

## **The Story Today Is Unbiased Research**

Greetings to you all on this first day summer. It's great to see so many of you here. Please let me extend a warm welcome to you on behalf of ISU Extension, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station.

The story here today at Crawfordsville Farm is research — the **unbiased research** that comes about because of the partnership of the Experiment Station, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Extension. Field Days provide a chance for you to see research projects in progress and talk with the people involved in the experiments. It's also an opportunity to view the latest in modern agriculture.

And the research that's taking place at the Southeast Iowa Research and Demonstration Farm affects the health of Iowa's economy, its families, and its environment. I might go so far as to say that "It's ripped, 'Ripped from the headlines!'"

One of the unique projects is the Double Cropping of Peas. Jim Fawcett and Tom Miller are providing leadership for that project in which field peas are substituted for most of the soybean meal in swine rations and may be more economical than soybean meal.

Also, the Iowa Nut Growers Association has established a demonstration site on the farm where they are growing chestnuts and other tree crops with little or no soil erosion, use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides. This system of agriculture benefits family farmers, Iowa communities, and the environment. In fact, the American Heart Association promotes chestnuts as a low fat food. Nutritionally, they are more similar to whole grains than nuts; they have practically no fat and contain a very high quality protein, and are rich in complex carbohydrates.

And don't forget the Demonstration Gardens, where the Wine Grape Cultivar Trial Project was established in 2003 to evaluate the adaptability, productivity, and wine making quality of 20 new cultivars. Also, Asian soybean rust is top of mind for most Iowa producers. The Asian soybean rust plots here and in other parts of the state are helping us understand the exact conditions that favor its spread in North America. This disease remains a threat to soybean production in the United States and certainly in Iowa. It is important to monitor the disease progress and development. These and other Sentinel plots will help producers manage this disease effectively and efficiently in the foreseeable future.

A few other projects also come to mind that have had significant Extension involvement here at the Southeast Research Farm. To name a few, Jim Jensen is working with low-linolenic soybean varieties. Greg Brenneman has swine manure management trials underway. Jim Fawcett has some weed management trials. Virgil Schmitt is working on bean leaf beetle management. Greg Brenneman, Jim Fawcett, and Matt Helmers have a farmland drainage project. Greg Brenneman and Jim Fawcett also are working on a long-term rotation and tillage study.

In addition, our Extension staff meet regularly with the Southeast Iowa Ag Research Association Board and SERF Staff to keep us in-sync with projects at the farm and research direction. Virgil Schmitt serves as the SEIARA secretary and Greg Brenneman serves as the SEIARA treasurer. These relationships foster collaboration between lowans and Extension: lowans depend on us for ideas and unbiased research to keep them on the cutting edge of agricultural development, and we rely on them to tell us how we can do our jobs better. In the end, everyone wins.

I often talk about keeping Iowa State University Extension **relevant** for today. **And** relevance means staying in-sync with Iowa's greatest challenges. This is critical to Extension's mission of building partnerships and providing research-based learning opportunities. This all leads to one objective: improving the quality of life in Iowa. And lowans have been very clear about telling us what they value most, so each of our programs centers around these three values:

- Healthy People
- Healthy Environments
- Healthy Economies

The Bioeconomy is a good example of the intersection of Healthy People, Healthy Environments, and Healthy Economies. It's a topic in the papers almost daily. This spring Extension facilitated group discussions throughout the state and nearly a thousand lowans spoke out about the bioeconomy. Opinions varied from outright optimism to concerns for future effects.

Extension facilitators came armed with a list of questions, but the participants led the discussions. And let me tell you, we witnessed some wide-ranging, freewheeling discussions.

lowans' responses reveal an urgent need for education and information to help communities make informed decisions about water, land, infrastructure, business, livestock, and economic development. Their concerns about the rapid changes in the state all call for education, information, research, and communications.

These are Extension's strengths, and listening to lowans will help us customize our programming to meet their needs.

The opportunities mentioned were overwhelmingly job and economic

development related. In fact, when asked about bioeconomy opportunities, the most reported word was "jobs." Other themes related to the economy that appeared often were increased tax revenue, tax base, new businesses, economic development, and value-added agriculture. Employment as it relates to keeping young people in Iowa and providing for a new generation of farmers also came up in several discussions.

Overall, the top concerns mentioned by the participants were livestock, infrastructure, environment/natural resources, water quality/quantity, and sustainability. These themes overlap and show up in a lot of different ways throughout the participant responses.

Livestock is continually mentioned and it may be the most contentious issue in Iowa's new bioeconomic future. Respondents believe the competition for feedstocks and resulting higher prices will force livestock producers to leave Iowa. Others voice their concern that jobs created by the ethanol industry will be far fewer than the jobs eliminated in the livestock industry. Several county discussion groups also mentioned that moving livestock to new locations might cause problems. Areas of the state not used to living near livestock might complain about the odor.

Infrastructure also was reported hundreds of times throughout the statewide discussions, and was reflected in specifics such as biomass storage, railroads, bridges, roads, trucking, logistics, pipelines, transportation, and traffic.

Water, both as an agricultural input and a natural resource, also was listed as a concern of Iowans. The underlying question seemed to be "is there enough water to support this new industry while sustaining existing agricultural needs and natural resources?" Concerns about possible water pollution from changes in agriculture related to ethanol production also were mentioned.

The environment/natural resources theme often was reported as a concern in terms of conversion of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land being put back into production, possible soil erosion, and loss of soil health due to stover removal and the potential loss of wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Respondents at the group sessions also wanted to know "what comes next;" not just in the next 10 years, but after ethanol and other biofuels take firm hold across the country.

We'll have a complete report available soon — be sure to check our website or your county extension office. This information will serve as a baseline for future studies and may support decisions on public policy, ISU research initiatives, and Extension outreach activities.

At this point, I would like to thank you for your time. I'm pretty sure that I've bent your ear enough and that you are anxious to get on with the tours. If there's time, though, I would be happy to take a few questions.