

THE CALIFORNIA tomato GROWER



Research is The Key



Gentleman using a fluorometer to read mold count results from VICAM's MoldQuant-T test, a quantitative test for tomato mold.

With compliments

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As we do each February, we are devoting a good portion of this issue to the work done by the University of California farm advisors. Each year, they evaluate the different varieties developed by seed company researchers and used by the industry. Their work is invaluable to the many growers and processors in this state, who use this report to determine what varieties are best suited for their area, conditions and utilization.

We also have a couple of other research stories in this issue highlighting additional work by these researchers. Research could well be considered the life blood of agriculture. For the past 100 years, researchers have been improving everything from the seed to crop protection tools to the irrigation equipment to tractors. It has always been important for growers to optimize their crop potential while minimizing the cost to grow that crop. But it probably has never been more important than it is today. And research allows that to happen.

At the annual meeting this month, we are going to be taking another look at some more critical research. That is the research that has helped develop a new mold assay test. (The annual meeting, including that report, will be highlighted in next month's issue.) This new mold test will soon become the industry standard as it is far superior to the Howard Mold Count that has been used for decades in this industry, and has served us well. The new test was developed by university researchers and is being adapted for commercial use by VICAM, the same company that provides testing capabilities to the wheat and nut industries for aflatoxin. With the help of all concerned, this test should quickly replace the Howard Mold Count, be approved by the USDA and become the new U.S. standard. And as we move to this sophisticated test so will the world.

It is in our best interest to implement this procedure as quickly as possible as its accuracy is far superior to the current method, will provide an objective measurement of quality and prove to be of great value to the industry at large. The development of this test allows us to once again pause, reflect and applaud the exemplary work done by the men and women who devote their lives to agricultural research.