

Vice President's Letter



A drive through the countryside almost anywhere in Mississippi this summer showed what was on the minds of most farmers at planting time—corn.

This year the state's farmers planted 980,000 acres to corn, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture figures released in June. That was just shy of triple the state's 2006 corn acreage.

Strong demand for corn to supply ethanol plants in the Midwest and the resulting higher prices helped encourage a move from cotton and soybeans by many farmers this year. The need for corn to supply our own poultry, catfish and livestock industries also helps support corn production in the state. Research and educational programs in support of all the crops and other agricultural enterprises in Mississippi are among the duties of the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University.

Variety trials, development of crop management programs, demonstration plots and other research activities are all part of the work of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. With 16 branch locations throughout the state, the experiment station is able to conduct research under conditions similar to those faced by most producers. Trials on farms of cooperating producers also help MAFES scientists better apply their research to real-world situations.

Research is also carried out by scientists in the College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Forest Resources. The work in those units touches the lives of thousands of Mississippians ranging from forest landowners to pet owners.

The educational programs in the division include teaching traditional college students in the veterinary medicine program, the forest and wildlife areas and the disciplines included in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, as well as MSU Extension Service activities in almost every community in the state.

The thing that makes all of these varied programs possible is the support of organizations and individuals that care about the future of our state and nation. They know that education and research are the keys to providing a better tomorrow for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

The funding provided by the Mississippi Legislature is especially important because it provides the base from which we can leverage support from other sources. State appropriations also provide funding for salaries, and this year's level of funding has helped bring salaries more in line with those in surrounding states. Competitive pay for our researchers, faculty, extension professionals and support staff is an essential part of attracting and retaining the individuals who can provide the research and educational programs Mississippi needs to continue to be a successful competitor in the national and global economy.

Vance H. Watson

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