

MARCH 2002

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Department of
Agriculture

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ARS CELEBRATES NORTH DAKOTA RESEARCH THIS WEEK

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 21, 2004--The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is celebrating research at two North Dakota locations this week as part of the agency's 50th anniversary.

The agency's Red River Valley Agricultural Research Center in Fargo will hold its event today. On Thursday, the agency's Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory in Mandan will celebrate 90 years of U.S. Department of Agriculture research there.

"USDA began agricultural research at Mandan to support family farmers settling the Plains region in 1914," said Edward B. Knipling, acting administrator of ARS. When ARS was formed as a separate agency in 1953, it continued the research and expanded at the Mandan facility. The Fargo center is celebrating 40 years of research in the Red River Valley."

Larry Chandler, director of the Fargo Center, said he and his colleagues research new varieties of potatoes, sugar beets, sunflowers, wheat, barley and oats; grain quality tests; toxins in livestock; and insect and weed control. Chandler coordinates the research of six research units in three laboratories, with 125 employees, near the campus of North Dakota State University.

The 2,400-acre Mandan facility researches sustainable crop and livestock systems, diverse cropping systems, biofuel production, forage breeding, and soil carbon storage, according to lab research leader Jon Hanson. The 90th anniversary will be the theme for the Mandan lab's annual "Friends & Neighbors Day" on July 22.

This celebration will also commemorate a 20-year relationship with North Dakota's Area IV Soil Conservation Districts (SCD), which lease a 463-acre farm for the Mandan scientists to perform field-sized research with modern, farmer-sized equipment.

"Over the years, the Mandan lab has been closely followed by farmers-- particularly its research on finding the most successful crop sequences in no-till farming systems. This and other work by Mandan scientists has been widely adopted by farmers in Northern Plains states," Knipling said.

Two excellent examples of this technology transfer activity are the “Friends & Neighbors Day”, which drew nearly 600 people last year, and the annual “Research Results and Technology Conference”, which attracted over 160 farmers and ranchers this year.

“Both the Fargo and Mandan USDA-ARS research scientists deliver technology to agriculturalists through events such as the annual Marketplace for Entrepreneurs where they focus on transfer of new Ag technology. This year’s event drew about 5,000 visitors,” Knipling said. “Farmers, ranchers, and related businesses depend on this research to improve their livelihood.”

Knipling spoke at the Fargo ceremony today, along with: ARS Northern Plains Area Director Will Blackburn; North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson; North Dakota State University Vice President and Dean for Agricultural Affairs, Patricia Jensen; and others. Johnson, Knipling, Blackburn, and others are scheduled to speak at Mandan tomorrow.

ARS is the USDA’s chief in-house scientific research agency.

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