

The Greatest Industry In The World

Dr. C. Wayne Smith, Interim Department Head

I believe it was Earl Butts, former Secretary of Agriculture, who shared a wonderful story about being introduced to a gentleman at some function several years ago. When the Secretary asked this man what he did for a living the man responded, "I'm just a farmer." The story goes on with the Secretary using that comment to launch into thoughts about the pride that the gentleman should have in being a part of the agricultural production industry in the United States. We too are a part of the greatest food and fiber production industry the world has ever known, not the greatest in the last 10 or 100 years but the greatest over the course of human history. Our industry, production agriculture, is so successful that only about 1% of the U.S. population is directly involved in food and fiber production, leaving the remaining 98+% free to accomplish other tasks. But none of those tasks are greater than production agriculture,

for production agriculture makes all of the others possible.

Dr. Elsa Murano has been using a phrase lately that also encapsulates this pride. Her first comment when introduced as the Dean of COALS at graduation ceremonies or other such functions is to say that her College is the "A in Texas A&M." She also has made a commitment to establish a Forage-based Beef Cattle Research, Teaching, and Extension area on the former TAES Production Farm on Highway 50. Over the next three years (projected time table) almost 700 acres under a center pivot, plus additional dryland acreage, will be devoted to teaching, extension, and research activities dealing with the use of

forages in beef production. This is a joint effort by the Departments of Soil and Crop Sciences and Animal Sciences. Drs. Larry Redmon, Monte Rouquette, and Jason Sawyer are the guys charged with the development of this facility. To me, this is tangible evidence of a renewed commitment to production agriculture at the flagship campus of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

"We too are a part of the greatest food and fiber production industry the world has ever known"



Thanksgiving, 2005. Please consider bringing an extra dish or cash donation for "Aggies Serving Aggies."



Thanksgiving Dinner - A Time To Serve Aggies

Tami Hons

Our Departmental Thanksgiving dinner will be held Tuesday, November 22, 2005, in the Heep Center. It is always a great time to eat too much and see the families of our co-workers.

This year we would like you to do something a little extra. Dan Hale, a faculty member in the Animal Science Department, and Bill Biggs, a former Aggie, have been offering a Thanksgiving Dinner for the last three years to people living at the Married Student Housing Complex. With the help of volunteers they provide and serve a Thanksgiving meal, tell the

Thanksgiving story to the international body of students who live in the complex, and offer free bags of rice provided by HEB. Dan and Bill always run out of food. Always.

We would like to help fill the gap. If you could, please bring an EXTRA dish or cash donation this year. It would be greatly appreciated. Just mark it "Aggies Serving Aggies."

Two years ago, I met our departmental website designer, Li Zhang, at one of these Thanksgiving meals. Amazing things can happen across the dinner table.

The Greatest Industry In The World *Continued*

There are other reasons to take pride in our profession and in our Department. We have some of the most highly recognized and productive scientists, teachers, and Extension specialists in the U.S. mingled with some of the brightest young faculty anywhere. Our faculty conduct research into the most basic biological mechanisms affecting production and natural resources to the most applied production techniques, and our Extension faculty extend those concepts to producers, home owners, and other users of our natural and renewal resources. It is true that we have suffered the loss of national and international leaders across all disciplines and the economics and politics of our time have not allowed us to replace all of them. However, we also have mid and late career scientists stepping up to the plate to assume leadership rolls in our profession and we are on the verge of adding additional new faculty. We have completed the interview process and are awaiting approval from the Dean of Faculties to offer positions in Turf Ecology and in Aquatic/Soil Microbiology. The Dean has asked that Departments resubmit all approved Signature Positions for her review and we are awaiting her re-approval of our Urban Nutrient Management position. I have visited with Drs. Gene Nelson and Mark Hussey and proposed a plan to add positions in Soil Mineralogy and Turf Breeding/Genetics. A Soil and Crop teaching/research position in Wheat Breeding was identified as the highest priority in TAES/COALS and awaits funding. The implementation of these plans will result in a renewed and expanded commitment to natural resources, turf sciences, and production agriculture at College Station. When we combine those plans with the focus of our outstanding TAES and TCE faculty at ARECs around the state, one can only step back and take pride in being a part of this Department.

So while we have been through some tough times in recent years, I want to express my appreciation and pride in each and every person associated with production agriculture and particularly everyone associated with this Department. The faculty, staff, students, and former students of this department are the best of our profession. We have a lot of work ahead of us but if Agriculture is the A in Texas A&M, then Agronomy is the A in Agriculture.

The Soil & Crop Sciences Department moved from the old agronomy building to the Heep Center in 1977.

Gladys Retires

Mrs. Gladys Beasley, departmental bookkeeper, retired August 31, 2005. She began in the department as a press operator in the old Agronomy building in April 1975, moved with the department in 1977 to the Heep Center to run the Copy Center. In June 1981, she climbed the ranks handling purchasing, inventory and travel prior to taking the bookkeeping

position in January 1983. Gladys will be enjoying retirement with her husband, Larry, for at least one month. She will return to work October 1, on a part time basis.

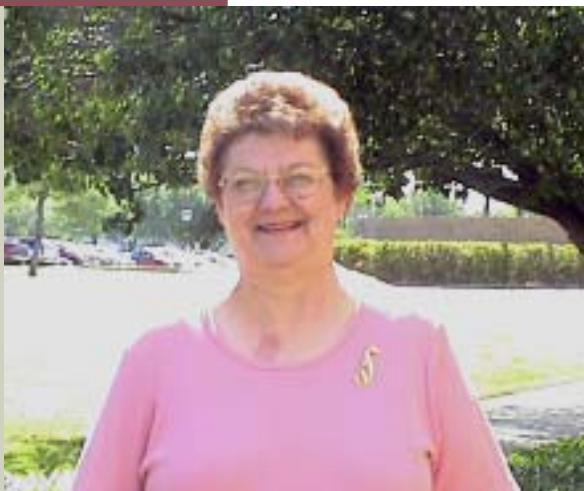
New Business Manager

Mrs. Pam Wilhelm has taken the position of Business Manager for all accounts in Soil and Crop Sciences, TAMU, TAES and TCE.

She has a vast knowledge of the department and has been the primary bookkeeper for TCE for years. She can be reached at 979.845.3913.



Gladys Beasley will return to Soil & Crop in a part time capacity in October.



Forage Sorghum Silage Production - Saving Water In The High Plains

Brent Bean, Ted McCollum (ANSCI), Calvin Trostle

The feed yard industry is currently the largest consumer of silage in the Texas High Plains. However, dairy production in the area is steadily increasing and is creating additional demand for quality silage. With the decreasing water table and increasing demand for silage, irrigation water may soon be the limiting factor in beef cattle and dairy production. Sorghum silage requires approximately 40% less water than corn, but growers have not widely produced this crop because of a preference for corn silage by the feed yards. Sorghum silage contains less energy but a similar roughage value as corn silage. However, new varieties of brown midrib sorghum have energy values intermediate between corn and conventional sorghum. Because of declining water levels and increased pumping costs, the production of corn silage in some locations cannot be sustained. New genetics in sorghum may provide an opportunity for an alternative crop to corn that would reduce water usage but produce acceptable silage for the cattle feeding and dairy industry.

In January of 2005, two of the major sorghum seed companies in the area were surveyed to determine if their sales of forage sorghums, particularly brown midrib sorghums, had changed since 2000. Both companies reported significant increase in their sales. One seed company reported an increase of total forage sorghum sales of 45 percent since 2000 with BMR forage sorghums making up 20 percent of sales. A second company reported a 10% increase in forage sorghum sales with BMR forage sorghum also

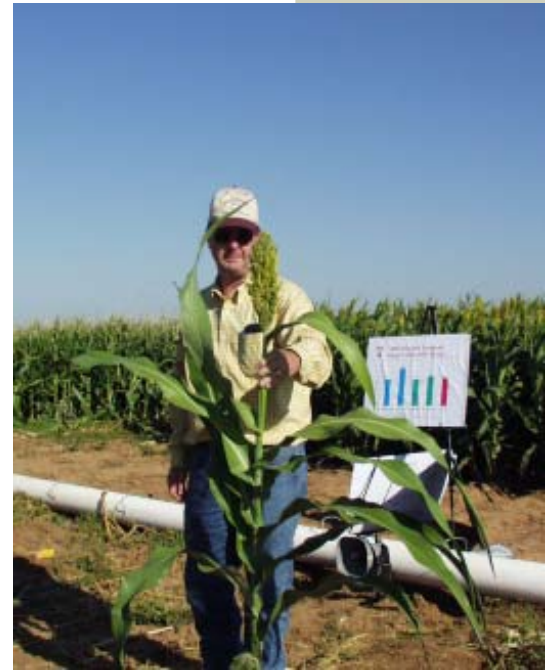
*Amarillo 2005
sorghum
silage trail.*

New sorghum varieties have energy values intermediate between corn and conventional sorghum.

making up 20% of total sales. Both companies stated that information provided by TCE played a significant role in their increased sales. A third company, which is a major provider of corn silage seed, stated that they had observed a 20% shift in corn silage seed sales to forage sorghum since 2000. The Texas Ag Statistics Service reported 130,000 acres of corn silage harvested in 2000, but only 110,000 acres harvested in

2004. The 20,000 acre loss in corn silage was likely planted to forage sorghum silage as is reflected in the shift of harvested sorghum silage during the same time period from 60,000 to 80,000 acres. A reasonable estimate is that at least 75 percent of the 20,000 acres was grown under irrigation. The potential water

savings on a shift of 15,000 acres to sorghum from corn silage is 162,000 acre inches. At a cost of \$10.00/ac-in, this is a total savings of \$1,620,000.



Brent Bean speaking at the Bush Farm Sorghum Silage Field Day.



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Don't Let The Name Stop You

The name of the Soil & Crop Sciences Department can sometimes be a bit confusing, since we don't offer a degree by that name. The primary undergraduate degree that we offer is a B.S. in Agronomy, with a choice of three options. Currently, we have 84 students pursuing our Turfgrass Management Option, 31 students specializing in Soil & Crop Management, and 8 students involved with our Agro-Industry Option. We also offer a B.S. degree in Plant and Environmental Soil Science, with an emphasis in either plants or soils. This curriculum, with its greater emphasis on mathematics, chemistry, and statistics, is primarily designed to prepare students for graduate studies.

Many of our students are involved in The Texas A&M University Turfgrass Club (<http://turfgrassclub.tamu.edu/>) or the Texas A&M University Agronomy Club (<http://agronomyclub.tamu.edu/>).



Joao Vendramini, new forage specialist at Overton.



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Soil & Crop News

New Faculty Join SCS

Joao Vendramini and Yoana Newman are new faculty joining Soil & Crop Sciences. Joao, or "Joe", is an Assistant Professor and Forage Specialist at Overton. He received his Ph.D. in Agronomy from the University of Florida. You may view his profile at <http://soilcrop.tamu.edu/professors/vendramini/profile.htm>.

Yoana is also an Assistant Professor and Forage Specialist based in Stephenville. She also received her Ph.D. in Agronomy from the University of Florida. You may view her profile at <http://soilcrop.tamu.edu/professors/newman/profile.htm>.



Yoana Newman, new forage specialist at Overton.

Fall Seminars
3:30 – 4:30 P.M.
Room 101 Heep Center,
College Station

September 21
Dr. Norman Borlaug

September 28
Dr. Robert Wiedenfeld

October 5
Dr. Jorge da Silva

October 12
Dr. Angelina DeCastro

October 19
Dr. Douglas Ming

October 26
Dr. Giovanni Piccinni

November 2
Mr. Kerry Mayfield
Mr. Travis Waiser

November 16
Mr. Ben Hagood
Mr. Comfort Manyame

November 30
Dr. Robert Lascano

2005 ASA-CSSA-SSSA Annual Meetings

The Soil & Crop Sciences Mixer will be held at Buca di Beppos in Salt Lake City, Utah, Tuesday, November 8. It is located at 202 West 300 South. Be our guest for a pizza, pasta and salad buffet from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.



Olympic Cauldron Park
More information at

<http://www.asa-cssa-sssa.org/meetings/acs/>