

THE MISSISSIPPI AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION



Diverse Partnerships Benefit Research

To accomplish its mission, The Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station must cooperate with other universities, government agencies, businesses, commodity groups and other agricultural stakeholders.

“Producer organizations at the local, state, regional and national levels play an important role in helping our research scientists carry out their work,” said MAFES Associate Director Reuben Moore.

Among the groups providing ongoing support for research are the Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board, the Mississippi Rice Promotion Board, and the Mississippi Cotton Incorporated State Support Committee. Producer check-off funds for soybeans, rice and cotton provide significant research funding.

At the local level, regular meetings with producer advisory committees provide MAFES personnel with input to help guide future research.

“In addition, farmer participation in on-farm field trials adds a real-world aspect to many MAFES projects,” Moore said. “MAFES scientists have off-station projects on farms in virtually every area of Mississippi. Producer participation in the research ranges from providing just the land for a project to performing most normal farming practices.”

MAFES also has extensive collaborative relations with other state and federal agencies, which enhance productivity and applicability of research on and off campus. Facilities and personnel of the USDA Agricultural Research Service and other federal agencies, for example, are strategically co-located to augment the total research effort. Such partnerships establish the communication links needed to avoid costly duplication of effort.



Lee County farmer Keith Wiseman, right, and Normie Buehring, senior research agronomist and superintendent of the Northeast Mississippi Branch Experiment Station, discussed Wiseman's just-emerged 2006 soybean crop during mid-April. The benefits of early planting, Wiseman said, are among the lessons he's learned from university research. (Photo by Bob Ratliff)

The branch station is one of the strongest tools agricultural researchers have in their efforts to find new and more efficient ways to produce food and fiber. There are, however, projects that need the type of setting found only on an actual working farm.

MAFES scientists have off-station projects on farms in virtually every area of Mississippi. Producer participation in the research ranges from providing just the land for a project to performing most normal farming practices.

Variety evaluations are among the research projects conducted with cooperating producers.

Lee County farmer Keith Wiseman is one of the cooperating producers for variety evaluations. His farm has been the site of soybean trials. Participating in the research, he said, has taught him a lot about soybean varieties.

“There are a lot of soybean varieties out there, but I've learned that just because they're on the market doesn't mean they're going to perform well on my farm,” he said.

The results of the variety research are made available through the Mississippi State University Extension Service, and Wiseman said the variety information is part of a management program that has helped him increase his average yields.

“I used to think a 20-bushel-per-acre average yield was good and 25 was great,” he said. “Now, there have been times when I've broken through the 50-bushel-per-acre level!”

THE MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE



MSU-ES: In Partnership with Mississippi

The Mississippi State University Extension Service has partners in all of Mississippi's 82 counties and in practically all communities in the state.

"Our mission is to provide educational programs and information of benefit to Mississippians," said Virgil Culver, MSU-ES state program leader. "To carry out that mission, we rely heavily on the help of adult volunteers for most of the programs delivered at the local and state level."

Partners at the local level also include county boards of supervisors, which provide office facilities and support programs in each county.

Support from producer organizations and from individual producers assists Extension personnel in providing educational programs, field days and other activities for producers of almost every agricultural product in the state.

Extension is constantly adapting to respond to needs, especially in the area of health education. In 2005, MSU-ES began facilitating Health is Academic in 40 Mississippi elementary schools. The goals of the program are to assess current school health situations, develop and approve a school wellness policy and implement the approved policy. The program is funded through grants from the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Healthy Schools with support from the Bower Foundation.

Another Extension program to bring more health education to Mississippi also began in 2005. The Extension Body Walk program is an interactive learning program to teach kindergarten through fifth grade students how to make good nutrition and physical activity part of their daily lives. Sponsoring partners include Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, the Mississippi Rural Health Corps, the Mississippi Attorney General's Office, and the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi.

The 4-H Community Pride Program, in partnership with Chevron Texaco, provides mini-grants for youth to serve their communities. Through the program, adult Community Pride volunteers learn cooperative skills such as planning, resource development, grant writing, media relations, and communication. Community members, local organizations and corporations often join the effort.

Each year, Extension's Rural Medical Scholars Program pairs high school students interested in careers in medicine with doctors for five weeks during the summer to give the students a brief taste of what it's like to be a medical doctor in Mississippi.

"These and a host of other Extension programs and activities help thousands of Mississippians of all ages improve their economic wellbeing, learn about healthy lifestyles or just get more enjoyment out of life," Culver said.

Professional photographer Wayne Rawson of Meridian is one of hundreds of 4-H adult volunteers in Mississippi. (Photo by Jim Lytle)



COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE



Diverse Partnerships Enhance CVM Experiences

Veterinary medicine is a diverse field, with careers ranging from small animal practice to national security.

Just as diverse are the partnerships that help MSU's College of Veterinary Medicine give its students opportunities to learn about all aspects of the profession.

The partnerships usually benefit both the students and the outside partner. That's the case with CVM's partnership with the humane societies in nearby Starkville and Columbus.

"The humane society receives no-cost spay and neuters," said Dr. Phil Bushby, CVM's academic program director. "The adoption rate of the spayed and neutered animals is significantly greater than those not spayed or neutered, and the students get a positive educational experience."

At the other end of the animal care spectrum, a partnership with the Jackson Zoo in the state capitol provides CVM students with hands-on experience with exotic animals while assisting the zoo with its animal health program.

A partnership with Iowa State University brings students from the midwestern school to MSU and takes CVM students to the Midwest to expand their knowledge of the beef cattle industry.

Another partnership takes recent CVM graduates to the nation's capitol to learn about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service. Called D.C. Track, the partnership gives participants experience at the Washington, D.C., headquarters of the agency responsible for protecting the nation's food supply. The three-month internships began in 2005.

CVM's faculty and professional staff also gain valuable experience through part-

nerships, including those with federal and state agencies, livestock and aquaculture producer groups and other schools.

Scientists in CVM's Department of Pathobiology and Population Medicine are part of the USDA's Food Safety Research and Response Network, which includes more than 50 food safety experts from 18 colleges and universities. Teams of researchers study different food safety pathogens in each major agricultural commodity and also serve as response teams at the request of federal and state agencies during episodes of food-related illnesses.

In the aftermath of 2005's powerful hurricanes, CVM personnel assisted with a variety of animal health needs in storm-damaged areas as part of the Mississippi Board of Animal Health's Animal Response Team.

"Medical science, either human or animal, involves complex opportunities in disease diagnostics, therapeutics and prevention," said CVM Interim Dean Gregg Boring. "The partnerships that help CVM carry out its teaching, research and outreach activities in those complex areas can be characterized by the Chinese proverb 'Many hands make a big task small.'"



Work with animals at the Jackson zoo gives MSU students real-world experience. (Photo by Tom Thompson)