

# THE DESERT DIFFERENCE:

A Showcase of AgTech Opportunities  
for Growing in the Desert



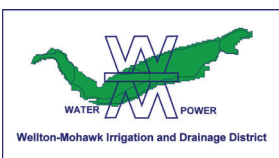
**NOVEMBER 14, 2024**  
Yuma Civic Center  
1440 W. Desert Hills Drive

## Agenda at a Glance

*\*detailed agenda on  
following pages\**

7:30 am	Registration & Breakfast Buffet
8:15	Welcome
8:30	Panel Discussion 1
9:20	Lightning Talks
9:50	Networking & Break
10:25	Breakout Session 1
11:15	Quick Break
11:20	Breakout Session 2
12:15 pm	Lunch
12:45	Fireside Chat
1:35	Lightning Talks
2:05	Networking & Break
2:30	Panel Discussion 2
3:30	Panel Discussion 3
4:25	Closing Remarks

## SPONSORED BY:



- 7:30 am Registration & Breakfast Buffet**  
Breakfast sponsored by Wellton–Mohawk Irrigation & Drainage District, Greater Yuma Economic Development Corp, Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association  
Coffee and beverages sponsored by Desert Control
- 8:15 Welcome**  
*Tanya Hodges*, Executive Director, Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture (YCEDA), University of Arizona
- 8:30 Panel Discussion**  
***Yuma County Leads in Smart Farm Technologies***  
What is AgTech, what are the opportunities it brings to desert agriculture, and how is Yuma becoming a global center for AgTech development.  
**MODERATOR:** *Paul Brierley*, Director, Arizona Department of Agriculture  
**PANELISTS:** *Walt Duflock*, VP of Innovation, Western Growers  
*PJ Way*, Broadband Program Manager, Yuma County  
*Matt Rahr*, Director, Cyber & Information Technologies, University of Arizona
- 9:20 Lightning Talks Round 1**  
Companies present their newest innovations in a 5–minute lightning talk.  
**MODERATOR:** *Samuel Discua Duarte*, Yuma Agricultural Center Farm Manager
- 1 *Verdant Robotics – Sharpshooter: Precision Application System powered by Bullseye Aim & Apply Technology***  
*Curtis Garner*, COO & Co–founder
  - 2 *Allo Fiber – SmartAg Initiative***  
*Mike Horton*, General Manager of Arizona  
*Jon Nordhausen*, Vice President, Product Development
  - 3 *Ecorobotix – Ecorobotix – ARA: Ultra High Precision Spot Sprayer***  
*Olivia Soares de Camargo*, Business Development Project Manager
  - 4 *Niqo Robotics – Launch of Niqo RoboThinner™ an AI powered spot sprayer for lettuce thinning***  
*Jaisimha Rao*, Founder and CEO
  - 5 *GRIPP – Gripp hace que mantener registros y leerlos sea 100 veces más fácil Masson***  
*Jenkin Lee*, Co–founder
- 9:50 Networking & Break**  
Snacks sponsored by Scott Resources and Syngenta  
Coffee and beverages sponsored by Desert Control

**Thank–you to our  
Day 2 Sponsors!**

**Digital Marquee:** *Allo Fiber, Bingham Equipment*

**Lanyards:** *Elevate Southwest*

**Food & Drink:** *Wellton–Mohawk Irrigation & Drainage District, Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association, Greater Yuma Economic Development Corp, Desert Control, Scott Resources, FarmWise & Syngenta*

10:25

**Breakout Session 1**

Breakout Room A

***Growing AgTech in the Desert: Lessons in AgTech and AgTech Adoption***

What are the challenges of building AgTech for the desert and how operations in the desert are successful at adoption and implementation.

**MODERATOR:** *Ben Palone*, Sr. Director of Automation & Commercialization, Western Growers

**PANELISTS:** *Robert Barnum*, Assistant Grower, Tacna AZ area, JV Farms

*Nick Copas*, Sales Manager, Keithly Williams Seeds, Inc.

*Jason Mellow*, President, Axis Ag, Inc.

Breakout Room B

***How the Regulatory Environment Impacts Autonomous Equipment Development***

Experts discuss the regulatory environment in Arizona and California and how it helps or hinders tech development and implementation.

**MODERATOR:** *Walt Duflock*, VP of Innovation, Western Growers

**PANELISTS:** *Tim Dunn*, Senator Elect, Arizona State Senate & owner/operator of Dunn Grain Co.

*Sean Sundberg*, Business Integration Manager, John Deere

*Olivia Soares de Camargo*, Business Development Project Manager, Ecorobotix

11:15

**Quick Break**

11:20

**Breakout Session 2****Breakout Room A: *The Future of Automated Harvesting: Are we getting close?***

How close are we to automating harvesting? In this panel we discuss progress, challenges and opportunities for harvesting automation for produce.

**MODERATOR:** *Kristen Smith Eshaya*, President, JV Smith Companies

**PANELISTS:** *Sufei Wang*, Brassica Commercial Breeder, Bayer

*Alex Gutierrez*, Founder and CEO, L5 Automation

*Ben Palone*, Sr. Director of Automation & Commercialization, Western Growers

**Breakout Room B: *A Global Perspective on AgTech***

AgTech is a global movement. Hear from a panel of experts who will talk about the trends and priorities they see in other countries.

**MODERATOR:** *Dennis Donohue*, Director, Western Growers Center for Innovation

**PANELISTS:** *Brandon Day*, COO, The Yield Lab Institute

*Louise Sutherland*, Ceres Agri-Tech Project Development Director

*Martha Montoya*, Founder and CEO, Ag Tools

*Ton van Arnhem*, Agricultural Counselor of the Netherlands

12:15 pm

**Lunch** (Sponsored by FarmWise and I.D.E.A. Systems Integration)

12:45 **Fireside Chat – INTRODUCTION: Kim Patten**, Assoc. Vice President, Research Development, UA

***What is AI and What Can it Do for My Farming Operation?***

This fireside chat will help demystify artificial intelligence (AI) and its practical applications in agriculture through a dialogue between a farmer and an agriculture technology expert.

*Matt McGuire*, Chief Agricultural Officer, JV Smith Companies

*Megan Nunes*, Founder and CEO, Bountiful

1:35 **Lightning Talks Round 2 – MODERATOR: Robert Masson**, Assistant Ag Extension Agent, UA

**1 *SeedSpider – WeedSpider – the intelligent mechanical weeder***

*Sam Lockwook-Geck*, VP Technical Projects & Support

*Matt Phillips*, VP Sales

**2 *KAP Organics Agro, LLC – Crop nutrition management, the intelligent way***

*Ajay Pahwa*, CEO

**3 *FarmSense, Inc. – Autonomous In-Field FlightSensors for Managing Pests***

*Leslie Hickle, Ph.D.*, CEO & Co-founder

**4 *AquaSpy – Continuous in-ground layer by layer monitoring of moisture + nitrate levels all season***

*Steven Medeiros*, CA/AZ Region Sales Manager

**5 *Provision Analytics – Food Safety Risk Scoring: Real-Time Insight on your Audit Readiness***

*Jaymee McInerney*, U.S. Sales Representative

2:05 **Networking & Break**

Snacks sponsored by Scott Resources, Syngenta & Drinks sponsored by Desert Control

2:30 **Panel Discussion**

***A Glimpse into a Future Smart Farm***

How do we go from sensors in the field to a genuine Smart Farm? Experts discuss what makes a farm 'smart' including infrastructure, data handling, costs, labor, equipment, and instruments.

**MODERATOR:** *Derek Masseth*, Executive Director, Sun Corridor Network

**PANELISTS:** *Nirav Merchant*, Director, Data Science Institute, University of Arizona

*Jeff Orrey*, Chief Science Officer, Geovisual Analytics

*Leslie Hickle*, CEO and Co-Founder, FarmSense Inc.

3:30 **Panel Discussion**

***Smart Farm Integration... Make sure it happens!***

The final discussion will be on Smart Farm Integration. This session promises to be engaging and insightful. By turning the audience into the panel, we can gather diverse perspectives from growers, ag tech companies, researchers, and the community, addressing big-picture takeaways, potential challenges, and priorities.

**MODERATORS:** *Tanya Hodges*, Executive Director, YCEDA, UA

*Kristen Smith Eshaya*, President, JV Smith Companies

4:25 **Closing Remarks: Tanya Hodges**, Executive Director, YCEDA, UA