

Faculty Profile

David Zilberman is a Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Co-Director of the Center for Sustainable Resource Development at UC Berkeley. David is a Fellow of the American Agricultural Economics Association and a current member of its Executive Board. David's broad research interests focus on the economics of production technology and risk in agriculture, agricultural and environmental policy, and marketing.

David was born in Israel and was introduced to agriculture while working for two years on the dairy farm and orchards of a kibbutz. He received his Ph.D. at UC Berkeley and joined its faculty in 1979. David's dissertation was on animal waste management in southern California where he searched for policies that enabled the industry to thrive while meeting environmental regulations. During the 1980s, he initiated several projects on the adoption of modern irrigation technology and computers in California agriculture. These studies demonstrated that farmers adopt new technologies when it makes economic sense and that extreme events, such as droughts or extremely good prices, trigger changes in farming practices. During the early 1990s, David's research on pesticide economics and policy made a case against radical policies that called to ban pesticides, and for smart policies that take advantage of the vast economic benefits that pesticides generate while using incentives to protect against side effects. These studies established that what matters is not what materials are used in farming but how they are used.

Some of David's research has been sponsored by government agencies such as United States Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Food and Agriculture. His work has emphasized that environmental and farm policies have to be integrated to be most effective and that market instruments and incentives are most effective in achieving social goals. Recently, David has been engaged in studies on the impacts of climate change, the Internet, and, in particular, biotechnology in agriculture. He is a co-founder of an international



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consortium of agricultural biotechnology, and his research and outreach efforts aim to better understand the economics of biotechnology in agriculture and to design policies that will enable developing and developed nations to benefit from these technologies.

David has taught classes on agricultural policy and environmental economics. He enjoys working closely with his students and has chaired many Ph.D. dissertation committees. David's wife, Leorah, teaches at Berkeley High. They enjoy going to movies, plays and Warriors games. They also enjoy visiting their three sons in Davis and walking their two dogs.

David Zilberman is the George and Elsie Robinson Professor in the agricultural and resource economics department at UC Berkeley. He can be reached by telephone at (510)642-6570 or by e-mail at zilber@are.berkeley.edu.