

from the **DIRECTOR**



Agriculture is the ultimate service industry, helping fulfill the basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, while also providing opportunities for recreational activities.

Research in support of the farms and the multitude of businesses that make farming possible is a primary mission of MAFES. Our research scientists also are involved in activities that help improve the quality of life for all Mississippians, whether they are directly engaged in farming or just need better access to the goods and services provided by agricultural enterprises.

One project addressing quality-of-life issues is being conducted with MAFES support by the Social Science Research Center. Personnel at the center are pulling together information on jobs, transportation and social services in rural areas of the state and putting it into a form that can be used by community leaders and state agencies to better serve the needs of Mississippians, especially those in economically depressed areas. The story begins on page four.

Adding value to basic food crops through new uses and products has long been an important part of the work of MAFES scientists. Determining how consumers will react to new food products is a key part of that work, and a new lab on the MSU campus is equipped to do just that.

The James E. Garrison Sensory Evaluation Laboratory was dedicated in April and expands the capabilities of our scientists to determine consumer reactions to the products they are working with. The story begins on page 12.

This issue of Highlights also contains articles on how aquaculture has become a major part of the Mississippi economy and a report on the work MAFES scientists are doing in support of a crop that plays an important economic role in several north Mississippi communities—sweetpotatoes.

Horses are no longer the engines that drive agriculture, but they are a favorite source of recreation in Mississippi. MAFES animal scientists and other Mississippi State personnel conduct research in support of equine activities, and one outgrowth of this research is the availability of stallions with impressive bloodlines. The story on page eight explains why these animals are mutually beneficial to the university and the state's equine industry.

These are just some of the projects under way at MSU and branch stations throughout the state that ultimately benefit all Mississippians, whether they are directly involved in production agriculture or depend on those who are there to help meet their needs.

Vance H. Watson

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