from the DIRECTOR

Many people's concept of research comes from movies and TV and involves white lab coats and laboratories of beakers and test tubes filled with bubbling, smoking concoctions. There are, in fact, some MAFES labs that resemble the classic laboratory setting, although most aren't working with mixtures that bubble and smoke.

MAFES scientists involved in basic research work in such environments, seeking ways to apply new technology to biochemistry, molecular biology, animal physiology, biological engineering and similar fields. The results of their work help other scientists apply new knowledge to projects with direct application to improving crop and livestock production methods, food safety or other areas affecting the quality of life for individuals both on and off the farm.

Most MAFES scientists, however, do not work in the classic laboratory environment. Their days often are spent in research plots at the 16 MAFES branch stations and research units throughout the state or on the farms of producers whose cooperation helps apply research to actual on-farm situations.

MAFES personnel don't work in isolation. They are daily involved in cooperative efforts with colleagues from the Mississippi State University Extension Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, extension and experiment station staff members from other states and industry representatives. Most often, when progress is made it is a direct result of such cooperative efforts.

Recently, I read an account of the work of Miss Dorothy Dickins, who in 1924 became the first woman scientist employed by what was then the Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station. She conducted pioneering research into the food habits of Mississippi farm families. As a result of her work, Mississippi was one of the first states to pass legislation requiring the addition of nutrients lost through processing to white bread, degerminated cornmeal and other food staples.

Her lab on the Starkville campus was important to her work, but what Miss Dickins learned in the kitchens and backyard gardens of Delta sharecroppers and on small farms in the hills of north and central Mississippi was the key to providing information that improved the lives of all Mississippians. That pioneering spirit is still embodied in the men and women who are today's research scientists.

Vance H. Watson
Director

Volume 67, Number 1 WINTER2004

MAFES RESEARCH HIGHlights

MISSISSIPPI AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

Vance H. Watson Director

J. Charles Lee President

Vance H. Watson Vice President
Mississippi State University

EDITOR

Bob Ratliff

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Robyn Hearn

GRAPHIC DESIGN & LAYOUT

Annette Woods

PHOTO EDITORS

Jim Lytle Marco Nicovich

WRITERS

Tricia Hopper Maridith Geuder

PHOTOGRAPHY

Bob Ratliff R.E. Hutchins
Tom Thompson Karen Brasher
Clint Parish

MAFES Research Highlights, a quarterly publication of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, is available free to Mississippi residents upon request.

Mention of a trademark or commercial product does not constitute nor imply endorsement of the product by the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station or approval over other products that also may be suitable.

Requests for this, other MAFES publications, or change-of-address notification should be addressed to

HIGHLIGHTS
Office of Agricultural Communications
Box 9625
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9625

Available on the World Wide Web
msucares.com/pubs/highlights