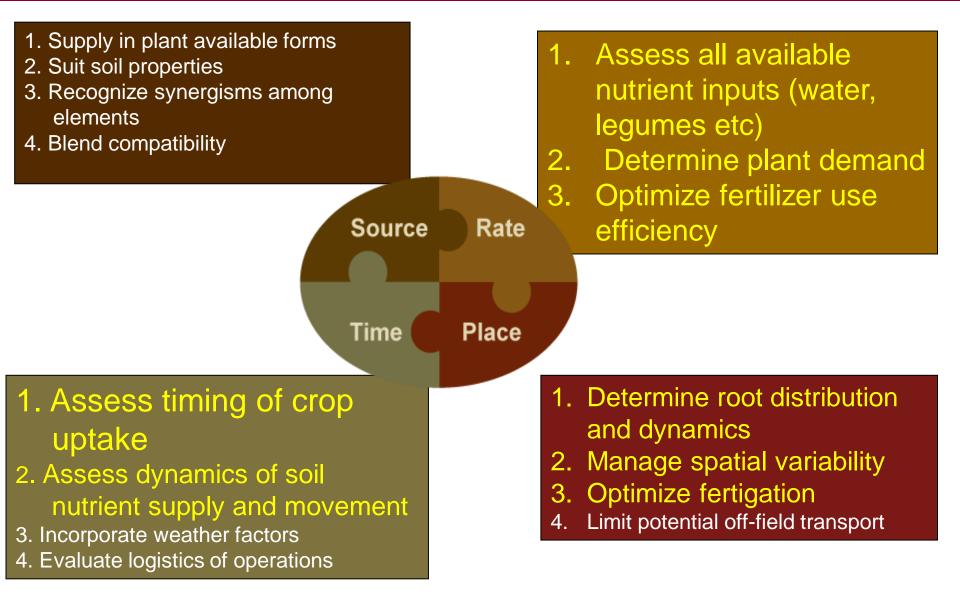
# The basic scientific principles of managing crop nutrients are universal





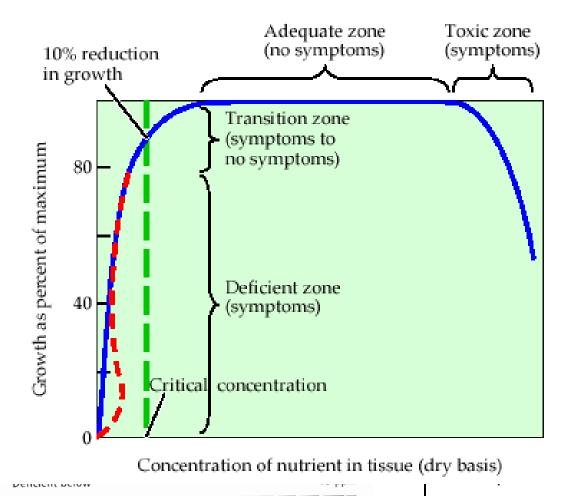
# The most relevant scientific principles of managing Almond nutrients are:





#### What do we know and how do we manage? Leaf Sampling and Critical Value Analysis





\*Critical values for boron deficiency and toxicity are currently being revised. Hull boron >300 ppm is excessive. Leaf sampling is not effective to determine excess boron.

cols are well defined pur leaves uadrant at 6' . analysis with standard Critical ed in Almond Production Manual als (N, K, B) nptoms (P, S, Mg, Ca, Mn, Zn, Fe,

#### results (NO R' S!)

n (Ni, Cl, Mo)

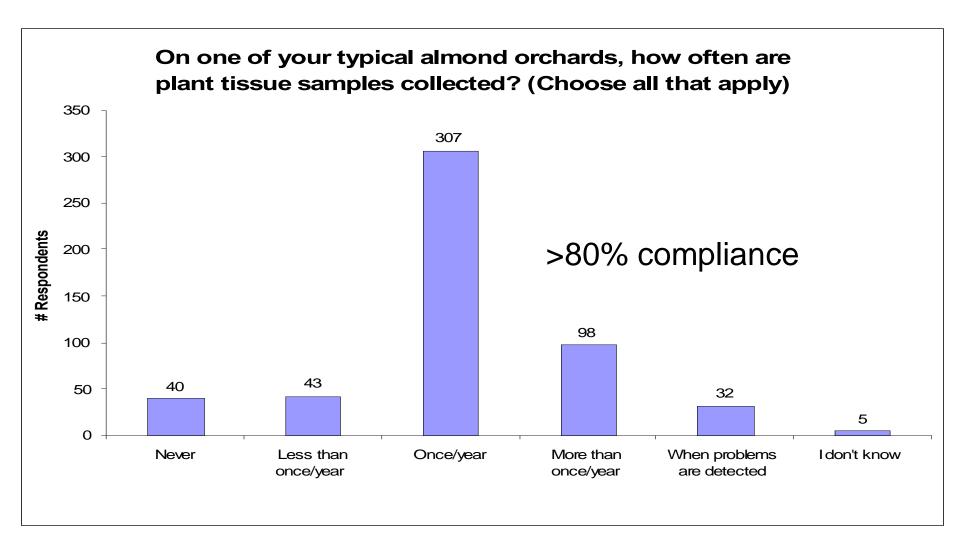
can indicate a shortage but cannot espond.

r decisions are currently based onI an 'estimate' of fertilizer needs

➢No guidance on Rate, Timing, Placement or Source

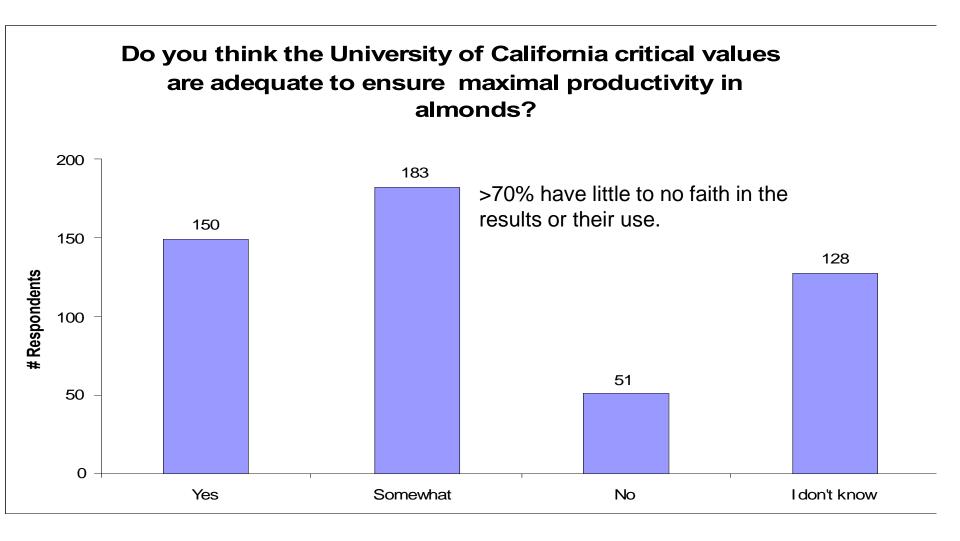
# Are tissue samples collected and if so how often?





Brown et al, 2004

# Are tissue samples being used to guide fertilizer management?





- originally defined as a means to identify when a crop is
   *`..just deficient..rather than just sufficient.. to define if, but not how much, fertilizer should be added..*
  - It was designed to detect deficiency.
  - It is not designed to determine how much fertilizer to apply
- the complexity of tissue sampling was recognized, but never adequately optimized for trees.
- limitations of the method and the utility of the approach have been mostly forgotten.

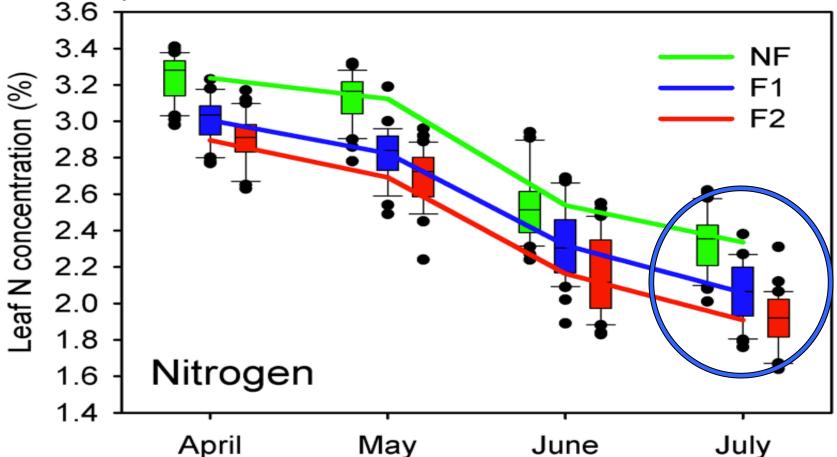
Which leaf is the best leaf? Should we target this local deficiecny with foliars?

NF

NF Spur

Deficient Fruiting Spur (F2)

### Critical Values are based on July/August sample. Early season CV's have not been validated.



Current Practice: Late summer sample. Too late for current season response. Too early for next season planning (yield potential is defined by winter and spring weather) Challenge: Develop early season sampling and interpretation methodologies.

### **Challenges of Sampling: Field Variability**

(768 individual tree samples. High producing 'uniform' orchard)



20

Typical Sampling: 1 pooled sample per management unit (Hypothetical) Field Mean 2.2% N (June): Critical Value 2.2% = OK?

**No!**: Full productivity can only be achieved when all individuals are above 2.2% What is the right target mean? (variability:response:cost:returns:yield)

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Challenge: Develop sampling protocols that incorporate variability, have a clear cost:return basis, while remaining cost effective.

## Summary: Tissue Testing for Almonds

#### Problems.

- Difficult to sample properly and hard to interpret. Current practice is a waste of money. Too few samples collected too late.
- Does not inform management practice
- UC critical values are probably correct but do not provide enough information at an orchard level

#### Solutions

- Develop methodology for early season sampling and interpretation
- Establish statistically valid sampling patterns and interpretation
- Develop improved lower cost (remote sensing, hand held meters etc).
- Integrate sampling with a nutrient budget approach.

### Alternatives?



## Efficiently replace the nutrients removed from the field

#### Estimate current year demand

- Last years yield, this years estimated yield, tree age, "common" sense
- Improved techniques are under development (remote sensing, modeling etc)
- Nutrient content of samples.

#### Measure and control inputs and losses

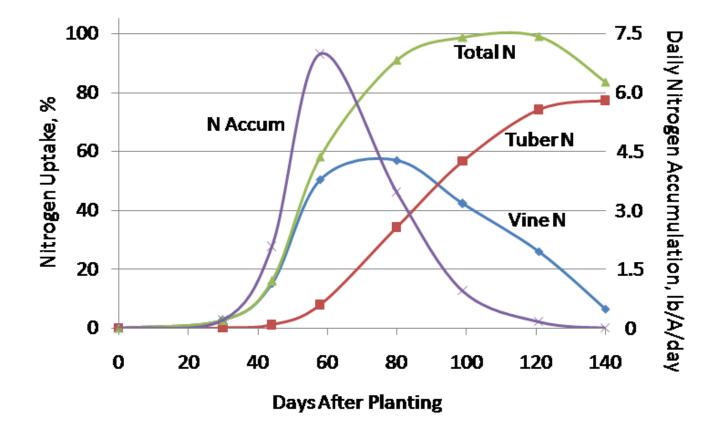
• Soil, fertilizer, irrigation, leaching, volatilization

#### Manage efficiencies and interactions

- Synchronization and location of nutrient applications
- Monitoring crop response

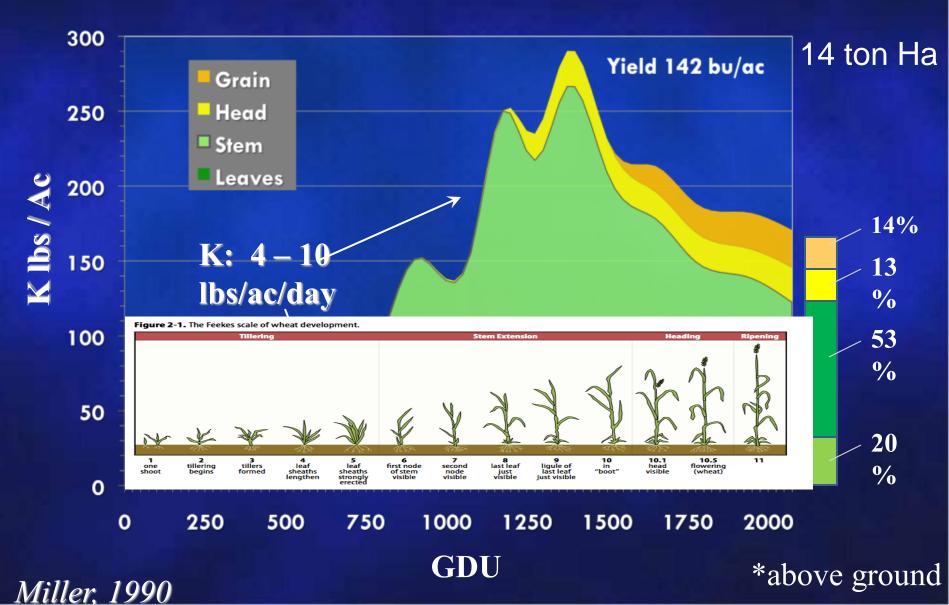
### How?

### Sequential Harvest Daily accumulation rates and plant parts (Russet Burbank potatoes, Oregon)



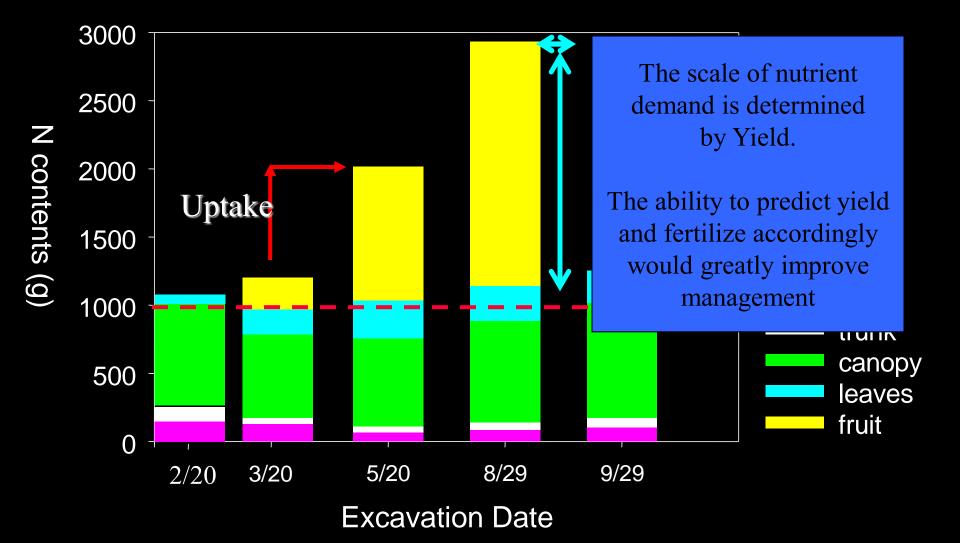


#### Sequential Harvest: Potassium Aerial Accumulation Wheat - California



# Sequential Whole Tree Harvest: 5 mature trees x 5 times in a year

# Whole Tree N Contents by Organ in Almond.



# Efficient Nutrient Management Approach - the 3 R's-



### Applying the Right Rate

- Match supply with demand (yield estimation)
- Determine nutrient content (leaf sampling)

## At Right Time

In-season fertilizer adjustment (leaf sampling and fruit development)

## In the Right Place

• Ensure delivery to the active roots. (Determine root distribution and activity. Determine water and nitrogen movement)

Leaf Sampling And Interpretation Methods For CA Almond Orchards. Sebastian Saa, UC Davis

**MARRO** 



MANA

# What do we currently do to manage our orchards?



# Sample in July



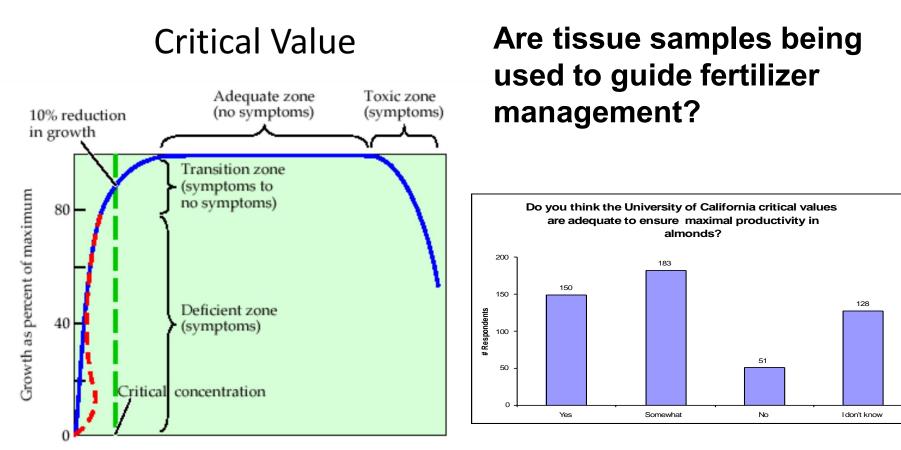
**Table 26.2**Critical nutrient levels (dry-weight basis) in almondleaves sampled in July.

Nitrogen (N) Deficient below	2×	2.0%
		2.2-2.5%
Adequate	SA ALMOND	2.2-2.370
Phosphorus (P)	PRODUCTION MANUAL	0.1-0.3%
Adequate		0.1-0.570
Potassium (K)		1.00/
Deficient below		1.0%
Adequate over		1.4%
Calcium (Ca)	HA CARDER	
Adequate over	the state	2.0%
Magnesium (Mg)		
Adequate over		0.25%
Sodium (Na)		
Excessive over		0.25%
Chlorine (Cl)		
Excessive over		0.3%
Boron (B)*		
Deficient below		30 ppm
Adequate		30-65 ppm
Excessive over		300 ppm
Copper (Cu)		- 22
Adequate over		4 ppm
Manganese (Mn)		
Adequate over		20 ppm
Zinc (Zn)		pp
Deficient below		15 ppm
Dencient below		

\*Critical values for boron dericiency and toxicity are currently being revised. Hull boron >300 ppm is excessive. Leaf sampling is not effective to determine excess boron.

# Problem Statement: Critical Values tell us little about management.





Concentration of nutrient in tissue (dry basis)



- Current Sampling Protocol is too late in year to make in season adjustments.
- Samples collected do not always represent the true nutrient status of the orchard as a whole.
- Our current CV's may not apply in all cases or may be wrong.





- Develop methods to sample in April and relate that number to July critical value.
- Develop method for grower to sample his field (recognizing that typical practice is only 1 sample per field is generally collected).
- Reevaluate the current CV's.

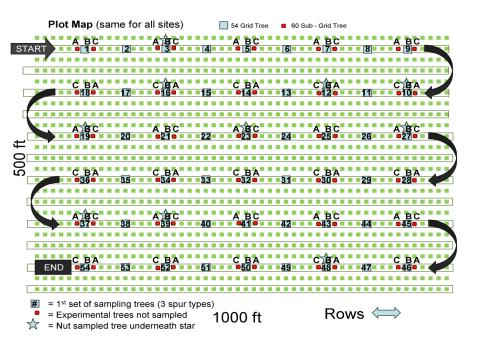




# Four sites from California's major almond producing regions

Location	Arbuckle	Modesto	Madera	Belridge
Tree Age	1998	1998	2000	1999
Varieties	NP – 50% B – 25% A – 12.5% C – 12.5%	NP – 50% A – 25% WC – 25%	NP - 50% C – 25% M – 25%	NP – 50% M – 50%
Spacing	22' x 18' (110 trees/ac)	21' x 21' (99 trees/ac)	21' x 17' (122 trees/ac)	24' x 21' (86 trees/ac)
Irrigation	Drip	Microsprinkler	Microsprinkler	Microsprinkler

## **Design and Sampling**



114 trees x 4 Sites x 3 years.

Yield.(About 1,130 data points)

 5 in-season nutrient samples.
 (8,500 x 11 = 93,500 data points)



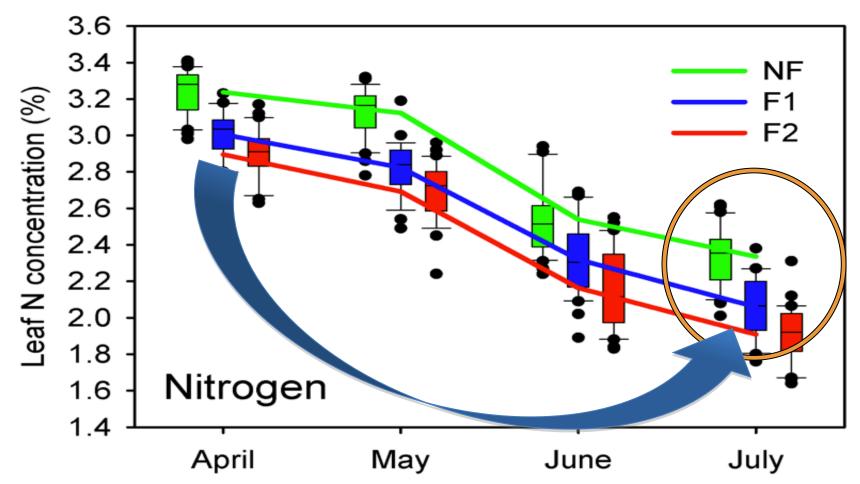




## **Time Problem.**



Can we sample in April and predict July?



Approach: Multi site, multi year, multi tissue and multi element analysis.



- Model one uses all the April information from F2 spurs to predict the July nitrogen value.
- Model two uses the nitrogen NF information from April to predict the July nitrogen value.
- Both models also predict what percentage of the trees are above or below the current July nitrogen critical value.
- Both models work well but we do not yet know which model is best (validation will be done next year).

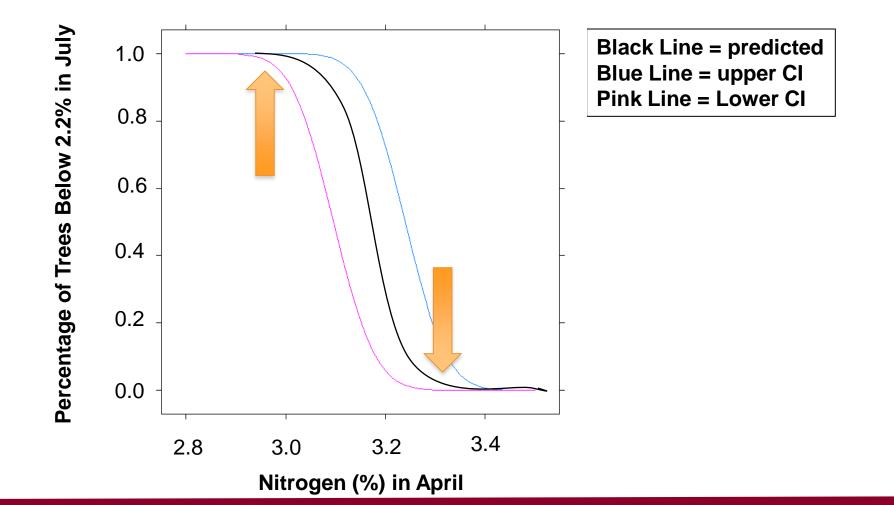
## **Results Cross-Validation Model 1**



Site	Year	July Nitrogen Predicted	July Nitrogen Observed
Arbuckle	8	2.4	2.3
Belridge	8	2.4	2.4
Madera	8	2.5	2.4
Modesto	8	2.4	2.4
Arbuckle	9	2.4	2.6
Belridge	9	2.4	2.4
Madera	9	2.6	2.4
Modesto	9	2.6	2.7
Arbuckle	10	2.4	2.5
Belridge	10	2.3	2.7
Madera	10	2.3	2.3
Modesto	10	2.4	2.5



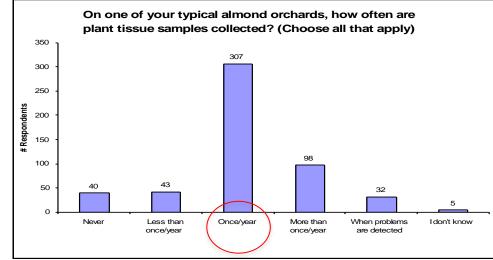
## Expected % of trees below 2.2% in July





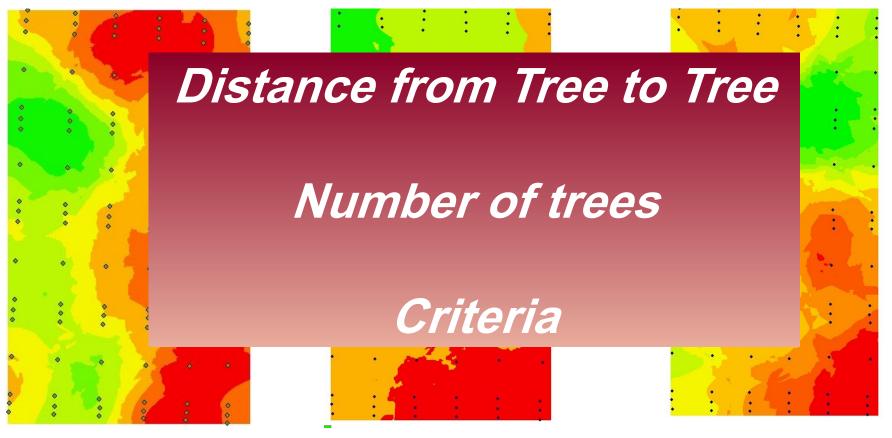


- Develop methods to sample in April and relate that number to July critical value.
- Develop a protocol for growers to sample their fields properly (recognizing that only 1 sample per field is generally collected).



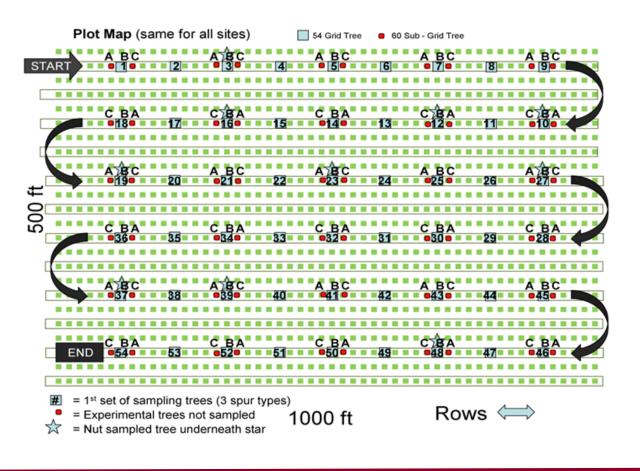


How do you represent the true nutrient status of your orchard as a whole? What is the best way to sample?





### →We attempt to test if and when trees are 'communicating'.





For the case of nitrogen, we could not detect tree to tree 'communication' in distances farther than 30 yards *(CA almond trees do not talk to each other much).* 

However, we do not know if there is 'communication' at shorter distances.

Then, "as conservative protocol" we propose that samples are collected at least 30 yards away.

# Number of pooled trees needed in April to estimate the true mean of Nitrogen.



Number of Acres	Trees needed at 95% Confidence	Trees needed at 90% Confidence
2	25	18
5	27	19
10	28	19
50	28	20
100	28	20

#### Note: 1 acre is assumed to be 100 trees

Pooled trees = Number of trees from which leaves must be collected and pooled into a single bag for a single nutrient analysis

# **Preliminary Sampling Criteria**



- Collect leaves from 18 to 28 trees in one bag.
- Each tree sampled at least 30 yards apart.
- In each tree collect leaves around the canopy from at least 8 well exposed spurs located between 5-7 feet from the ground.
- In April, collect samples at 8121 GDH +/- 1403 (43 days after full bloom (DAFB) +/- 6 days).
- if you would like to collect samples in July, then collect samples at 143 DAFB +/- 4 days.

- Develop methods to sample in April and relate that number to July critical value.
- Develop method for grower to sample his field (recognizing that only 1 sample per field is generally collected).











### We only had the Almond Fruit Production Manual table.

Nitrogen (N) Deficient below	4	2.0%
Adequate	AT MONTO	2.2-2.5%
Phosphorus (P)	ALMOND	<b>L</b> 12 21070
Adequate 7	PRODUCTION MANUAL	0.1-0.3%
Potassium (K)		
Deficient below		1.0%
Adequate over	V COLLECTION .	1.4%
Calcium (Ca)		
Adequate over		2.0%
Magnesium (Mg)		
Adequate over		0.25%
Sodium (Na)	SUPPORT OF ALBORITH AND ANTALA SPRONCES	
Excessive over		0.25%
Chlorine (Cl)		
Excessive over		0.3%
Boron (B)*		
Deficient below		30 ppm
Adequate		30-65 ppm
Excessive over		300 ppm
Copper (Cu)		
Adequate over		4 ppm
Manganese (Mn)		
Adequate over		20 ppm
Zinc (Zn)		
Deficient below		15 ppm

Table 26.2 Critical nutrient levels (dry-weight basis) in almond

\*Critical values for boron deficiency and toxicity are currently being revised. Hull boron >300 ppm is excessive. Leaf sampling is not effective to determine excess boron.



- We have developed two models to predict July Nitrogen concentration using April data.
- Both models measure orchard variability and calculate the percentage of the trees that will be above or below the current July critical value.
- In other words, both models can provide the information needed to maximize productivity.

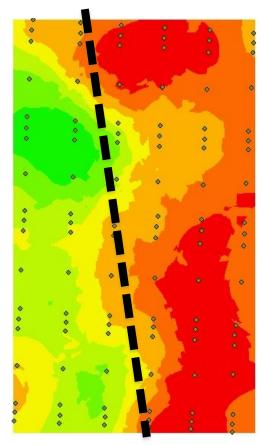


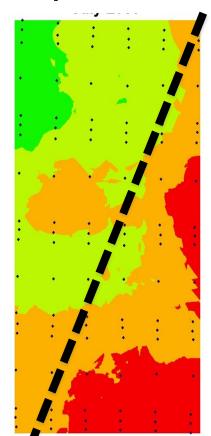
- However, guaranteeing maximal productivity does not guarantee maximal profitability nor best management.
- We have assumed that field variability exists and cannot be managed – that is not correct.
- To really optimize sustainability, leaf sampling and analysis and subsequent management must also consider economic and environmental factors.

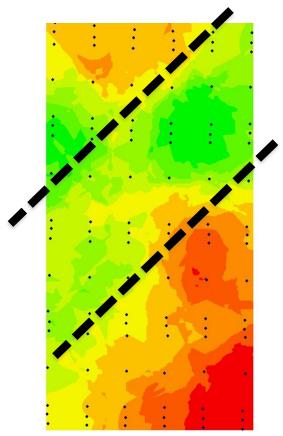
# **Conclusions: In the future**



We must not only recognize and interpret orchard variability, we should attempt to control (or reduce) it.









# Thanks!

Sebastian Saa
Emilio Laca
Patrick Brown

# **Nutrient Budget for Almond**

A DRAY

umr

Saiful Muhammad UC Davis



# Efficient Nutrient Management Approach -the 4 R's-



# Applying the Right Rate

• Match demand with supply (all inputs- fertilizer, organic N, water, soil).

#### At Right Time

• Maximize uptake minimize loss potential.

#### In the Right Place

• Ensure delivery to the active roots.

#### Using the **Right Source**

• Maximize uptake minimize loss potential.

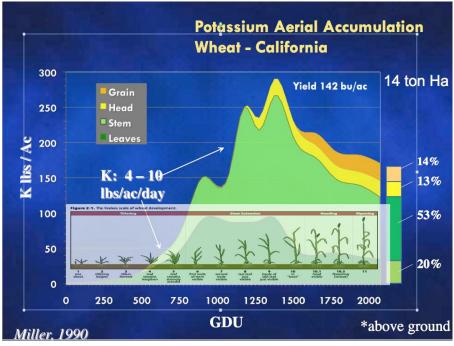
# **Determining the Right Rate**



### **Nutrient Budget Approach**

- Provides information on total annual demand
- Develops knowledge of growth and development and derives nutrient demand curves
- Provide information on nutrient uptake rate and timing

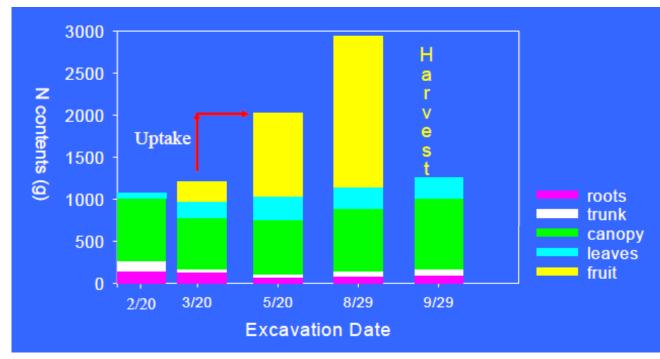




# Suitability of Almond for Nutrient Budget Management



- Mature almond tree is relatively determinate in growth pattern
- Majority of nutrients are partitioned to fruit
- Irrigation systems and fluid fertilizers have made ondemand fertilizer application easy



#### Patrick Brown unpublished data

# **Fertility Experiment**



#### Treatments

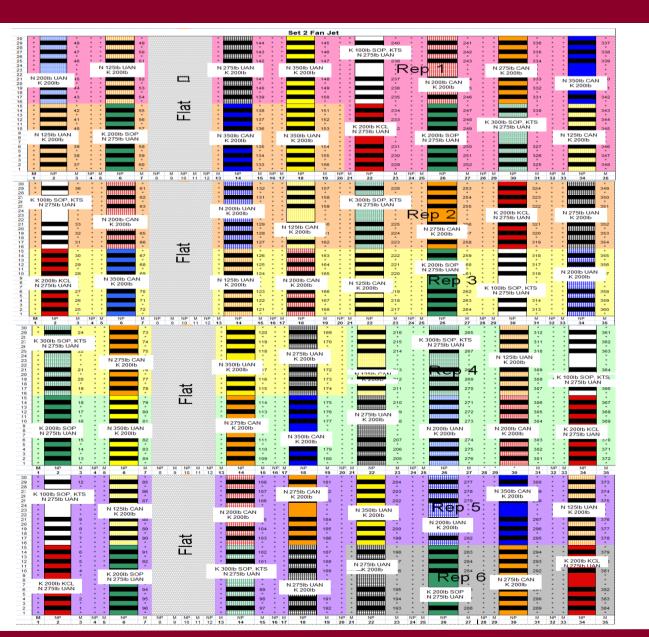
- 4 Nitrogen rates 125, 200, 275 and 350lb/ac
- 2 Nitrogen Sources- UAN 32 and CAN 17
- 3 Potassium Source- 100, 200 and 300lb/ac
- 3 Potassium Sources- SOP, SOP+KTS and KCI @200lb/ac Irrigation Types
- Fan Jet and Drip
- Fertigation
- 4 times during the season
  - 20, 30, 30 and 20% in February, April, June and October

#### **Samples Collection**

- Leaf and Nut samples collected from 768 individual trees five time in season
- All trees individually harvested

### **Experimental Layout**





Large experiment covering approximately 100 acres.

768 trees individually monitored for nutrients, yield, light interception, disease, water.

Trees were 9 leaf in 2008.

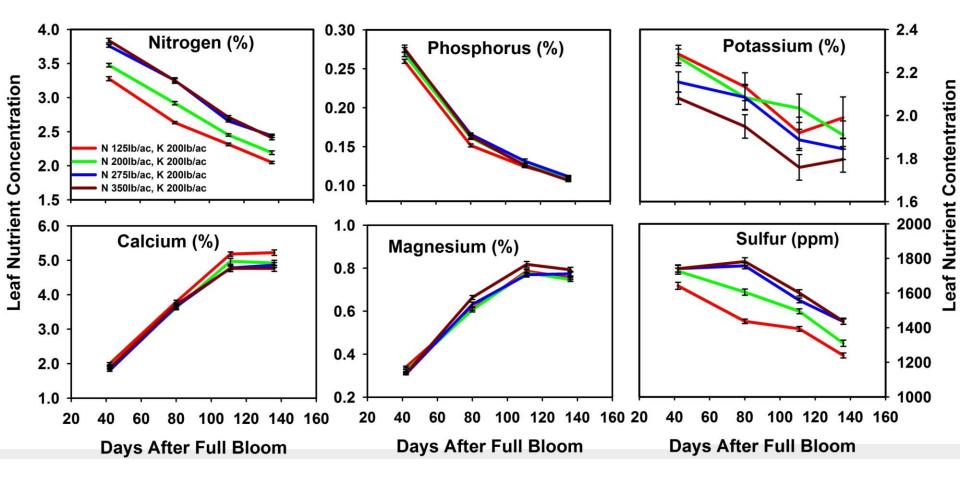
Nonpareil - Monterey



# **Preliminary Findings**

# **Leaf Nutrient Content 2010**

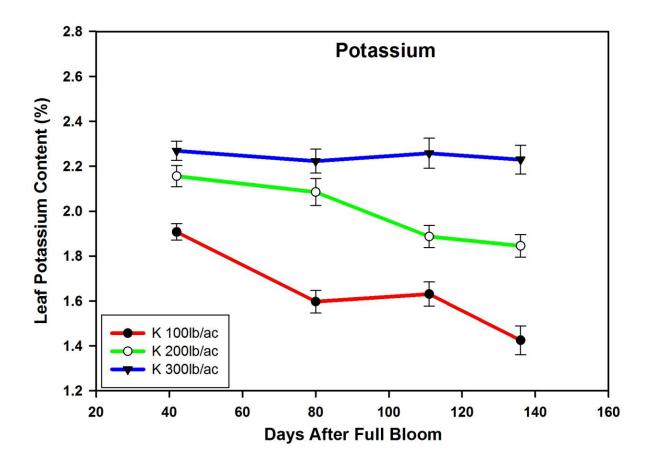




## Leaf Potassium Content 2010



No effect of K application rate or tissue K has been observed.



# Kernel Yield (lb/ac)



#### 2010

	N UAN 32				N CAN 17			
Irrigation	125	200	275	350	125	200	275	350
	2,865	3,453	3,765	4,064	2,622	3,313	3,960	3,728
Drip	С	b	ab	a	С	bc	ab	а
	2,584	3,109	3,481	3,583	2,730	3,046	3,810	3,530
Fan Jet	С	b	b	a	d	С	а	b

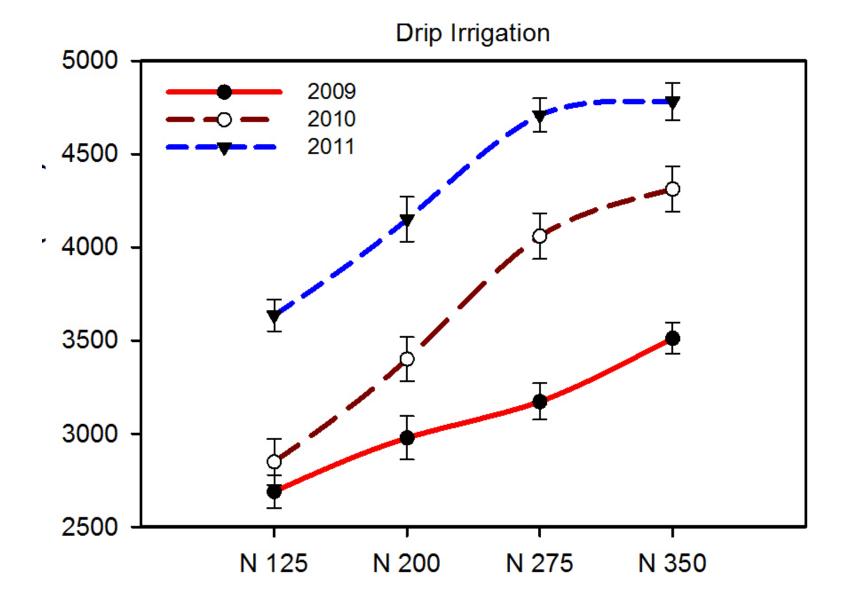
#### 2011

	N UAN 32				N CAN 17			
Irrigation	125 200 275 350				125	200	275	350
	3,732	4,229	4,696	4,775	3,564	4,365	4,833	4,969
Drip	с	b	a	a	С	b	a	a
	3,744	4,048	4,480	4,406	3,746	4,161	4,420	4,361
Fan Jet	С	b	а	а	С	b	а	a

Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different at 10%. Statistics are only within irrigation type.

# **Yield Response to Nitrogen**







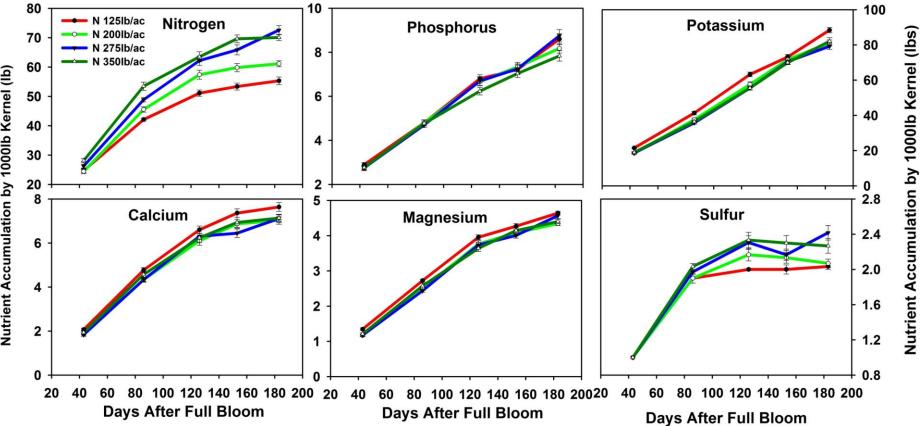
#### Cumulative Kernel Yield 2009-2011 (lb/ac)

	N UAN 32				N CAN 17				
Irrigation	125	200	275	350	125	200	275	350	
	9,328	10,642	11,667	12,356	8,796	10,298	11,844	12,139	
Drip	d	С	b	a	С	b	a	a	
	9,156	10,245	11,201	11,314	9,563	10,345	11,539	11,109	
Fan Jet	С	b	a	a	С	b	a	a	

Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different at 10%. Statistics are only within irrigation type.

## Nutrient Export by 1000lb kernel





## **NPK Export by 1000lb Kernel at Harvest** 2009-10

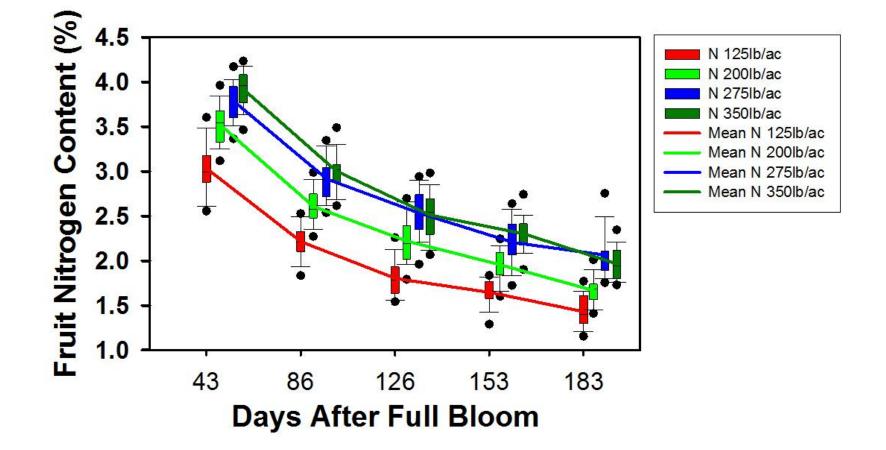


		NPK Exp	port by 10	001b Kerr	nel in 200	9-10 (Ib)		
2009					2010			
Nitrogen Rate (lb/ac)					Nitrogen Rate (lb/ac)			
Nutrient	125	200	275	350	125	200	275	350
N	53	56	58	59	55	61	73	70
	b	ab	а	а	С	b	а	а
Р	7.5	7.4	7.2	6.7	8.6	8.2	8.9	7.8
	а	а	ab	b	ab	ab	а	b
К	75 73 73 72				88	81	80	82
					ab	b	b	b

- -

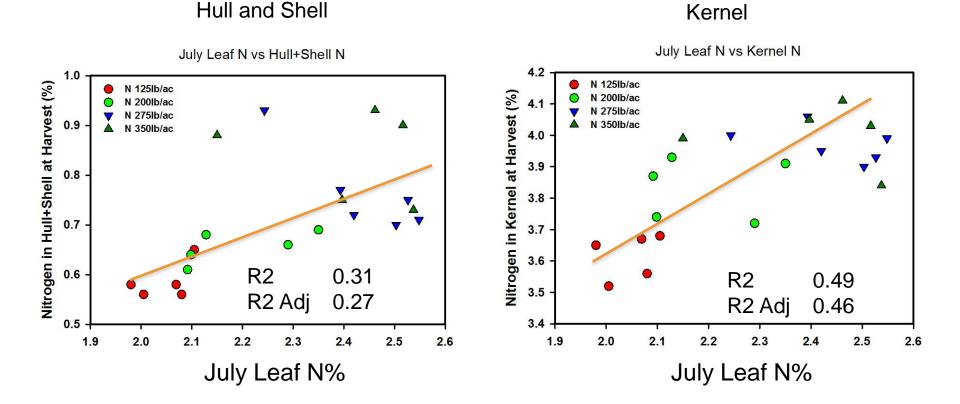
Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different at 10%.

# Nitrogen Fertilization and Fruit N Content (2010)



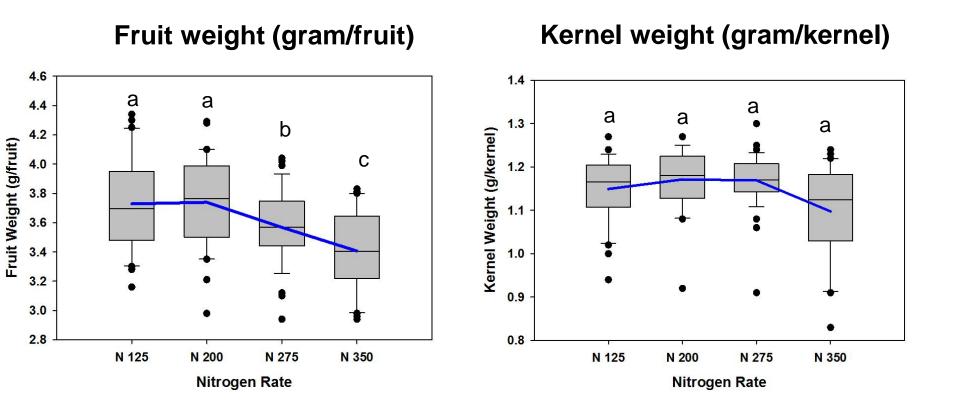
# July Leaf N and Hull+Shell and Kernel N at harvest





# Fruit and Kernel weight







#### Shelling Percentage (%)

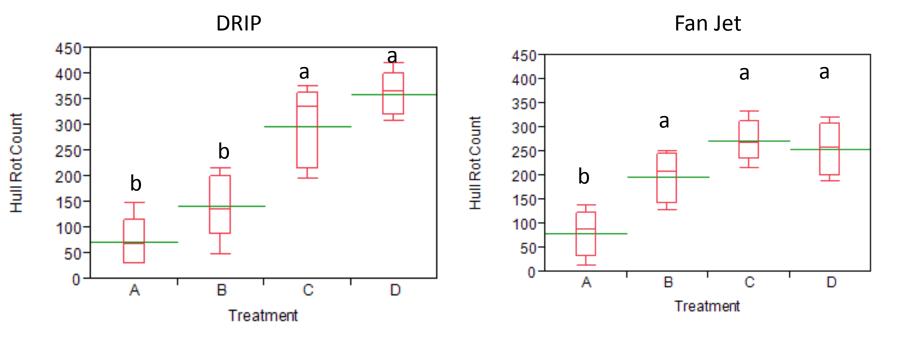
	N UAN 32				N CAN 17			
Irrigation	125	200	275	350	125	200	275	350
	25.8	28.7	28.4	29.8	25.5	27.4	29.9	28.0
Drip	b	a	а	а	С	b	а	b
	26.2	28.0	28.3	28.2	26.6	27.5	30.4	28.0
Fan Jet	b	a	a	а	b	b	а	b

Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different at 10%.

Statistics are only within irrigation type.

Shelling percentage is on the basis of clean 4lb sample

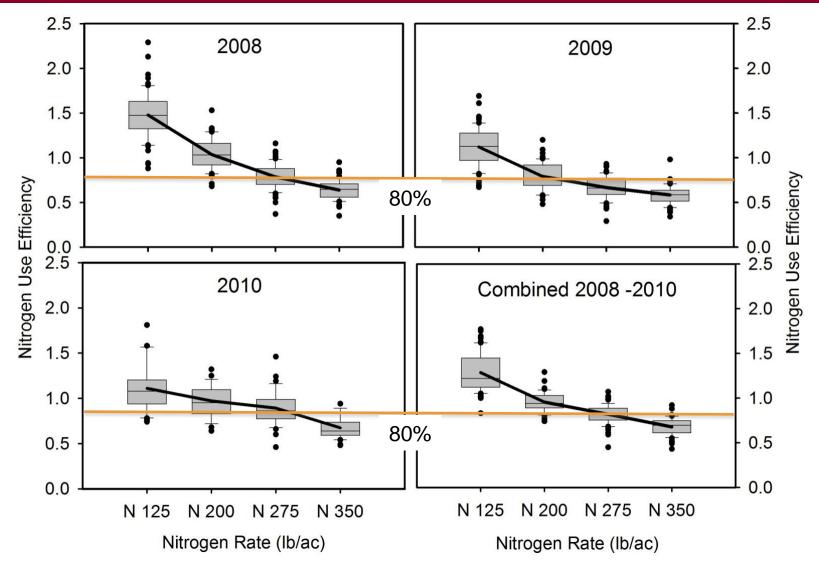




Treatments A= N 125lb/ac B= N 200lb/ac C= N 275lb/ac D= N 350lb/ac

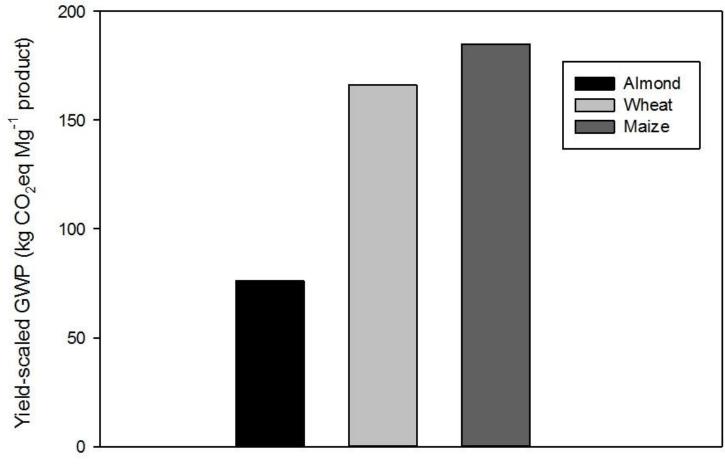
# Nitrogen Use efficiency 2008 - 2010





NUE = N Export in Fruit/N Applied

#### Relative Greenhouse Gas Generation by Almond, Wheat and Maize



Crop

(Schellenberg et al. Submitted; Linquist et al. 2011)

## Conclusions



- 1000lb kernel removes from 55 (at a leaf N of 2.0% in July) -70lb N (at a leaf N of 2.4% in July), 8lb P and 80lb K.
- 80% of N, 75% of P and K accumulates in the fruit before 120 DAFB (mid June in 2010).
- In this trial a N rate of 275lb/ac maximized yield (4,700 lb acre) and there was no benefit from N application in excess of this value.
- A Nutrient Use Efficiency (N removed in harvest/N applied) of 75-85% was observed for N rate 275lb/ac rate.
- Although significant differences in leaf K status were observed in 2010; no statistically significant differences in yield have been observed





# In this orchard we have attempted to satisfy the 4 R's

#### Applying the Right Rate

• Match demand with supply (all inputs- fertilizer, organic N, water, soil).

#### At Right Time

• Fertigate coincident with demand.

#### In the Right Place

Ensure delivery to the active roots.

#### Using the Right Source

• Soluble, compatible and balanced.



### 75% efficiency = 50 lbs N/acre/yr (x 500,000<sup>+</sup> acres) = 25,000,000 lbs N/yr

#### However small changes make a big impact.

• A 25 lb reduction in N application or 15% increase in efficiency reduces loss by 50%.

#### Next Steps:

Adapt fertilization to real yield potential (Site Specific Yield Prediction)

Apply N coincident with tree demand (Determine Root Growth and Uptake Patterns)

Keep fertilizer N in the root zone (Model N and water flow; develop new fertigation technologies; Pulse, Episodic, continuous, differential injection, CRF)

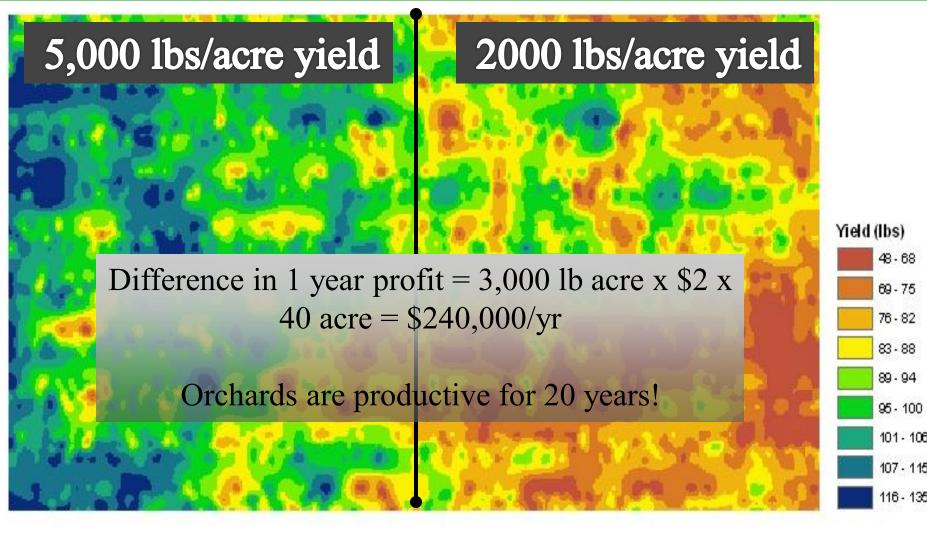
#### Manage for variability (next step)



## **Thank You**

# Now how do we take this to the next level of efficiency?

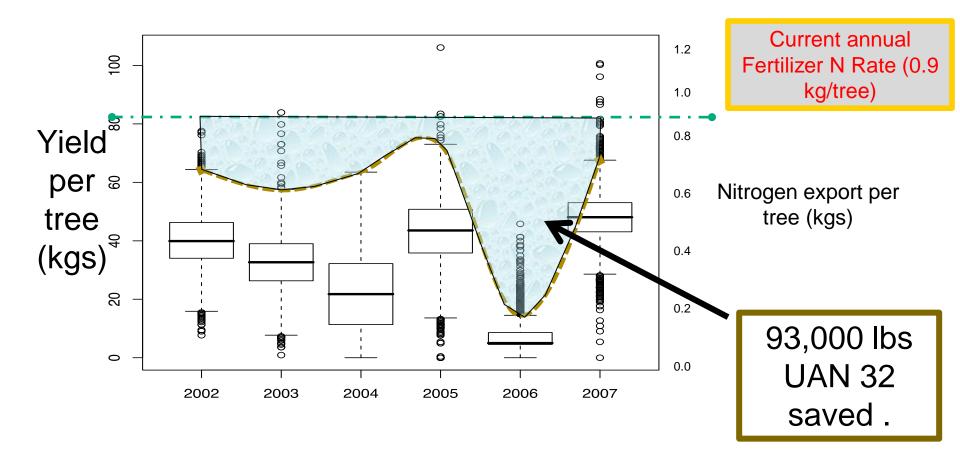
#### Managing for Spatial Variability introduces greater complexity in management Is it worth it?



Pistachio Yield

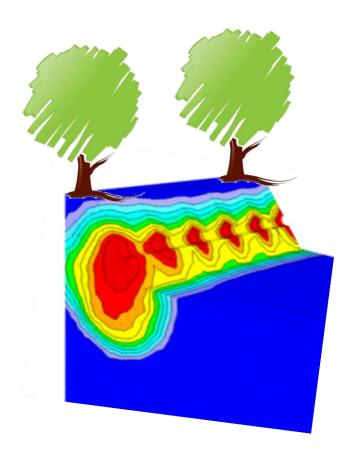


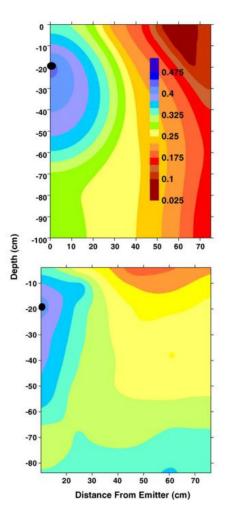
# Yield Variability Alters N Demand. Yield of 10,000 trees for 6 years



# Soil Type and Irrigation Practice Alters Nitrate Leaching

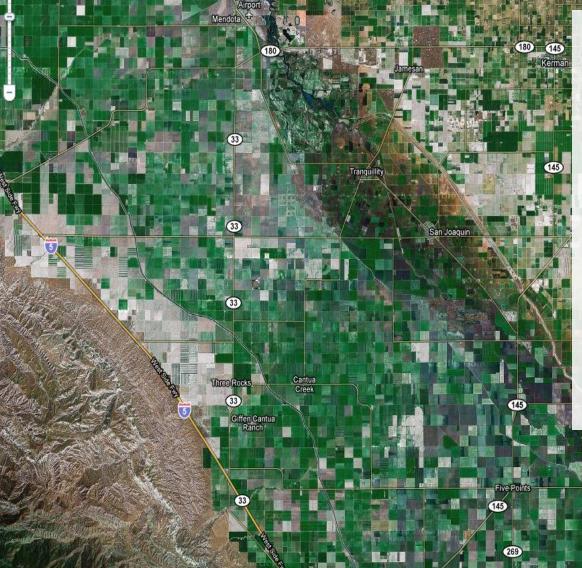
Water and Nitrate Distribution after fertigation event





# **Large Scale Spatial Variability**

Any solution must offer scalability and specificity



Sources of Yield Variability

- •Climate Regional and annual
- Soils
- Management Practices
- •Water Source
- •Age
- Previous years yield
- Disease
- Cultivar

Is this all too complex to implement?

#### New University: Almond Board: Industry Collaborative Project



#### Managing Variability to Optimize Sustainability

High intensity mapping to establish Zonal Irrigation/fertigation System. (ZIFS)

- C Intrast Irrigation/fertigati Industry Partners Needed!
- · Fertigation, irrigation, consulting, fertilizer, sensing
- and control, farm management.
- Above Canopy sensing (tower mounted or aerial imagery)
- Climate and modeling based.

Measurements:

Yield, nutrient flux, root growth, nutrient status, N and Gas loss



### Goal:

A fully scalable (field –farm- county – state) Irrigation and Fertigation Protocol

