

# MEDIA INFORMATION

News Bureau

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT AWARDS SOUTHEAST \$90,126 RBEG GRANT FOR SUB-IRRIGATION RESEARCH SYSTEM AT NEW UNIVERSITY FARM

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo., Sept. 14, 2007 – Southeast Missouri State University has been awarded a \$90,126 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) to support a research project for a controlled drainage/sub-irrigation system at the new University Farm.

The announcement was made today during a check presentation at the farm.

The funding will be used to purchase and install an irrigation system below ground level so water is not lost through evaporation. The controlled subsurface drainage irrigation system is an advanced technology that allows surplus water to be removed from the soil during periods of wet weather. It also supplies water to the soil during dry periods, according to Dr. Mike Aide, chair of Southeast's Department of Agriculture, School of Polytechnic Studies.

Aide said "the system's technology is ideal for the type of soils at the new University Farm," adding that "subsurface irrigation – an irrigation system below ground level -- dramatically promotes higher crop yields and reduces energy costs. Aide said John Hestor and Mark Nussbaum of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Jackson, Mo., office used a computer model to determine the economic benefits of installing the subsurface system. They say the computer model demonstrates substantial crop yield benefits over conventional or no irrigation.



Pictured left to right: Dr. Kenneth W. Dobbins, President, SEMO University; Dr. Mike Aide, Chair of the Department of Agriculture, SEMO University; Jo Ann Emerson, U.S. Representative; Greg Brannum Missouri Rural Development State Director; Dr. Bill Ellis, Professor of Agriculture, SEMO University

"We anticipate that installation of this emerging technology and the planned research to document its effectiveness will increase rural prosperity in our region," Aide said.

Installation of the system will begin this fall on 100 acres of the University's new 252-acre farm at 6885 State Hwy. 25, one and one-half miles south of Gordonville, Mo., on the east side of Highway 25. Land was leveled at the farm this summer in preparation for the system's installation. Aide says he hopes the system is fully functional by the end of the year with use of the system to begin next spring.

Kenneth W. Dobbins, president of Southeast Missouri State University, said "We want to express our appreciation to Greg Branum of USDA Rural Development, U.S. Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond and U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson for their roles in helping secure funding for this project. The controlled drainage/irrigation project is very important to our new farm. Besides benefiting our own agriculture production, the system will become a model area farms can replicate. This new technology also will be environmentally friendly."

Dobbins added, "I would like to thank the USDA and NRCS engineers who designed and developed this state-of-the-art system for our University Farm. It is our hope that the Southeast Missouri State University Farm can lead the way on research with this infrastructure so it can be adapted into bottomland farming regions of the Missouri Bootheel and Ozark Border regions in the near future.

"These regions are dynamic agricultural resource areas that support a massive agribusiness sector," Dobbins said. "Thus, they are prime locations for using this type of technology to boost agriculture production."

Greg Branum, USDA Rural Development State Director for Missouri, said "USDA Rural Development is proud to partner with Southeast Missouri State University on this research project which should have positive impacts for years to come."

Aide says he hopes the University's controlled drainage/sub-irrigation system will promote research involving this technology, including possible studies of pollution mitigation and agricultural productivity. He says he also wants the new system to encourage land owners throughout the region to consider this technique and explore other emerging agriculture technologies that could provide advantages in their crop yields.

The University Farm's controlled subsurface drainage irrigation system was developed thanks to funding from a USDA Rural Development Rural Business Enterprise Grant. RBEG grants are awarded to finance development of emerging enterprises in rural areas.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that supports increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$76.8 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure, he said. As a result, more than 1.5 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's Web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mo>.

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