Aaron Smith is a Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of California, Davis, where he has been since 2001. Originally from New Zealand, he earned his PhD in Economics from the University of California, San Diego. His research addresses policy issues in agricultural, energy, and financial markets. Recent project topics include impacts and efficiency of biofuel policies, understanding commodity booms and busts, explaining recent failures of grain futures markets to accurately price the underlying commodity, and the effects of hedging and speculation in commodity prices. His research as received the Quality of Research Discovery, Outstanding AJAE Article, and Quality of Communication Awards from AAEA. He served as an Associate Editor of AJAE in 2009-2011 and as Econometrics Section Chair for AAEA in 2015-16.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for AAEA?

The AAEA contains hundreds of talented economists working on many of society’s largest problems, including feeding the world, optimizing the environment and natural resources, and improving the welfare of the world’s poor. The importance and relevance of these topic areas provides an opportunity for AAEA to expand its membership base. The association’s challenge is to be recognized as the premier organization representing economists who work in these topic areas.

What actions would you initiate to address the challenges and opportunities described in your response to the previous question?

I would push AAEA to focus on (i) running a vibrant annual meeting, (ii) publishing relevant impactful research in AAEA journals, and (iii) communicating members’ scholarly contributions to those outside the AAEA community. Because AAEA members have diverse specialties, I would also support AAEA sponsorship of smaller conferences that focus on sub-specialties within agricultural and applied economics.

At the end of your three-year term, what changes/new initiatives would you have helped create?

I hope to see an increase in membership, especially among early-career scholars, increased attendance at the annual meetings and at sessions during the meetings, and increased visibility of the achievements of members among policy makers, the wider economics community, and the public.