



Hello Kern County.

My name is Tobias Oker and I am glad to inform you that on January 3rd, 2023, I started work as a Soils and Irrigation Cooperative Extension Advisor for Kern County.

Although I am new to California, I know a little bit about this great state's timeless allure that made many people to make it home, thrive in it and contribute to its growth. In reality, I think California is one of those kinds of unmissable places wherever one is because its name reverberates around the world, carrying along with its stories about the state's economic, cultural, and technological impact, just to mention a few. I first learned about California and its famous aqueducts as a high school geography student in Uganda many years ago. So, I feel particularly very fortunate to have the opportunity to see them physically and to be a part of the conversation about water resources in the state, which they are a critical part of.

I moved to California from the other end of the country – Georgia – where for close to four years, I worked as an irrigation research engineer at the University of Georgia (UGA), Tifton campus. At UGA, I worked in conjunction with the state NRCS to update the Georgia Irrigation Guide. Thereafter I worked on a research project to develop crop water use curves for apples, peach, pecan, and a grapefruit called muscadine.

Prior to joining UGA, I was a graduate student at Kansas State University (K-State) between 2014 and 2018. At K-State, the main topic of my doctoral research was Mobile Drip Irrigation, a relatively novel technology with a demonstrated potential to improve irrigation efficiency in center pivot systems, the main type of irrigation method in Kansas and the Midwest. Before starting grad school at K-State in 2014, I had worked in Uganda as a water management research and extension scientist at the National Agricultural Research Organization for about three years, and before that as a Research Assistant for two years.

In 2005, I graduated with a BSc in Agricultural Engineering from Makerere University, Uganda, and in 2010, a MSc in Water Science and Engineering from IHE Delft, Institute for Water Education, The Netherlands.

I look forward to getting to know and working with the growers of Kern County, their industry partners, the wider community, and colleagues at the University of California, in a collaborative effort to find answers to the challenges and opportunities in irrigation and other soil-water management issues in our county. I can be reached by email (teoker@ucanr.edu) or office phone (661) 868-6218. My twitter handle is @TobiasOker and I

will use it to share information about irrigation and other soil-water related topics, and occasionally exciting soccer news.

I am supported by my wife, Natalie, and fueled by the energy of my two daughters, aged 5 and 9. My other interests are exploring parks, wildlife, watching and playing soccer. I hope to eventually learn how to play my favorite rumba tunes on a guitar one day.

Thank you.

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