



IN MEMORIAM

Benjamin C. French
Professor of Agricultural Economics, Emeritus
UC Davis
1923 – 2013

Professor Benjamin (Ben) French, 90, professor emeritus of agricultural economics at the University of California, Davis, died August 23, 2013 at his home in Davis, California. Born May 30, 1923, in Hanford, California, Ben attended elementary schools in the Sacramento- San Joaquin Delta region of Northern California and graduated from Rio Vista High School in 1941. He developed a passion for duck hunting and fishing in his formative years and his love of the outdoors remained strong throughout his life.

Ben enrolled at UC Berkeley in 1942, but was soon called to active military duty in March 1943. As a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division he saw active duty in both France and Germany. After the war, he reenrolled under the GI Bill, earning BS (1948), MS (1949), and PhD (1953) degrees in agricultural economics at UC Berkeley.

Professor French joined the faculty at Michigan State University in 1953 as an Assistant Professor in Agricultural Economics. He returned to the University of California's Davis campus in 1959 as an Associate Professor in the Agricultural Economics Department where he would establish a distinguished career in agricultural marketing. He retired from UC Davis in 1989. During his early career Professor French extended the topics of economic efficiency in plant operations, covered in his award winning Ph.D. dissertation, with a landmark *Hilgardia* monograph coauthored with Sammet and Bressler. This early research fostered a professional line of inquiry in Agricultural Economics that was well documented in his review article in *Survey of Agricultural Economics Literature*, Volume 1. Subsequent work in several topical areas was characterized by his attention to detail, depth of analysis, innovative approach and the application of applied econometrics to market policy questions. Significant contributions include supply response models examining market control programs for perennial crops including apples, pears, lemons, cling peaches, Brussels sprouts, asparagus and raisins. He also contributed to industry economic models for processing tomatoes, honey and eggs in addition to the literature on price bargaining for agricultural commodities. Professor French's pioneering research received numerous awards and recognitions. In 1981, he was selected as a Fellow of the American Agricultural Economics Association, its highest recognition.

Professor French's teaching contributions at both the undergraduate and graduate levels were noted for his thoughtful and rigorous development of the subject matter. He worked closely with his students and many now hold prominent positions in universities, businesses and government. Professor French also made significant program contributions to development of the Department of Agricultural Economics at UC Davis, where he served for several years as Vice Chairman and then as the first Chairman when the Department became administratively separate from UC Berkeley in March of 1966. He served a full term as Department Chairman from 1976 to 1981. His insistence that the new Department meet the highest standards of scholarship greatly influenced its future development.

Professor French was widely respected by colleagues across campus for the rigor he insisted on in the newly revised teaching programs emerging in the College of Agriculture at Davis in the period 1964-68. His wisdom and commitment to what he saw as the required high standards of The University of California was particularly appreciated by Campus administrators for many years.

Three weeks after Ben's death, his wife of 65 years, Mary (Loscutoff) French, also passed away. Ben and Mary are survived by their daughter Susan French Weeks; sons Ben and Stan; son-in-law Ed Weeks; daughter-in-law Wendy Chan French; granddaughters Aubree French and Gillian Weeks; and great-granddaughter Bristol Bullivant.