

# Letter from the Dean

So many factors will shape the future of crop agriculture in Arizona that quantitative predictions are unwise. However, historical trends and current developments give some clues about the next few decades.

As our water supply becomes more restricted by law and by cost, agriculture can maintain its present place in the state's economy only by continuing to increase the efficiency of water use and by concentrating on crop and livestock enterprises that give high net returns. This can be done. The state's productivity, already among the highest in the world per acre, theoretically can continue to increase. Our agricultural exports can continue to help meet the food and fiber needs of the world while strengthening the country's foreign-exchange status.

The degree to which these possibilities are fulfilled depends in part on continuing strength in research and development, and in implementing beneficial innovations. Maintaining financial support for agricultural education, research and extension will be necessary. Given that support, some more specific predictions are reasonable. Increasingly sophisticated management techniques will be required for successful growing of crops in the state. Computers will help growers keep detailed records and make decisions throughout the growing season, such as when and how much water to apply. Integrated pest management, now in its infancy, will become standard practice in the future. As farm laborers become better organized, farm managers will become more proficient and knowledgeable in labor relations. Many of Arizona's successful farm operators and managers are UA College of Agriculture graduates. The future need for sophisticated management skills will continue to improve farm equipment, chemical tools and crop varieties.

Other public policy decisions besides the level of support for research and education will have great impact on agriculture in the state. Some social planners would use agriculture as a tool for social change and redistribution of wealth, overlooking agriculture's function of producing food and fiber for people's basic needs. Outdated concepts of family farms are one symptom of this confusion. Future trends in the costs of energy and credit will affect agri-



Deans Darrel S. Metcalfe and Bartley P. Cardon.

culture more than many other industries. So will developments in the interpretation and possible modification of the state's 1980 Groundwater Management Act.

Many of these factors are unknown quantities. One important player in the future of Arizona agriculture is now a known quantity, an encouraging one. As of December 1, Dr. Bartley P. Cardon will have succeeded me as dean of the UA College of Agriculture. He is a graduate and former faculty member of the college who, for the last 25 years, has managed the growth and success of a large feeds company. Arizonans in both plant and animal agriculture know Dr. Cardon well. So do agricultural leaders around the country and the world with whom he has worked and consulted. These people know that Arizona is fortunate to have a man of Dr. Cardon's knowledge and abilities leading the efforts of the College of Agriculture.

*Darrel S. Metcalfe*

Darrel S. Metcalfe  
College of Agriculture  
The University of Arizona