ANNUAL REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESULTS

Fiscal Year 2006

COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Prairie View A&M University

Prairie View, Texas

April 2007

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COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER

OVERVIEW

The Cooperative Agricultural Research Center (CARC) is the organizational unit within the college of Agriculture and Human Sciences at Prairie View A&M University, originally established as an agricultural experimental substation in 1947, with assigned administrative and managerial responsibilities research in the food and agricultural sciences. The Center serves to coordinate research activities in four major areas: Animal Systems, Food Systems, Plant and Environmental Systems, and Socioeconomic and Family Systems.

The **mission** of the Cooperative Agricultural Research Center is:

> To conduct basic and applied research in the Agricultural, food and social sciences to produce research information and technological developments which improves the socio-economic conditions of the clientele it serves in Texas, the nation and the world, with emphasis on the historically underserved; and
>
> to participate in and contribute to the University's land grant mission of teaching, research and service by developing and transferring scientific information, technical competencies, and human capital in the food and agricultural sciences.

The **vision** of the Cooperative Agricultural Research Center is to respond to the needs of agricultural producers, extension agents, government agencies, scientists, students, faculty, and the private sector to ensure that the best research information and technology is being developed.

Our **philosophy**: **Together We Make a Difference**

BACKGROUND

The AREERA of 1998 amended the Hatch Act of 1887, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, and sections 1444 and 1445 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) to require plans of work to be received and approved by CSREES prior to the distribution of funding authorized under these Acts. The collection of information includes 3 parts: the submission of a 5-year plan of work every five years; the submission of an annual update of the 5-year plan of work, if applicable; and, the submission of an annual report of accomplishments and results. The 5-year plan of work for fiscal years FY 2000-2004 was amended in FY 2004 and extended through FY 2006.

This Annual Report of Accomplishments and Results is a comprehensive statement of the Agricultural Research activities for the fiscal year 2006, as required by the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA), and as allowed under the USDA's "Guidelines for Land Grant Institution Plan of Work". This report is parallel to the 5-year Plan of Work that was approved by CSREES in July/August, 1999, as amended in 2004.

This report has been reviewed and approved by the 1890 Research Director. Therefore, all correspondences regarding this report should be directed to:

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A. PLANNED PROGRAMS

National Goal 1: An agricultural system that is highly competitive in the global economy.

PROGRAM 1: Animal Systems

Overview:

Key research areas are designed to improve scientific understanding of physiological mechanisms affecting reproduction, growth and performance. These undertakings are crucial for development of efficient production practices and promotion of a healthy and competitive livestock industry in Texas. Application of this science-based information allows for the development of humane and cost-effective production practices that promote animal well-being and minimize stress. It is also necessary to produce animals that provide consumers with the quality meat and milk products they desire at an affordable cost. High production efficiency and lean growth are critical elements for expanding local and national markets and effectively competing in global markets.

Situation and Priorities

The science and landscape of agriculture has changed in recent years necessitating the need to implement management practices that accommodate needs that are concomitant with diminishing agricultural lands. In addition, there are increased demands being placed on the traditional crop sources (i.e. corn, soybeans, wheat, etc.) used in foods, feed and fiber. More and more of our base feedstock are being channeled into fuels and plastics production, which greatly impacts livestock production. Greater attention will have to be paid to alternative production schemes, in particular, more forage-based intensive systems.

Assumptions Made for the Program

Reproductive efficiency limits profitability of animal production systems. Research will address issues that affect lifetime reproductive efficiency in grazing ruminants. Focus areas include projects that identify factors that influence uterine health and embryonic and fetal survival. Decreased early embryonic losses will increase farm animal production efficiency and well being.

Biotechnology allows incorporation of molecular data into genetic evaluations. Assisted reproduction technologies, marker assisted selection and germplasm conservation provide the tools to enhance genetic selection of selected phenotypes. Identification of molecular markers for desirable traits, including disease and stress resistance, will facilitate recommendations for interventions that maintain optimal herd health and profitability in the Texas Gulf Coast Region.

Enhanced public understanding of the concepts and applications of animal well-being and the physiological basis for animal growth, reproduction, and cost effective production can be achieved through field days, workshops and other educational programs.

Ultimate Goal(s) of This Program

The overall goal of the Animal Systems focus area is to increase the efficiency of producing livestock with an emphasis on grazing ruminants (beef cattle and goats). This will be accomplished through research activities that generate scientific and technical information on animal production systems that are applicable locally, nationally and internationally.

Activity for the Program

Applied and basic scientific research goals are as follows:

1. Determine the efficiency of farm animal production systems through a combination of best management practices and genetic enhancement.
    a. Analyze the usefulness of various forage based production systems and management practices for the Texas Gulf Coast.
    b. Maximize livestock productivity on small acreage using forage based nutrient systems for livestock production.
2. Develop methods to improve reproductive efficiency of farm animals and improved conditions for growth and well-being.
    a. Define endocrine and paracine mechanisms which regulate uterine receptivity and support conceptus growth, endometrial attachment and placentation.
    b. Identify proteins that carry the carbohydrate recognition molecules on the endometrium that promote stable cell-cell interactions and facilitate placentation.
    c. Investigate factors involved in sperm attachment within the female reproductive tract and their relationship to fertility levels.
    d. Utilize functional genomic approaches to understand the physiological mechanisms that influence reproduction, growth and efficiency of food producing animals.
    e. Identify molecular markers for desirable traits, including disease and stress resistance.

Description of Targeted Audience

While the University's service area extend throughout Texas and the world, the University's target service area includes the Texas Gulf Coast Region. This includes the surrounding counties and includes the rapidly growing residential and commercial area known as the Northwest Houston Corridor as noted in the original Texas Plan. Therefore, problems associated with agricultural production systems, including those that exist at urban-agricultural interfaces and impact stakeholders will be addressed.

Outcome Target

Improved reproduction efficiency and improved conditions for optimal growth and well-being of farm animals. Availability of resources (demonstration/test plots, hay and pastures, co-grazing site, etc.) for use by research scientists, graduate students and Extension personnel for research and teaching purposes. Availability of demonstrations using latest technology for research, demonstrations and teaching purposes for herd/farm record systems, animal identification, etc. applicable to small scale producers. A greater public understanding of the principles of animal behavior, animal responses to their environment, and the biology of reproduction and growth. Increased farm income and profitability by understanding production economics, profit margins and clarifying marketing channels and timing. A more competitive livestock industry in Texas.

External Factors Which May Affect Outcomes

- Public Policy Changes
- Appropriations Changes
- Competing Public Priorities
- Economy
- Populations Changes (immigration, new cultural groupings, etc.)
- Natural Disasters (drought, weather extremes, etc.)

Description

Meaningful program content is dependent on an awareness of industry and producer needs and trends over the short and long term. These needs are determined by maintaining contacts with industry, producers, consumers, and state and federal organizations. Program inputs/design, implementation and output assessment will be monitored to allow for future directions. This requires a close working relationship between extension, research and academics within and external to our own university structure as well as with local, state and federal agencies. Measurable outcomes of program inputs will be monitored and evaluated continuously in order to determine effectiveness in accomplishing program goals and objectives. Groups involved in program development, implementation and assessment include:

The Cooperative Extension Program at PVAMU
The Department of Agriculture, Nutrition and Human Ecology at PVAMU
1862 and 1890 Land Grant Institutions
Texas Agricultural Experiment Station
Texas A&M University
Texas A&M University System institutions
Texas Medical Center in Houston
Agribusiness Linkages

Key Themes

1. Adding Value to New and Old Products

Research projects currently on-going at the Center address value-added products from goat milk as well as goat meat. Researchers are working on projects to develop new manufacturing parameters for goat cheese, ice cream and yogurt. Since very little goat milk is consumed as fluid milk, the demand for goats milk is derived primarily through its value-added components. Results from our work on textured parameters of goat milk allows for the manufacturing of hard-type goat cheese which have longer shelf life, and therefore greater marketability. Researchers are also looking into ways to speed the maturation and aging process of cheese. Researchers are also working on new products from goat's milk caseins, a by-product that offers great potential.

In recent years, goat meat is becoming more and more popular as the other red meat. However, the per capita consumption of goat meat in the U.S., in comparison to other red meats is extremely small. More goat meat is consumed in "traditional" fashion primarily by distinct ethnic groups. That not withstanding, the demand for goat meat is on the rise. In fact, the available supply of goat meat from domestic supplies have been short of demand in recent years. Preliminary data show that there is a large supply of goat meat imported from other countries, such as Australia, primarily as ungraded bulk carcasses. There is still much work to be done here as it relates to the implementation of uniform standards. IMPS standard for fresh goat meat were approved by USDA in October 2001. However, applying these standards to boxed frozen carcasses that are imported is still a challenge to the industry. Work done at our Center show that the quality of imported goat meat is inconsistent with the standards for quality as approved by USDA. To result this issue will require a concerted effort and collaboration among a number of agencies.

2. Agricultural Competitiveness

Improved genetics, management and new markets prepare way for small farm producers. Traditional production systems for small ruminants have not been effective in concentrated production systems. Production systems that rely primarily on West Texas rangelands are not conducive for ideal marketing. Great distances to markets usually mean less profit to producers or higher prices to consumers, and, unfortunately, more middle man involvement. Within the past decade, there has been an increased awareness and demand for lean red meat, and in particular, goat meat. Paralleling this increased awareness has been the slow movement of goat production centers towards these markets. Producers in these areas are generally smaller scale land owners who are faced with different management problems than were typically encountered on Western ranges. Critical to these new producers is an understanding of better land management, low cost production systems, and direct marketing channels. Understanding the impact of genetics, management and environment is critical to a profitable (or loss) operation.

Our work with goats focus primarily on improving genetics. In our dairy goat operation we using purebreed French, Alpine and Nubians, as our base stock. Through careful selection, artificial insemination, and marker assisted selection, we have improved the quality of our herd. Dairy does from our herd have won the grand champion prizes at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo for four of the last five years. Area producers are seeking assistance from us to provide technical assistance and advice on improving their herds. Area High School FFA/4-H chapters routinely seek our support and assistance. Each year for the past several years, dairy goats from our herd have won championship prizes at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Recent research projects started include 1) breeding management in goats (with emphasis primarily on out-of-season breeding), and 2) production management systems (with primary emphasis on alternative feed supplements). This work is designed with a two-fold purpose in mind: a) to the stabilize supply over the course of this entire year, and b) to produce quality meat consistent with newly established grading standards for goat.

Maximizing least cost production for small land holders. Scientists are looking at the effects of new genetics on productivity of forage based goat production systems. Optimum land usage (ie. stocking rates), livestock rotation, forage alternatives, forage supplementation, annual forage cycles, etc. are being examined with an eye towards market/price responses. The effect of genetics and management on market responses as well as carcass quality and yields are preparing a path for producers which directs them in ways to increase profits.

Alternative breeding/production systems. Typical production systems for goat producers follow breeding programs which result in marketable goats at a time when supplies are very high (May through August each year) and prices are lowest. Annual fluctuations in production follow classical seasonal patterns of supply/demand imbalances. When supplies of marketable goats are lowest (December through April each year), prices are predictably highest. Programs at our Center are underway to assist producers in managing their breeding programs so that marketable goat meat is available at times of traditionally high market prices. Methods of genetic selection for intensive breeding programs (3 kid crops every 2 years) and for extended breeding season capabilities are now being examined for possible producer application. The results of photo stimulation work which has been widely used by dairy goat producers is now being used on meat goats with great success.

Winter grazing options. Environmental/climatic conditions found in Texas and along the entire Southern U.S. corridor provides an environment for a more extensive and cost effective production system. Fall kidding programs which supply markets with goat meat at a time of highest market prices require Fall and Winter forages to sustain production capabilities. High quality winter forages have been used well with sheep and cattle systems. Current work at our Center is looking at various types of winter forage and different breeds of goats in an effort to establish feasibility of such systems for goats.

An integrated approach. With available farmland acres decreasing each year, scientists and producers must come up with practices which are more productive and environmentally friendly. A diversified, multi-product small farm production system which optimizes resources and emphasizes environmental integrity must be pursued. More and more, urban sprawl is cutting into historical agriculture based areas. Plans for functional interfaces must be developed so that the agro-urban interactions meet the needs of both groups. Models must be developed and tested which will address the problems of such growth. Intensive, practical and profitable agricultural production systems must be developed in this type of environment. Increased productivity from smaller production units in conjunction with urban growth may blossom into direct marketing channels for creative producers. Our university is situated in one of the largest and fastest growing rural/urban interfaces (Houston) in the country. Large farms are being carved into small ranchettes (5, 10, and 15 acre parcels). Many of these newly established urban/rural dwellers are seeking alternative uses for their land. Among alternative livestock enterprises, goats seem to offer the most viable alternative. Our outreach and research efforts are geared to assisting producers in defining the most effective method of rearing goats in this environment. We offer various workshops through our annual goat field day. Each year we attract 200-300 producers to our annual goat field day, with at least 50 percent of them being first time participants. Throughout the year we offer focused workshops both on-campus, and through the region that we service.

3. Agricultural Profitability

A very typical and legitimate question that we get from would-be goat producers is can I make money. Our work on enterprise budgeting indicate that yes goats are potentially a very profitable enterprise. However, there are still glitches in the marketing system for goats that must be worked out. Goats do require some attention that may not be readily apparent to the novice. Therefore, we recommend proceeding with education.

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productivity from smaller production units in conjunction with urban growth may blossom into direct marketing channels for creative producers.

4. Animal Genomics

The introduction of Boer goat genetics into the U.S. (1993) has resulted in a greater awareness of goats and their market potential. Traditional goat breeds in Texas are not meaty type animals. The Boer goat, a larger frame/meaty animal, offer potentials for increased goat meat production. Also, critical to the success of improved great genetics, is the adjustment/ timing of breeding programs to match market demands. As stated earlier in this report, the normal breeding cycle for goats does not correspond with the traditional peaks and valleys in goat meat demands. Alternative breeding/management projects are underway to address this problem. Boer crosses with other breeds helps in overall genetic improvement.

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With recent advances in gene mapping of livestock, the center has initiated steps for the collection, processing and conservation of semen and embryos of all breeds of goats. This endeavor is necessary in order to preserve genetic diversity in goats for future use. The International Goat Research Center currently serves as a satellite site to the National Animal Germplasm Program, centrally located in Fort Collins, CO, for the preservation and conservation of goat germplasm, in the short term. In addition to *ex situ* conservation plans, *in situ* breeding and conservation programs are underway with breeds in danger of extinction such as the Tennessee Stiff-Legged goat. Also Spanish and Boer goat genetics are being preserved. This collaborative project includes Langston University of Oklahoma, SUL Ross University, Alpine, TX, Texas A&M University, Virginia Tech University, ARS, Ft. Collins, CO, and the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy.

5. Animal Health

Our researchers are looking at animal from two perspectives: 1) Immune systems as it relates to respiratory diseases, and 2) Immune systems as it relates to parasites. The problems are particularly important in intensive rearing systems. In the cattle industry, many of these problems have been resolved. However, in goats, intensive rearing is a fairly recent phenomenon that must be addressed. We are looking at:

a) Pasteurella haemolytica – this organism is the major pathogen identified in the disease complex referred to as pneumonic pasteurellosis. It produces severe respiratory problems in goats. The mechanism of pneumonic pasteurellosis is still unknown even though bacterial virulence factors have been identified. Our research approach is to apply the principle of "competitive exclusion" using bacterial flora from the respiratory tract to healthy animals to compete for binding site, nutrients and the production of bacteriocidins to eliminate *Pasteurella haemolytica*. Bacterial antagonism or competitive exclusion by normal bacterial flora is considered to be the main mechanism of elimination of various enteropathogens from the intestinal tract of man and animals. Our goal here is to define bacterial interactions in the controlled environment of the bioflo 3000 system so as to prevent the colonization of *Pasteurella* (Mennhemia) *haemolytica* in the respiratory tract.

b) Caprine arthritis encephalitis – is a lifelong disease characterized as a species non-specific nononcogenic retrovirus belonging to the subfamily lentivirinae. The virus has significant economic impact on the goat industry reducing the longevity of valuable animals. The virus is transmitted primarily through the ingestion of viral contaminated milk. We have identified a class of antibodies from infected goats that cleave DNA molecule. This activity can be inhibited by a viral specific protein. This research seeks to understand the biological basis for catalytic antibody activity in CAEV infected goats. We have correlated the catalytic antibody activity with disease progression in infected goats. We have now began the work on determining if the expression of DNA hydrolyzing activity is linked to the antibody response to CAEV positive sera and if it can be inhibited by a synthetic peptide corresponding to the ectodomain of gp38 transmembrane glycoprotein.

c) Caseous lymphadenitis (CLA) – Caseous lymphadenitis (CLA) is a disease in goats and sheep caused by corynebacterium pseduotuberculosis. It is characterized by fibrous incapsulated abscesses in the peripheral lymph nodes and sometimes in the lungs and other visceral organs. The progression of CLA in goats and sheep involves primary wound infection, lymphatic and hematogenous dissemination, and secondary infection of lymph nodes and various visceral organs.

The diagnosis of CLA is currently done by the synergistic hemolysis test (SHI). The SHI test is easy to perform, inexpensive, and detects antibodies formed against the exotosin of corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis. However, the test does not detect subclinically infected animals. Our scientists are working on more effective diagnostic tests and vaccines for CLA.

d) Parasites – The control of gastrointestinal parasites is a complex but important aspect of goat production in Texas. Selection of a control program is designed to identify the parasites causing problems in a particular herd. Not all parasites are the same. Intestinal parasites may be shared with other hosts or infective only to goats. Some are highly pathogenic causing debilitation or death, others are of little significance even in high numbers. Some parasites flourish in warm weather, others in cool, and a few year round. Some parasites

stimulate protective resistance by the host, others do not. Drug treatments may work against all stages of some parasites but only certain stages of others. Each parasite has its own niche, some invade and destroy epithelial cells lining the intestines, others migrate through tissues. They may be voracious blood suckers or dwell in the lumen of the digestive tract competing for nutrients in the ingesta. With so many variables, it is understandable why there is no single drug control program, or management system available to work effectively against all goat parasites and why parasite identification is so important. Once identification has been made, a control program can be developed to fit the needs of the production management system and to target specific parasites.

Two of the most important gastrointestinal parasites found in goats in Texas, whether they are raised for meat, milk, fiber production or pleasure, are *Haemonchus contortus* and coccidia.

Haemonchus contortus are the blood sucking trichostrongy lid nematodes found in the abomasum. They can cause sudden death from acute blood loss or a chronic disease characterized by anemia and protein loss resulting in animal with lowered production of meat, milk or quality fiber. The life cycle is direct proper identification of *Haemonchus* and coccidial infections if possible is essential in developing and selecting the best control program for each individual goat production operation. Well planned programs usually control but rarely eliminate parasite infections. It is therefore important to monitor the efficacy of a control program, and efforts should be made to routinely check the levels and identity of parasite infections in goat herds. Research scientists at our goat center are working closely with scientists from Texas A&M University and The Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory to devise effective diagnostic techniques to reduce losses due to these diseases.

6. Animal Production Efficiency

Present: Our current research efforts have included leading a team of scientists in developing a decision support system for meat goat production. Embedded within this DSS is a goat growth simulation model, or a decision tool, to aid producers in maximizing their resources. The thrust of the simulation has been on developing a growth model incorporating the fundamental genetic processes regulating the accretion of body protein and appetite as well as energy and protein metabolism and their interaction with climate and season, temperature, nutrition, health and management on the growth and body composition and reproductive performance of individual animals. This has involved inter-disciplinary cooperative work, among the milieu of multi-disciplinary areas of genetics, nutrition, economics, physiology, reproduction, health, *et cetera*. The research team is searching to find a suitable point on the growth curve in goats (different breeds of goats) where growth would be maximized given appropriate levels of nutrition. This model will assist decision makers in making some critical decisions regarding input/output relationships.

Additional activities that have built capacity and transformed the culture of the goat center include the following: We have established criteria for meat animal research at our Center; equipped the International Goat Research Center with fenced breeding pastures and portable huts to facilitate breeding, pasture rotations and handling of goats; equipped the Center with individual feeding stalls for goat nutritional studies; provided demonstrations and answers to clientele questions and supplied information on technical know-how; and, actively participated in annual Field Day's to demonstrate efficient goat production strategies. Our research program this past year has expanded to include local producer groups as part of our stakeholder's input. Our goal here is to see if what we are doing at our research center will work on a "real" production farm and to get advise, suggestions and feedback from producers.

7. Grazing

Our Scientists are looking at the effects of new genetics on productivity of forage based goat production systems. Optimum land usage (ie. stocking rates), livestock rotation, forage alternatives, forage supplementation, annual forage cycles, etc. are being examined with an eye towards market/price responses. The effect of genetics and management on market responses as well as carcass quality and yields are preparing a picture for producers which directs them in ways to optimize profits. The effort is being coordinated with area producers and collaborating institutions in Louisiana (LSU and Southern University). Preliminary results of this work has been presented at scientific meetings (i.e., American Society of Animal Science and the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists).

Winter grazing options. Environmental/climatic conditions found in Texas and along the entire Southeastern U.S. corridor lend themselves to a more extensive and cost effective production system. Fall kidding programs which supply markets with goat meat at a time of highest market prices require Fall and Winter forages to sustain production capabilities. High quality winter forages have been used well with sheep and cattle systems. Current work at our Center is looking at various types of winter forage and different breeds of goats in an effort to establish feasibility of such systems for goats. In order to sustain production throughout the year, water is needed for forage growth. Water sources other than deep well supplies are being utilized to irrigate pasture lands. Surface waters trapped in tanks and reservoirs are being looked at as sources for irrigation practices. Potential problems associated with irrigation programs (foot rot, parasites, erosion, depletions, etc.) are factors that also must be taken into consideration.

An integrated approach. With available farmland acres decreasing each year, scientists and producers must come up with practices which are more productive and environmentally friendly. A diversified, multi-product small farm production system which optimizes resources and emphasizes environmental integrity must be pursued. More and more, urban sprawl is cutting into historical agriculture based acreage. Plans for functional interfaces must be developed so that the agro-urban interactions meet the needs of both groups. Models must be developed and tested which will address the problems of such growth. Intensive, practical and

profitable agricultural production systems must be developed in this type of environment. Increased productivity from smaller production units in conjunction with urban growth may blossom into direct marketing channels for creative producers.

8. Biotechnology

For several years we have had a number of research projects focusing on certain aspects of biotechnology. For the most part these have been externally funded projects (MBRS, CBG, NIH), nevertheless, they are an integral part of our research thrust. Projects include: "Cellular Basis for Pregnancy Recognition". The thrust of this project is to examine molecular mechanisms underlying the effects of gonadal steroids and conceptus regulatory factors on the cellular interactions which initiate placentation in ruminants. A second thrust has been "Regulation of Uterine Function During Pregnancy in Swine". This project looks at two aspects of endometrial function in swine and the factors regulating them: 1) proteins regulating conceptus/endometrial adhesion and 2) factors controlling secretion of proteins known to be required for conceptus/placental development. The basic goal of this work is to increase litter size in swine. A third project in this area entitled, "Dietary Lipid Effects on Brian Cholesterol Metabolizing Enzymes" is designed to examine the fatty acid profiles in the brain, cholesterol levels and cholesterol metabolizing enzyme activity in neonatal pigs.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

Our research are focusing efforts on the role of specific carbohydrate antigens play in the process of cell recognition and attachment within the female reproductive tract. They have recently evaluated this work on goats. Results indicate active remodeling of the apical plasma membrane glycocalyx of caprine uterine epithelial (UE) cells occurs during the first 24 days of pregnancy. The aim of this work is to define the cellular events responsible for the establishment and maintenance of pregnancy in farm animals and use this information to enhance fertility and thereby increase the profitability of animal production systems.

A second long-term goal is to develop a decision-support system for goat production systems. Our scientists have developed a simulated computer model to define parameters of optimal input/output relationships. Results indicate that intensive feeding as an input parameter does not add to the profitability in meat goats. However, pasture grazing with supplemented feeding improves handling and management of goats, thus enhancing profitability.

A third major goal is to develop a gene pool (repository) for the preservation of goats. This is a collaborative effort involving several land-grant institutions and USDA agencies. The aim is to ensure to survival of genetics for goats. Boer, Spanish and Tennessee Stiff-Leg are the three main focal breeds.

A fourth goal is to develop techniques for reducing the somatic cell count in goat milk. This will enhance the opportunity for more goat milk producer to achieve grade "A" status for their milking operations, thus increasing the viability of goat milk operations.

Galectins are a family of animal lectins with affinity for beta-galactosides and established roles in cell adhesion, growth and apoptosis. Galectin-15 (LGALS15), one of the newest members of the galectin superfamily, is expressed specifically by the endometrial luminal epithelium (LE) and superficial ductal glandular epithelium (sGE) of the ovine uterus, where it is induced by progesterone and stimulated by IFNT in concert with blastocyst growth, elongation, and implantation. LGALS15 is secreted into the uterine lumen and contains a putative carbohydrate recognition domain (CRD) as well as a conserved RGD integrin recognition sequence. Available evidence supports the hypothesis that LGALS15 functions as a secreted cell adhesion molecule that facilitates attachment of the conceptus trophectoderm to the endometrial LE through the RGD recognition sequence. The objective was to determine if LGALS15 is expressed in the endometrium of other mammals.

Any management tool which allows producers to be more efficient and profitable has a tremendous impact on industry development. The use of a simple management practice of increased light exposure of dairy goats during certain periods of lactation can greatly improve producers bottom lines. In addition, by decreasing the concentration of somatic cell counts in the dairy goat milk, producers are able to expand their marketability of dairy goat milk.

Currently a research program is being maintained entitled "Establishing a Biodiversity and Genetic Resource Conservation Center for Goats at Prairie View A&M University." The long term goals are: To establish a germplasm conservation center for goats, characterize goat breeds, improve meat/milk production in goats through modern molecular technologies and study genetic drift in small populations maintained in situ. Also, goats are being selected for resistance to gastro-intestinal nematodes. The main thrust of this research at the International Goat Research Center deals with conservation of caprine genetic resources, specifically conservation of goat germplasm. This involves collection of semen, ova and embryos from three goat populations: The Boer, the Spanish and the Tennessee Stiff-legged also known as Myotonic goats. This research is being approached in two ways, namely preservation of live or in situ populations and preservation in liquid nitrogen of the collected germplasm or ex situ conservation. The goal is to ensure that goat genetic resources are preserved. The three breeds of goats are maintained on pasture and bred through natural matings, i.e, exposing the does to the bucks during the fall. Since these goats are being maintained in live populations they are bred annually. Also, a project has been initiated to select for resistance to gastro-intestinal nematodes on the offsprings produced. The latter is challenged with a known dose of Haemonchus contortus with a two-way selection performed for high and low tolerance/resistance to the nematodes.

Goal 2: **A safe and secure food and fiber system and a healthy, well nourished population; and**
Goal 3: **A Healthy, well-nourished population.**

PROGRAM 2: Food Systems

Overview

The Food System Program (FSP) supports the land grant-mission and goals of USDA through addressing issues of regional and national importance of enhancing nutrition, food safety/quality and the related impacts on the quality of life. Critical issues facing the underserved population locally, nationally and globally involving the incidences of nutritional related illnesses and diseases, such as diabetes and obesity, and the increase in foodborne illnesses.

The goals of the FSP are:
1. To increase the body of knowledge in the understanding of nutrients and mechanisms implicated in illnesses and diseases.
2. To increase the body of knowledge in the areas of quality and safety of meat, milk, and value-added products.

To accomplish these goals research will be conducted to develop methods for enhancing the quality of food and food products, examine strategies for mitigating the transmission of natural food borne pathogens, examine methods for the reduction of natural and introduced toxicants in foods and feed, examine nutrient quality enhancement of food and food products, examine mechanisms involved in nutrient utilization and diseases, evaluate strategies for minimizing the transfer of microbial pathogens during food handling, evaluate strategies for translating nutrition knowledge into better food selection.

Situation and Priorities

These issues have been defined with input from discussion groups at the University including researchers, extension program specialists, staff, students and from reviews of current and related lierature, including the strategic plans of USDA agencies (eg. ARS, CSREES) the National Institute of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Texas Department of Health and Human Services. Our Cooperative Extension Program has regular future forums which helps in determining issues related to our clientele. The most recent data presented by the CDC indicates that 76 million cases of food borne illnesses occur each year in the United States with exhibited mild symptoms. However, some 325,000 foodborne illness cases require hospitalization and another 5,000 foodborne illnesses result in deaths. The outbreaks of food borne illnesses varies in method of spreading but a significant number of incidents are widespread affecting individuals in various places with the onset of symptoms occurring over a several week time span. Based upon CDC reports and unpublished data here at the University, in addition to technological advances in detection and control of pathogens, education of food

handlers and the utilization of food safety practices may be the most effective manner to reduce the risk of increasing the pathogen population. Futhermore, the prevalence rates (> 20%) of obesity is high in over half of the US. Although obesity affects the population at large, the populations serviced by our institution is disproportionately impacted. The viability, productivity and well being of society is at risk with the projected numbers of individuals that will be impacted by obesity and associated chronic diseases in the future.

Projects within the FSP will address the issues of nutritional related illnesses and the high incidence of food borne illnesses through research activities focusing on mechanisms and biomarkers of nutritionally and foodborne illnesses and disease, improving the organoleptic and nutritional quality and safety of food.

Existing research data indicate that much of the nutritional related illnesses are due to inappropriate nutrient-energy intake as well as inadequate physical activity. Furthermore the translation of research knowledge into effective programs for reducing these problems is not fully understood. Increasing the nutritional value of foods (whole, enriched, fortified or enhanced) through value added efforts and improving the organoleptic characteristics of foods will have a major role in consumer acceptance and food choices to reduce the illnesses associated with poor diet and inadequate nutrient intake.

Assumptions Made for the Program

The acceptance of any food or food products is not only determined by its nutritional and organoleptic qualities but also by its safety. Food quality and safety are the most important factors for consumer's acceptance and consumption and are issues that are federally regulated. The movement of pesticides, herbicides and antibiotic residues throughout the food chain is of foremost importance. Research that will examine the presence of these hazards along the food chain of from the farm to the table will provide knowledge for the withdrawal process, processing methods and alternatives to traditional methods for the preservation and increase in production of meat and milk products.

Ultimate Goal(s) of this Program

The Food System Program goals are:

1. To increase the body of knowledge in the understanding of nutrients and mechanisms implicated in illnesses and diseases.
2. To increase the body of knowledge in the area of quality and safety of meat, milk, and value-added products

Activity for the Program

Conduct research activities centered around:

-Developing methods for enhancing the quality of food and food products.

-Examining strategies for mitigating the transmission of natural food borne pathogens.

-Examining methods for the reduction of natural and introduced toxicants (eg. antibiotics in milk and Salmonella) in foods and feed.

-Examining nutrient quality enhancement of food and food products.

-Examining mechanisms involved in nutrient utilization and diseases.

-Evaluating strategies for minimizing the transfer of microbial pathogens during food handling.

-Evaluating strategies for translating nutrition knowledge into better food selection.

Description of Targeted Audience

The primarily targeted audience are the underserved population living in the surrounding counties and the Northwest Houston Corridor. This population is dominated by Hispanics and African-Americans. Also, this area has been designated by the State of Texas as Prairie View A&M University's service area.

Outcome Target

-Commercialization of methods/technologies for improving the quality, safety and use of food and food products for the reduction of obesity, food borne illnesses and other nutritionally related diseases.

-Nutrition/exercise intervention programs leading to a reduction in obesity.

-Increase in the dissemination and use of research based information into newsletters and incorporation into extension and other programs leading to a reduction in nutrition related and food borne diseases and illnesses.

External Factors Which May Affect Outcomes

- Populations Changes (immigration, new cultural groupings, etc.)
- Appropriations Changes

Description

External factors which may affect the outcomes of the defined programs include but may not be limited to competing programmatic As new challenges arises and are of immediate urgency, as a part of the food system program commitment to enhancing the quality of life of the underserved populations, the food systems program will address these issues. The defined program will not change unless effective programs have been implemented to alter the need as

addressed. Challenges, population changes with respect to nutritional related illnesses, i.e. obesity, appropriations changes and the partnerships gained or loss.

Partnerships and/or collaborations with the following agencies, organization and industries are crucial in accomplishments of the program's activities and goals
-Cooperative Extension Program at the University.
-Department of Agriculture, Nutrition and Human Ecology at the University.
-Other 1862 and 1890s Land Grant Institutions.
-Texas A&M University and with other Institutions within the System.
-Linkages with Texas Medical Center (Houston, TX), Nanofluence Health Corporation (Northfield, IL), Hibiscus Plantation (Waller, TX), and Alltech Biotechnology Corporation (Lexington, KY).

As new challenges arises and are of immediate urgency, as a part of the food system program commitment to enhancing the quality of life of the underserved population, the food systems program will address these issues. The defined program will not change unless effective programs have been implemented to alter the need as addressed.

Evaluation Studies Planned

- Before-After (before and after program)
- Retrospective (post program)
- During (during program)

Description

The food system program activities will be evaluated during and after program initiation. The progress of each activity will be measured annually as a part of the CARC fiscal year annual accomplishment and plan of work. The scientist leading each activity will have to report specifically on the progress that has been made on that activity. The progress report of the activity must include finished task, undone task and address problems and solutions with associated activity and a recommendation for continual support of activity. The overall program will be evaluated based upon the stated outputs and outcomes. The use and input of extension personnel, industrial and other partners will help to effectively evaluate and accomplish the activities and goals of the program. The evaluation process will review whether the facilities and other resources presently at the university are adequate to accomplish the goals

Program Outcomes

Development/licensing of a new patent (pending) entitled "Nanoemulsion Compositions and Methods of Use Thereof" (2006). This invention relates to antioxidant compositions, particularly compositions formed by natural ingredients, and methods for using said compositions to stabilize emulsions containing highly polyunsaturated lipids. The product will contribute to a market shift of functionalizing foods and beverages and thus increasing the nutritional value of foods in general.

Key Themes:

1. Food Handling

The transmittal of bacteria through food handling has become an increasing national and international concern. The recent outbreak of diseases in the United States created quite a national concern. The outbreaks of such diseases as Salmonella, E. coli, mad cow, and SARS, Avian Flu, etc. has heightened the awareness and the urgency of finding solutions to these problems.

At our research center, scientists are engaged in research to address issues related to food contamination during handling. Our primary emphasis is on meat. Because of the various ways that meats are transported, there are many ways for meat to become contaminated with bacteria. A recent survey by the Food Safety and Inspection Service indicated that whereas four percent of broilers entering processing plants tested positive for Salmonella, thirty-five percent of carcasses leaving the plants tested positive. This points to a clearly identified need for successful intervention strategies. At our poultry center we have developed a novel approach of decontaminating poultry carcasses. Application for a patent on this process is pending at this time.

2. Food Quality

Consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the quality and safety of the food that they eat. The proliferation of foodborne pathogens, the increasing concern about chemicals in foods, as well as mineral deficiencies in food, point to the need for research on food quality. Our researchers are engaged in research that addresses several of the issues: toxic metals, fungi, and mineral deficiencies. On-going research addresses such topics as Biocontrol of fungi contamination in food and crops, increasing the production of vitamins, minerals and hormones in plants, the control of toxic metals in soils and water, the control of oil contamination (oil spills, etc.), and the control of pesticide uptake in plants. Additional ongoing work is looking at the traceability of antibiotics in goat milk.

Food industry participants, from growers to servers, have always shown a genuine concern for the quality and wholesomeness of the products they deliver. Two of the biggest concerns are oxidation, especially oxidative rancidity, and microbial growth, especially foodborne pathogens. The oxidative stability of processed food products containing susceptible fats and oils is of paramount importance to the producer, processor, distributor, and consumer. The increasing complexity of the food system presents continuing challenges to enhance the oxidative stability of processed foods containing susceptible fats and oils. In order to improve and develop novel processes, scientists must better understand and evaluate parameters that are affected during processing, packaging, distribution, and storage.

Today's popularity of new products does not change the picture of food preservation. Consider, for example, the blaze of new no-fat and low-fat products hitting the market. In spite of reductions in fat, they may still need protection for whatever amount of fat remains in the product. Even non-fat products may still legally contain very small amounts of fat. It is well known that whatever their kind or origin, fats and oils have limited stability. During storage they undergo various deteriorative reactions that reduce their nutritive value and also produce volatile compounds, giving off unpleasant smells and tastes. In general, the term rancidity has been used to describe the mechanism by which lipids alter in nature, mechanisms that may have a biological or chemical origin. Among the alternation of a biological nature there are those produced by microorganisms (bacteria, fungi, yeast), which may be inhibited by the addition of preservatives, and those produced by enzymes, mainly hydrolytic rancidity or lipolysis. The latter may be inhibited by thermal treatment, by conservation at low temperature, or by reducing the percentage of water.

Alterations of a chemical nature are due to the action of oxygen. Lipid oxidation reactions, known as autooxidation, commonly occurs in lipids with a high content of unsaturated fatty acids and constitute the most common deterioration of fats used in the food industry. However, unsaturated fatty acids are not the only constituents in foods that undergo oxidation. Compounds that impart color and taste to foods, like some vitamins are also susceptible to oxidation, the existence of double bonds in their structure being their common denominator.

It has been shown that the oxidation of unsaturated fatty acids takes place through a chain reaction that essentially consists of an initiation or induction stage, which implies the formation of free radicals and hydroperoxides; a propagation stage in which hydroperoxides and radicals intervene and by-products such as peroxides, aldehydes, ketones, acids, epoxides, polymers, and ketoglycerides, some of which are responsible for the strange smells and tastes characteristics of rancid fats, may be formed; and a final, or terminal stage, that is characterized by the interruption of the chain reaction when the free radicals disappear because of the formation of dimers or other inactive products. In the propagation stage, peroxides may also interact with proteins, pigments, and other food constituents to generate substances whose chemical nature may be harmful to human health.

One of our food scientists is looking for plant-derived (phenolic) antioxidants to aid in the reduction of oxidation (rancidity) of food products containing susceptible fats and oils. These water-soluble antixoidants derived from plant tissues are capable of reducing the peroxide level. These natural antioxidants provide more cost-effective protection from oxidation than existing natural antioxidants, and they may be used for food preservation. Implementing these findings should aid in enhancing the oxidative stability of food products containing susceptible fats and oils.

3. Food Safety

Food quality and food safety research at our Center are integral to the success of our work. Therefore, it is often difficult to distinguish one from the other. Under the previous theme of food quality, results of some of our on-going research were delineated. Additionally, there are other projects that we consider food safety related: Antibiotics in animal feed, pesticide uptake in plants, antibiotics in goats milk, contaminated animal carcasses, etc. For years, feed containing subtherapeutic levels of antibiotics has been a common practice in promoting growth in poultry. Recently, this has become a food safety issue, particularly in many European nations. A recent study to compare the effects of yeast cultures, MOS, and terramycin as growth promoters in turkeys, show promising results. This work has been reported at scientific meetings.

Another of our scientists is looking at pesticide inactivation in plants by glutamate dehydrogenase. The ability of glutamate dehydrogenase (GDH) to immerize in response to changes in the environment makes the enzyme highly useful for the diagnosis of the response of crops to soil nutrient changes. The goal here is to better understand how nitrogen nutrients impact the nutritive value and quality of crops. The result is that by optimizing nutrient input would minimize the overuse of nitrogen nitrates.

4. Foodborne Illness

In recent years there has been a proliferation of foodborne illnesses attributable to foodborne pathogens. As part of our on-going research, we are exploring ways to reduce and/eliminate the spread of such bacteria. Results of our work are promising in regards to tracking the spread of bacteria on poultry carcasses. One of our scientists has developed a technique (patent pending) to virtually eliminate such bacteria by pre-slaughter flushing and rinsing.

5. Foodborne Pathogen Protection

Because of the various ways meats are transported from the farm to the kitchen table, there are many ways for meats to become contaminated with bacteria. Consequently, contaminated meat at the kitchen table, the final step in the food-chain, makes consumers vulnerable to illnesses associated with foodborne pathogens. Once the bacteria enters the restaurant or the kitchen, the possibility of cross-contamination of other foods exists.

As part of our on-going research to increase the safety of meats for consumers we have explored the combined effects of pre-harvest flushing of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract and ready-to-cook (R.T.C.) Carcass rinsing on the reduction or elimination of entropathogens from poultry and poultry parts with significant success. One of our scientists has recently developed a novel and potentially effective and safe method of improving the safety of poultry based on the application of tropical fruit extracts on the total elimination of Salmonella from poultry carcasses and parts. This method has been tested and application for a patent has been processed.

6. HACCP:

Our HACCP plan for meat handling covers beef, goat, pork, and poultry carcasses and cut products. The plan was accepted and approved by USDA, and has been implemented as an integral part of research, teaching and outreach efforts. Provisions in the plan call for the educational intervention and training of meat processors and handlers. A series of workshops and training sessions involving area meat processors, cooperative extension workers, 4-H leaders, are conducted on an ongoing basis. The objective of these sessions is to educate the public on proper techniques of meat handling and sanitation of equipment and facilities used in meat processing. In addition to working with local extension workers, 4-H leaders, local citizens and area school teachers have been included in the workshop as well. Also, students participating in our summer research apprentice program for high school students (RAP) are also given HACCP training.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

One of our long-term goals in food safety is to reduce the incidences of foodborne illnesses by reducing contaminated animal carcasses and/or value-added products. Our scientists have used poultry, goats, swine, and to a limited extent, beef cattle to identify practical ways of decontaminating animal carcasses. Results of our work with poultry have shown that there are simple techniques (patent pending) that handlers can use to significantly (more than 70 percent) reduce the bacterial count on poultry carcasses. This work is now being extended to pork carcasses and eggs. Preliminary work indicate that the results on pork will achieve results equal to or greater than that for poultry.

A third goal is to control the passage of antibiotics in goat milk and meat tissue. A number of analytical tests have been used to test for traces of residues in goat milk. However, the work is continuing as no particular test has yet been confirmed as reliable.

Sterol regulatory element binding protein 2 is a transcriptional factor with a role in regulating the transcription of genes involved in cholesterol synthesis. Obesity has been associated with a high level of blood cholesterol. SREBP2 is potentially ontogenic and genetically regulated. SREBP2 is found during the suckling period but is in greater amounts with the commencement of weaning, at day 25 of life. It is during this period, that lean pigs have higher amounts of SREBP2. This data correlates with lower mRNA expression of SREBP2 in obese human subjects and the presence of SREBP2 prior to weaning in rats. Furthermore, dietary influence on SREBP2 is age related. A diet high in a saturated fat resulted in higher levels of SREBP2 than a diet containing a polyunsaturated fat. This was most noted during the weaning period than the suckling period of lean pigs. The findings suggests that dietary intake at weaning potentially changes the level SREBP2 to reflect metabolic changes and need.

Goat milk and products made from goat milk have unique aroma and flavors that are preferred by many gourmet food consumers. Flavor is a major attribute that influences the selection and consumption of dairy foods. Formation of flavor is very complex and results from the interaction of several compounds originating from components of dairy products. The dynamic biochemical and chemical reactions in some dairy products, especially aged goat milk cheeses affect flavor formation during processing and aging. Maturation and aging of cheese are a time consuming and expensive process requiring controlled temperature and humidity. Finding practical ways to reduce the length of refrigerated storage and ripening of cheeses is economically important and will save the cow and goat dairy industry a considerable amount of money and, in some cases, will determine the economic failure or success of a dairy food processing operation. The formation of flavoring compounds in semi-hard and hard type goat milk cheeses can be enhanced by modified processing techniques. Accelerated ripening and flavor development in goat milk Jack cheese was studied at Prairie View A&M University. Addition of intra and extracellular enzymes from lysed bacterial cells of starter culture to cheese curd played a major role in flavor development, and aging and maturation process of this cheese.

Media attention has been focusing on dietary sodium levels and calcium intake. Consumers are responding by paying closer attention to food labels, and manufacturers are seeking new ways to address theses concerns. The challenge facing the food industry as a whole, is to reduce sodium levels without sacrificing flavor and texture characteristics while maintaining production costs. One option available involves the use of specifically designed salt replacements. A multifunctional salt replacement formulated with calcium-casein phosphopeptides (Ca-CPP) can be used to replace sodium in baked goods and snacks. This Ca-CPP isolated from caprine (goat) milk contributes to dough conditioning and provides a neutral flavor, fine cell structure and moist, soft texture in baked goods such as cakes, biscuits, pancakes, and muffins. The use of Ca-CPP affects sodium and calcium levels in baked goods and snacks. The intake of Ca-CPP builds healthier bones.

We obtained a 2-year USDA CBG Grant ($300,000. September 2006-August 2009) to establish a Food Science Laboratory at the Cooperative Agricultural Research Center. Among other things we will develop two new undergraduate courses to help enhance the Agricultural Program at PVAMU. The ultimate goal is to develop a Baccalaureate Food Science Program in the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences within three years.

Goal: 4: An agricultural system which protects natural resources and the environment.

Program 3: Plant and Environmental Systems

Overview:

The Plant and Environmental Systems Research focus areas has numerous projects that have been designed based on more than 20 years of research experience in the specific fields of study. Project work has been pursued on an individual as well as a collaborative basis during this time period; however the group will enter a new phase by developing one major project in which all team members contribute some portion of the work based upon their expertise, while maintaining the previous track record of focused research.

The major projects to be pursued by the group will focus on a very important and vital portion of the regional environment, the Texas Gulf Coast Prairie Wetland Ecosystems. The project activities will be focused on the following three main components, with the associated subtopics: 1) Soil and Water Monitoring – a) Soil Descriptions; b) Redoximorphic Features; c) Seasonally Wet Soils; d) Wetland Soils; e) Wetland Hydrology; f) Wetland Delineation; g) Water Table Monitoring; h) Water Storage Monitoring; and i) Rainfall Variability – Microsite Level; 2) Biogeochemical Processes – a) Petroleum Remediation; b) Toxic Chemical Remediation; c) Microbial Control; d) Fe and Mn Dynamics; e) Plant-Soil-Microbial Interactions; and f) Biodegradable Polymer Systems; and 3) Alternative Cropping Systems and Biomass Production – a) Bioenergy Crops; b) Environmental Biotechnology; c) Cellulose and Fatty Acid Enhancement; d) Biomass Genomics; e) Wetland Plants; f) Environmental Biochemistry of Prairie Grasses; and g) Plant Growth-Soil Microbial Interactions.

Situations and Priorities

Agricultural, environmental and energy resources within the state of Texas and the U.S.A. must be protected in order to maintain our quality of life as well as to provide stable economic growth. Identification of growth areas for continued collaborative research will strengthen our partnerships on all levels, including: university (departmental), regional (other universities and state agencies) and national (federal agencies).

Assumptions Made for the Program

1. Plant systems research is valued highly by our stakeholders.
2. Environmental systems components are beneficial to communities.
3. Applied and supporting basic research serve to bolster our fundamental knowledge within the food and agricultural sciences

Ultimate Goal(s) of this Program

1. To develop and maintain a premier research program focused on applied and basic research in plant and environmental systems studies.
2. To promote a central core research concept with associated integrated research, teaching, and extension components.
3. To serve our local and regional communities by providing plant and environmental systems knowledge which guides the growth of the urban fringe.

Activity for the Program

1. Newsletters.
2. Publications (journals, articles).
3. Abstracts.
4. Presentations (scientific conferences, workshops, seminars).
5. Digital media (video, MP3 JPEG, GIFF) of project work.
6. Audio (recordings, radio, TV excerpts).

Description of Targeted Audience

One-on-one interaction in field and lab project areas will highlight the research efforts. Extension is the end product of the integrated work within the research, teaching, and extension model.

Outcome Target

-Research results highly valued by stakeholders
-Increased recognition of the program
-Increased interest in the program by students wishing to matriculate in the program
-Enhanced attraction of external funding

External Factors Which May Affect Outcomes

- Natural Disasters (drought, weather extremes, etc.)
- Appropriations Changes
- Government Regulations
- Competing Programmatic Challenges
- Competing Public Priorities
- Economy
- Public Policy Changes

Description

Our regional climatic dynamics can have an extremely adverse effect on our applied systems research. Economic, appropriations, and policy changes will determine our ability to address focus areas. Government regulations will direct our focus as landowners and end users seek our knowledge to address plant and environmental systems needs.

Data Collection Methods

- Observation
- Sampling
- Portfolio Review

Description

Methods to address data collection will include sampling of research outcomes based on observation and portfolio reviews. Care will be given to maintain confidentiality within the project frame work while allowing outcomes to be clearly recorded based upon level of importance to stakeholders.

Program Outcomes:

Cost-effective Transformation of Higher Hydrocarbons (C13-C35) to lower hydrocarbon (C6-612) by Using Natural Agents to Reduce Sulfur Content in Petroleum Oils and its Derivatives (2005). This invention is the outgrowth research that began with seeking ways to de-contaminate soils around cattle dipping vats, tractor machinery yards, and waste oil runoffs. This product provides a natural way to de-contaminate soils and water.

Synthetic Biology (2006). A $16M collaborative project with Harvard University, MIT, and the University of California – Berkeley. This is a major breakthrough for our research center. It has brought high visibility and recognition. The project will involve one of our top scientists, Dr. Raul Cuero, who is the first scientist at our center to develop a patent. He now has eight patent applications pending. The project will involve the interactive effects of biological and chemical agents in the environment.

Key Themes:

1. Agricultural Waste Management

Agricultural waste accounts for much of the reported cases of non-point-source pollution in Texas and the nation. Major contributors to point-source and non-point-source pollution are Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs). The former are facilities housed in a relatively concentrated area, animals used for eggs, milk and meat. The main hazards from animal waste can be summarized as high levels of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) nitrogen, phosphorus, suspended solids, microorganisms

and decomposing organic matter. Several scientists at our Center are collaborating on research (TAES & ARS/USDA) to remediate and disinfect waste water from farm lagoons and dairy cattle runoff. Results from these studies are being used to implement strategies to reduce water contamination from farm runoff. We have used our own research center as a test model to develop monitoring points to track waste water runoff. Preliminary results indicate that runoff can be carefully crafted monitoring systems. Additional work is being done at off-campus sites in the Texas coastal zones to delineate the impacts of toxins on estuaries and waterways.

2. Biocontrol

Researchers at our Center are engaged in projects to define bio-control methods to reduce toxins in plant, water and soil. A new technology (patent) has been developed at our Center that reduces toxic metals such as copper, zinc, chromium, in lakes, ponds, rivers, and in soil by up to sixty (60) present. This technology is being tested for use in large scale municipal aqueducts and sewage treatment facilities. Biocontrol methods have also been developed at our center to control oil spills and de-contaminate water from cattle dipping vats. Results of this work is being tested for commercial application. Results of this work has also shown great promise in cleaning up oil spills in the Houston ship channel. We have very recently entered into a commercial agreement with a private company to commercialize one of the products developed through this process.

3. Natural Resources Management

The world's human population is projected to double in the next 40 years, and the demand for food is projected to triple because of the growing middle class. Right now only an area the size of North American is under agricultural cultivation, but many tools are available including biotechnology, new agrochemicals, and biological controls. Expanded food production can be achieved by cultivation of crops on challenged environments. There is therefore need for the assessment of the molecular changes induced on plant metabolism by abiotic stresses. Since glutamate dehydrogenase (GDH) isomerizes in response to changes in the plant's environment, it could be used as a high through put screening (HTS) target for assessing abiotic risks imposed on plants growing in challenged environments. Also, because GDH regulates crop growth and yield, the enzyme is a determinant of the biological efficiency of plants. But the molecular mechanisms of the enzyme are not fully understood. The broad aims of the work are to elucidate the molecular mechanism of the isomerization reaction, and to apply it as a high through put screening method for assessing the response of plants to altered environments. The results will on the long-term lead to improvements in the biological efficiency of crops. To date, results have been very successful on peanuts and alfalfa and recent work has begun on other forage crops.

4. Nutrient Management

Annual crops absorb a high percentage of mineral nutrients from the top soil thereby depleting the soil nutrients. It becomes necessary in the following cropping season to add

fertilizer to the soil in order to increase crop yield. But the productivity gains achievable through fertilizer use have led to excess fertilizer application with consequent contamination of surface and ground waters. Emphasis is therefore shifting from maximizing crop yields to improving the accuracy of fertilizer recommendations. Conventional methods for making fertilizer recommendation relies on chemical soil and plant analyses data. They do not indicate the response of plant metabolism to the nutrients. Furthermore, during crop growth, there is no method for evaluating the accuracy of the fertilizer rate applied to the crop. The consequence is that the conventional method recommends more fertilizer than the crop needs for maximum yield.

A team of our scientists have been studying the effect of fertilizer nutrients on crop metabolism with the aim to develop a method for making accurate fertilizer recommendations. The new method is based on the isoforms (isoenzymes) of glutamate dehydrogenase (GDH), an enzyme that is found in the mitochondria. The enzyme suffers differential degradation depending on the concentration of fertilizer nutrients applied to the crop. The differential degradation is visualized by displaying the isoelectric isoenzymes by native polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis followed by GDH activity staining of the gel. The method is being tested with soybeans, maize, and peanuts which are commonly cultivated in Texas.

A collaborative project in which scientists at our Center have been engaged in focus on "Systems for Sustainability of Alfalfa Production on Acid, Coastal Plain Soils Using Various Harvesting Strategies". Again, the goal here is nutrient management. Results of this work will increase the areas where alfalfa can be profitably produced in Texas.

5. Water Quality

Waste water from animal feeding operations (AFO's and CAFO's), and chemical fertilizer and pesticide applications are major contributors to point and non-point source water pollution in Texas and the nation. Research scientists at our Center are working on methods to remediate and/or disinfect water from these sources. Working in conjunction with USDA Agencies, the EPA, the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Service, our Scientists have developed techniques and strategies to reduce water contamination from such sources. We are using our own farm as a test model site to develop an effective water runoff monitoring system.

6. Wetlands Restoration and Protection

Since climatic processes are dynamic and ever changing, wetlands, which are dependent on hydrologic cycle inputs, increase or decrease in size due to yearly and decadal alternating wet/dry cycles. Wetlands are defined based on the presence of hydrology, plants, and soils. Each of these parameters is affected by the larger climatic cycle, therefore we should expect a buffer or transition zone to exist naturally on dynamic wetland landscapes. Soil scientists have been focusing on water levels in seasonally wet and wetland soils, because the wetness

conditions provide important clues to the soil features that can be used to identify seasonally wet soils during the yearly dry period.

A natural progression from research on specific wetland sites to extrapolation of the monitoring data to the larger landscape requires selection of typical wetland sites that have soil wetness related (redox) features that are measurable on the characteristic landscape. Two important soil redox features include: 1) redox accumulations of iron (red, brown, or yellow spots) and 2) redox accumulations of manganese (black spots). These soil features can occur along soil pores (holes), on soil ped (block) faces, or in the interior of the soil blocks.

Research sponsored by the USDA-CSREES at our Center has identified zones of maximum accumulation of these soil features which can be used to define the wetland boundary and the associated wetland buffer, which at present is not used as part of the wetland size criteria. The work has expanded to include several test sites in the Gulf Coast area.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

One of our long-term goals is to reduce the amount of chemicals used in crop production. Our scientists have developed biocontrol methods to reduce the amount of synthetic chemical fertilizers needed for efficient crop production. An added benefit of reducing the level of fertilizer usage is reduced incidences of contaminated water through run off.

Our scientists are also working on methods to determine the combined effects herbicides and pesticides in plant growth. Through a technique called GDH – scientists are analyzing the effects of various combinations of pesticides and herbicides in crops.

A third goal of our research is to develop a water quality monitoring system. Our scientists have established projects to monitor the flow of water runoff within various watersheds and climatic zones. The procedure is currently using manual monitoring check points. However, GPS/GIS technology is being developed to enable researchers to monitor these sites by remote sensing. This work is a collaborative effort involving several agencies – USDA/NRCS State agencies, and Agricultural experiment stations.

Chitosan is a derivative of chitin which is isolated from the shells of shellfish which is considered waste material. However, significant scientific findings of others seem to indicate that chitosan has the potential for a number of applications but most specifically in this project as plastics wrapping. Further studies will be needed to increase the flexibility of chitosan and to determine the effect that chitosan will have on foods.

Peanut is an important crop food, feed, and fuel. Industry and consumers are interested in improving the food quality of peanut, but peanuts are prone to attach by insects, and by toxic fungus called Aspergillus. Peanut farmers and processors will benefit from research that will lead to improvement in insect resistance, oil quality and flavor. The aim of this research was to

identify peanut genes that regulate its growth and the vegetable oil, proteins, and flavor qualities.

Since the Establishment of the Bio-EGIS Laboratory in the Cooperative Agricultural Research Center, (October 2003), we have trained six (6) groups of high school, college-bound students and, also undergraduate students in the College of Engineering; and the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences at PVAMU. These students have been trained in the basic skills of global Positioning Satellite (GPS); and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Judicious applications of these tools help in a more efficient management of Natural Resources.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The Cooperative Agricultural Research Center uses several input processes to obtain stakeholder input for purposes of designing research.

1) Joint Research and Extension field days and related activities (e.g., Annual Goal Field Day, County Extension Field Days, short courses, etc.). For twenty-four (24) years, the Cooperative Agricultural Research Center has co-sponsored an Annual Goat Field Day. For 2006 the format was expanded to incorporate a full college-wide field day and open house held on May 20, 2006. Evaluation sheets, suggestions were distributed and received from participants. Results indicate overwhelming interest in this activity.

2) Co-sponsoring small farmers conferences - for several years we have co-sponsored the small farmers conference with the Texas Department of Agriculture, The Texas Landowners Association, Inc., and various other co-sponsoring entities. The Annual Farmers and Ranchers Conference with the Texas Landowners Association is held in October each year. Over 300 farmers and ranchers participate, with issues and concerns being discussed. Typically, several scientists/faculty from our Center conduct workshops at this program annually.

3) Participation in the Texas A&M University System Agriculture Program initiatives:

   A) The Texas Agricultural Summit Initiative. The Texas Agricultural and Natural Resources Summit Initiatives began in 1993. It is an apolitical forum for people concerned about Texas' food, fiber, and natural resource system to meet and plan for a future we all share. The Initiative is based on the principle that Texans can find workable solutions to any challenge if given an open forum in which to share ideas. The Initiative purpose is to identify and resolve critical issues facing Texas agriculture by bringing together representatives from every sector and interest. Since it's inception in 1993, the following Summits have been held: Food Safety, Nutrition and Health Summit, December 1995; Farm Bill and Beyond Summit Conference, June 1996; Environmental and Natural Resource Policy for the 21st Century Summit Conference, November 1996; Rice Summit Conference, February 1997; Financing Texas Agriculture Summit Conference, May 1998; Texas Forestry: Preparing for the 21st Century, June 1999; Agricultural Biotechnology and Genomics Summit, October 1999. The 2001 Summit focused on Agricultural Policy (i.e., the Farm Bill) with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture in attendance. In October 2005, the summit was replaced by a listening session with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. In 2006 a number of regional meetings were held around the state.

   B) Texas Community Futures Forum. The Texas Community Futures Forum (TCFF), is a statewide process begun in January 1999, that identifies priority

issues and needs in all 254 Texas counties. A form of the TCFF has been used for long-range program planning since 1985, and is a broad assessment of needs sponsored by the Texas Cooperative Extension and the Texas A&M University System's network of county, district, and state faculty. The TCFF engages citizens, experts and staff from local and state agencies to plan for the next 3-5 years.

C) Texas Community Leadership Forums, The Texas Agricultural and Natural Resources Summit Initiative shifted to a new format called the Texas Community Leadership forums hold regular meetings around the state. These forums are designed to be more inclusive of grass-roots input and are held monthly at the county level. Representatives from our College and our Research Center are active participants in these sessions.

D) USDA Sponsored Workshop – When available, CARC scientists participate in various USDA sponsored workshops.

E) Advisory Committees – Many of our scientists, including the Research Director, who is a member of the ESCOP-PC, the SRDC Advisory Committee, and the Texas Department of Agriculture Organic Standards Committee, routinely participate on various advisory committees. Ideas are gathered at these meetings and are brought back and shared among other scientists. We also are members of Council of Ag. Administrators of the Texas A&M University System Ag. Program as well as the Agriculture Consortium of Texas.

F) Bi-Weekly Staff Seminar Series – Our Center conducts a bi-weekly seminar series. Each scientist is required to present a minimum of one seminar per year before their colleagues. External speakers are invited on a regular basis to share around topical issues.

G) Professional Conferences, Workshops, Short Courses – All center scientists are required to participate annually in a minimum of one professional conference. This is where new ideas are gathered.

H) Business/Industry Cluster – Our Center Research Director is a member of the Executive Committee of our campus cluster committee. Over fifty (50) private sector companies are members of this cluster. As a result, at least one cluster company is currently contributing to our research program.

THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

1) Merit Review

All funded projects, either Evans-Allen, Experiment Station (Hatch), or State Matching, undergo a scientific review process. Each scientist (or faculty) when submitting a proposal for funding support, must submit the name of at least two qualified individuals to provide technical review of the project. Additionally, the Research Director selects individuals to serve as members of an internal review panel in consultation with the University's Vice President for Research and Development. At minimum, three individuals review and evaluate each proposed project prior to approval for external submittal and /or internal fund allocation.

2) Scientific Peer Review

All research proposals submitted for funding (including CRIS projects) must show evidence of one or more external reviews. Written comments should be included with final proposals for campus routing. Routing proposals through quality control check points (Research Director –> Dean of the College –> Vice President for Research) are designed to ensure that proposal meet RFP guidelines as well as meet scientific merit qualifications. All proposals are quality checked by our on campus Office of Sponsored Programs.

MULTISTATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

We are currently engaged in three multistate research project. The first project is designed to investigate alternative breeding and production systems for goats. Institutions involved include LSU and Southern University of Baton Rouge, LA. Results of this work have been reported at recent scientific meetings. A second project which focus on the preservation of Goat Genetics involve institutions in two (2) states Texas and Oklahoma, and one USDA Agency (ARS) in Colorado.

INTEGRATED RESEARCH AND EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

* Houston Livestock Show and Goat Show, February 25, 2006 - March 18, 2006
* College-Wide Field, May 20, 2006
* Beef Cattle Workshop, June 10, 2006
* Artificial Insemination Workshop, September 2006
* Horsmanship Workshop, October 2006
* Youth Lab, June 2006

* Research Apprentice Program – July/July 2006

* Landowners Association of Texas, Inc's, Annual Small Farm Conference, October 11-13, 2006, Humble, Texas

* Jointly appointed Research Scientists/Extension Specialists

A third project, which is a Sec 401 IFAFS Project is a multistate, multi-institutional, multifunctional project, involving twelve (12) 1890 Institutions. The focus of this project is education, research and outreach on Biotechnology Education.

* Jointly appointed Research Specialist/Extension Specialist in 4-H and Youth Development - Goats (one in 4-H Goat currently on staff)

* Ethiopian Sheep and Goat Improvement Project

Summary of Expenditure Fte
Allocation by Goal and Program Area

	Goal 1	**Goal 2**	**Goal 3**	**Goal 4**	**Goal 5**
Funding by Source	Program 1	Program 2	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4
Evans-Allen	$1,087,836	$547,493	$547,493	$1,121,679	$21,475
State Matching	$979,218	$208,943	$208,943	$176,958	$132,844
Subtotal	$2,067,054	$756,436	$756,436	$1,298,637	$154,319
Fte Allocation	20.70	6.82	6.82	10.73	5.10