Scope and Objectives: South Central Family Farm Research Center, Booneville, Arkansas

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The South Central Family Farm Research Center is one of over 120 research locations funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. The Booneville, Arkansas, location was established in 1980 in cooperation with the University of Arkansas. In 1986 the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service co-located a Plant Materials Center at the Center. The Center is located north of the Ouachita National Forest in western Arkansas, south of Booneville.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

The mission of the Center is to develop, refine and validate technology for family farm production systems that will enhance biological and economic production efficiencies and product qualities. Because the scope, diversity and interactions among commodities and environments are complex, accomplishment of this mission will require many years of long-term innovative research approaches by the scientists involved. The family farm is an integral component of our agricultural industry and contributes to low-cost food, clothing and housing enjoyed by the American public. The family farm also provides for the production of export commodities to make the United States competitive in world markets; for national security by providing necessities that maintain our self-sufficiency; and for the economic stability of the community by providing much-needed jobs.

To accomplish this mission, research has been initiated in the areas of forage/livestock production and horticultural production systems. Research with forage/livestock production systems is concerned ultimately with identifying optimal combinations of grasses, legumes, animals and management practices with respect to biological and economic efficiencies. Research initiated in these areas includes forage variety research, forage management research, plant genotype by environment interaction research, cell grazing research, beef/forage management research, plant-animal interface research, animal genotype by environment interaction research, forage legume research and plant protection research.

Research in horticultural production systems is concerned with the identification and management of horticultural crops that can be incorporated into existing family farm production systems. Research has been initiated in the following areas: small fruits research involving raspberries, strawberries, grapes and blueberries; and vegetable research with crops such as European cucumbers, asparagus and vegetable amaranth.

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

The Plant Materials Center program was initiated by the Soil Conservation Service to provide vegetative solutions to soil and water conservation problems. The nationwide system of plant materials centers is critical to identifying the best vegetative solutions in a particular region under the soil and climatic conditions found in that region. High priority vegetative needs of the Booneville Plant Materials Center include protection of water quality, improvement of grasslands and reclamation of critical areas. These needs are addressed by the evaluation of current, commercially available vegetative species on problem sites. Similarly, new varieties are released from plant materials collected within the region after extensive evaluation and selection. These regionally selected varieties may have a wide adaptation and may be used to solve conservation problems in other regions.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS · ARKANSAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

The mission of the Cooperative Extension Service at the Center is to provide a linkage between the Center and various clientele groups in the center's ten-state service area. Our goal is to identify, develop, produce and distribute technological information pertinent to family farms in the areas of agricultural marketing, beef cattle/forage, farm management, financial management and horticulture.

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