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GROUND
TO **GROCERY**

Agriculture in Doña Ana County

PHOTO BY STEVE MACINTYRE

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Bulletin

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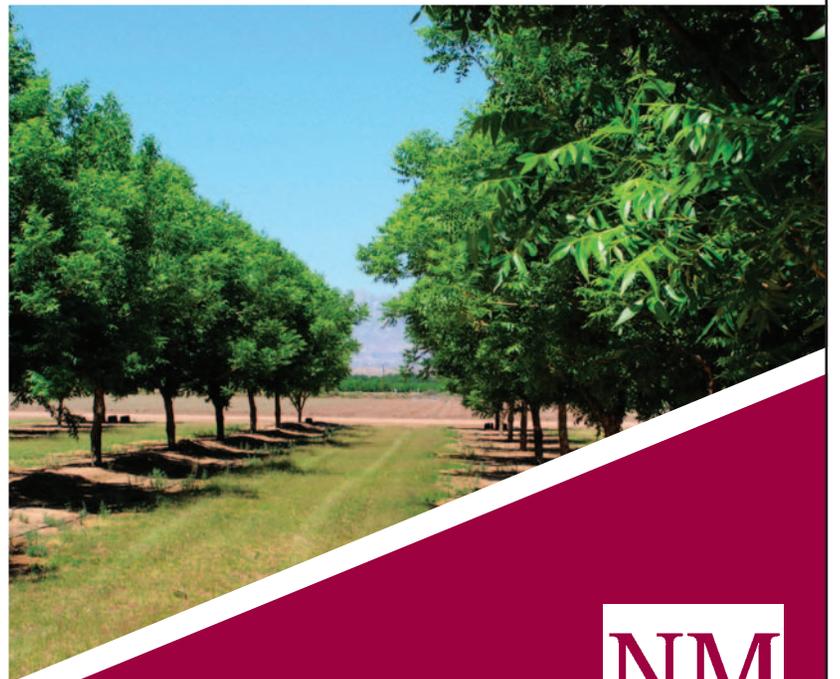
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FOR MORE THAN 100 YEARS, New Mexico State University has been at the forefront of agricultural research and education. With research facilities and Extension faculty located across the state, we are uniquely positioned to partner with our diverse communities to solve today's pressing issues.

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Greetings from the New Mexico secretary of agriculture

Doña Ana County has a rich and vibrant agriculture and food sector valued at over \$351 million at the farm gate. Doña Ana County is ranked No. 1 in the nation in pecan production and is the No. 1 county in New Mexico in overall crop production. However, agriculture is worth so much more than any dollar figure could value. Doña Ana agriculture leads to our high quality of life that we all enjoy each day. We are fortunate to live in a county exemplified by our rich diversity in both production and those who produce our food.

Agriculture roots run deep in this county. New Mexico A&M University (now New Mexico State University) provided many of the early research opportunities, and renowned researcher Dr. Fabian Garcia is attributed with much of the early success in developing the chile varieties we enjoy today. NMSU is currently building toward our future with the recently passed bond issue, which will provide the framework for tomorrow's



Director/Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte

agriculture.

New Mexicans have much to be proud of, and that sense of pride often centers around our cuisine. Our agriculturists produce the commodities that become the food which is the source of that pride. We turn milk into cheese, chile and onions into salsa, cattle into beef and much more. Our restaurants are known throughout the nation for their excellent selections that bring visitors and locals out every day.

We cannot forget our next generation. We have quality, successful 4-H and FFA programs, which are training and providing opportunities for our youth with hands-on and life experiential projects

culminating in life skills. This generation will utilize technologies that will enhance our ability to deliver local food products to consumers faster, better and cheaper. It is exciting to visualize the opportunities that lie ahead.

I encourage everyone to take a few moments to realize the gem that lies before you as you drive around and take in the beauty of Doña Ana County agriculture. Enjoy the local cuisine. Visit the farmers markets. Attend the junior livestock shows at the Doña Ana County Expo and Southern New Mexico State Fair. Visit the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum. Responsibly enjoy the magnificent, award-winning local wineries and breweries in the area.

I want to thank all of our agriculture producers. You all make this county the special place that it is.

Sincerely,

Jeff M. Witte
Director/Secretary
New Mexico Department of Agriculture

Other people to know in agriculture

John Floros

New Mexico State University President

"The food and agriculture sector is extremely important to (New Mexico), contributing between 1/5 to 1/4 to the state's economy. However, only about \$1 out of \$7 that the consumer pays for food goes to our farmers and ranchers, while the remaining \$6 go to food processing and manufacturing, transportation, distribution and final delivery. Our plan at NMSU is to help the sector grow not only on the production ag side, but also on the value-added side, and therefore, keep more of the total value of food products within the state."



Rolando Flores

Dean and Chief Administrative Officer of the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at New Mexico State University

"The College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at NMSU, through the Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service systems, is committed to helping farmers be successful and advance agriculture via the projects that encompass the recently passed GO Bond-Agricultural Modernization and Education Facilities; the Center of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture with its first projects being related to hemp research and extension center; and value-added initiatives to increase additional revenue streams from agricultural products."



Jon Boren

Associate Dean and Director of the Cooperative Extension Service in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at New Mexico State University

"The mission of the New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service in the College of ACES is to provide the people of New Mexico with practical, research-based knowledge and programs to improve their quality of life. Our programs serve as an engine for economic and community development and focus on agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development and health of all New Mexicans. Agriculture is critical in terms of the economic stability and growth of Doña Ana, not to mention the importance to the customs and culture of the county."



NMDA takes the reins in agriculture from Las Cruces home base

By **PAULA HEIKELL**

For Las Cruces Bulletin

Founded in 1911, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture is unique in that it is the only New Mexico state agency not located in Santa Fe or Albuquerque.

Instead, the state's founders established it under the control of the Board of Regents of the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, now known as New Mexico State University. As a result, the NMDA is headquartered on the NMSU campus, with a regional office in Albuquerque and staff and inspectors located throughout the state.

"The founding fathers of New Mexico were profound in their wisdom in placing an agency like NMDA with the teaching, research and extension functions taking place during that time," said NMDA's Director/Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte. "This has resulted in a uniform structure that has allowed us to respond more efficiently to producer and consumer needs.

"There is very little overlap or competition among scarce resources to address the needs, and it placed our department in the heart of agriculture, where producers in this area have instant access to the entire department," he said. "That is a benefit for NMDA and keeps us in touch with those we serve."

Not your grandfather's department of ag

The NMDA is a consumer-pro-



The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is located on the New Mexico State University campus. (Photo courtesy of NMDA)

ducer agency committed to ensuring food protection and helping the state to increase agricultural production and revenue. While the NMDA estimates that 75 percent of its efforts are focused on food safety and regulatory compliance, it also plays a multi-dimensional role in working with its many constituents.

On any given day, NMDA staff can be found handling a myriad of tasks, ranging from performing field and retail product inspections to organizing inbound trade missions for U.S. and international buyers, to presenting top agricultural issues to government and collaborating to protect the state's natural resources.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. NMDA represents all consumers and the state's more than 24,700 farms and ranches, according to the NMDA's latest statistics.

New Mexico has a long and successful agricultural history. It's home to wine and cattle ranching industries that date back hundreds of years. According to NMDA spokeswoman Kristie Garcia, New Mexico even has its own cattle-crossing border for livestock moving between the U.S. and Mexico. It is the fifth leading state for growing and harvesting dry onions, and ranked ninth in national milk production in 2017. New Mexico ranks first in chile production and peaches are the leading crop for the state.

The NMDA must be an expert on all these products and more. When the state takes on new crops, such as industrial hemp, it relies on the NMDA to ensure that cultivation complies with regulatory requirements. When emerging issues arise, such as the recent detection of chemicals, known as PFAS (Per-

and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances), contaminating the water on a farm in Clovis, New Mexico, the NMDA works closely with the FDA and other agencies to address its impact.

The NMDA is also the state's agricultural "brand ambassador," representing New Mexico at trade fairs, conferences and other events throughout the U.S. and abroad. It also invests in new marketing ideas. In recent years, the NMDA kicked off a nationwide green chile promotion, the largest single promotion in its history. It has also invested in extensive online marketing and social media programs to build awareness about New Mexico agriculture, food and beverage businesses.

Keeping an eye toward the future

In addition to managing present-

day requirements, the NMDA also keeps a close eye on how emerging trends will affect the state's agricultural future.

"Everyone will point to water as a top issue, but along with that, we are dealing with challenges with adequate labor and attracting the next generation of agriculture producers," Witte said.

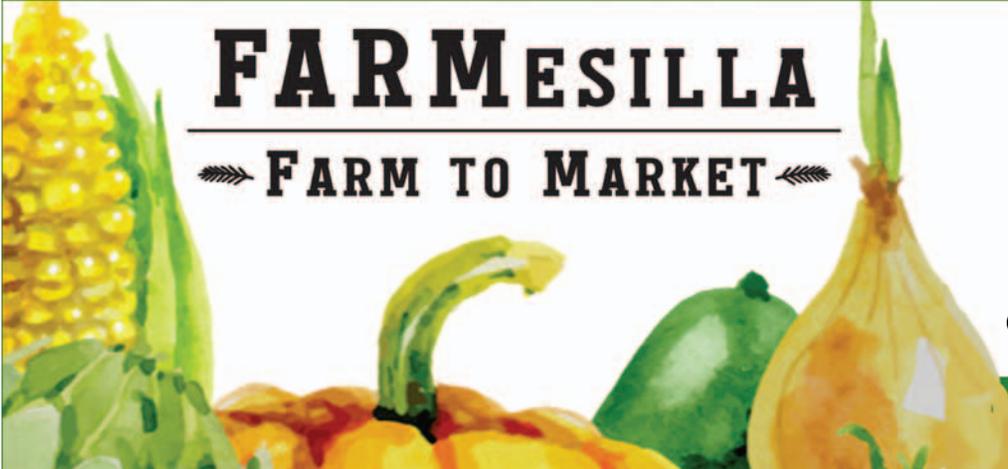
The NMDA, well aware that the average New Mexico farmer/rancher is over 60 years old, is working with other groups to attract youth through programs such as the New Mexico Youth Ranch Management Camp and New Mexico Agriculture in the Classroom, a nonprofit educational outreach program for K-12 students and educators.

Witte also cites technology as a key factor to producers' success.

"Good connectivity will be a game changer for agriculture in the future," he said. "The consumer is driving home source verification. Food safety is driving source verification. Technology, connected through broadband will enable producers, transporters and value-added processors to utilize new features such as block chain to verify traceability. Our department will be working with producers and others to evaluate traceability technologies as they work with purchasers of their products."

For information about the NMDA, visit www.nmda.nmsu.edu.

Paula Heikell may be contacted at paula@wordwell.net.



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Pecans take Mesilla Valley by storm

By **ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH**
Las Cruces Bulletin

Pecans are worth \$220 million a year to Doña Ana County, according to New Mexico State University's Doña Ana County Extension Agent Jeff Anderson. Because Georgia lost crops due to a hurricane last year and other trouble the year before, New Mexico is No. 1 in pecan production, and in Doña Ana County, there are 31,200 acres of pecan orchards.

"Doña Ana is the largest agricultural county in the state," Anderson said. "Outside of dairy and cattle, pecans are the largest market (in New Mexico)."

Anderson said pecans make a huge economic impact here. In addition to sending pecans to markets outside of the state, they are a draw for tourism, and there are all kinds of secondary products that come from the industry.

So, while pecans use about 60 inches of water per tree, Anderson said the economic significance makes the water use an arguable point.

"The water is going by in the river," he said. "It can go right on by or we could use it."

Before there were people in the Mesilla Valley, the river would flood across the valley, Anderson said. So, while people may think flooding (the trees) is bad, it recharges the valley's aquifer by spreading the water out.

"If it stays in the river, it stays in that area," he said. "But if you spread it out, it actually recharges the aquifer."

Anderson said pecans came to the Mesilla Valley around the turn of the previous century when Fabián García started experimenting with different nut crops.



Pecan grower Kristen Worthington poses with a bucket of pecans, next to a tractor at her pecan orchard in Mesilla Park in mid-March. (Bulletin photo by Steve MacIntyre)

The Stahmann family picked up on the pecan business in the 1930s and made it a local industry. They now farm about 3,200 acres of pecans.

In the 1990s, the Chinese market opened up and the pecan industry boomed and kept booming until 2018 when trade wars caused the international tariff to go from 7 percent to 47 percent. The price local growers get for their in-shell pecans went from \$3.40 to \$1.50 or less.

Kristen and Shawn Worthington have been growing pecans for two years in Mesilla Park. As small growers, they felt the impact of the price drop in a big way. The couple are transplants from the California Sacramento Valley and still excited about their new business.

Kristen Worthington is not too dismayed by the loss in crop value, although she said, "it was like a punch in the gut for some of the

smaller growers." She is planning to get machinery for shelling pecans and create a co-op with the other small growers around the Worthingtons' 5-acre place. She said the market for shelled pecans is less volatile than the inshell prices.

"If I can make this land pay for itself, that would be really good," she said. "The pecans are really perfect. As long as I can get them out of the shell, there is a lot of stuff I can do with them — candies, baked goods, boils, soaps and pecan butter."

Worthington said she plans on making various pecan products and taking them to the farmer's market to see what people like.

"I noticed at the farmer's market there wasn't a whole lot of people doing just pecans," she said. "But we are from a pecan area; this stuff tastes good. So, if I just make it all pecan-related stuff, I think people would enjoy it."

Worthington said she believes being creative as a small farmer is essential. And she is used to staying busy; she raised three homeschooled children and served on school boards in California. Here in the Mesilla Valley, she and her husband keep busy by volunteering at a local food co-op on the weekends.

Worthington is also exploring options for using the shells and trimmed limbs of her trees — "smoking chips maybe, or a compost pile," she said.

Worthington still thinks pecans are the perfect crop.

"I love pecans," she said. "After learning a lot about them, they are like the perfect thing. You don't have to worry about them going bad on the trees. You have a longer harvest time for them."

Elva K. Österreich may be reached at elva@lascrucesbulletin.com.

Pecans and New Mexico State University

By **ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH**
Las Cruces Bulletin

New Mexico State University Interim Associate Dean and Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station Natalie Goldberg spoke at the Western Pecan Growers Association Conference, which took place March 3 to 5.

Goldberg said the university has been going through an introspective phase, working on focusing its efforts as an economic engine in New Mexico.

One of the four pillars of NMSU's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) is food and fiber production and marketing, which pecans fit in well, Goldberg said.

NMSU is the lead institution with six others in a \$4 million-plus USDA-NIFA funded project. The college sequenced the pecan genome for the first time, Goldberg said.

"Genetic markers assist breeders in developing varieties and rootstocks for specific regions and conditions," Goldberg said. "We are very proud we are working in that area."

Goldberg said water is the most limiting thing in terms of growing pecans, and USDA funded research is happening at the Leyendecker Plant Sciences Research Orchards. Three research orchards are developing irrigation techniques and technologies, including drip irrigation that will help pecan growers in the west optimize irrigation efficiency and increase production and profitability for farmers per acre-inch of water applied.

"All aspects of water use affect agricultural efficiency,



New Mexico State University Interim Associate Dean and Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station Natalie Goldberg. (Bulletin photo by Elva K. Österreich)

profitability and human health," she said.

Goldberg also talked about the health benefits of pecans and research being done in the area of nutrition and food science.

"Pecans have numerous health benefits," she said. "NMSU is a leader in human health research related to pecans and an NMSU researcher, Dr. Wanda Eastman, was the first to show a link between pecan consumption and cardiovascular health."

The NMSU Cooperative Extension Service is a leading authority on pecan production, Goldberg said. They provide a comprehensive course on pecan production held every other October. The course attracts participants from all over the world, offers a solid foundation for beginners and lets experienced growers brush up on new information and techniques. The next course is in October 2020.

Elva K. Österreich may be reached at elva@lascrucesbulletin.com.

Long-time chile farmer reflects on his life in agriculture

By **BAYLEE BANKS**
For Las Cruces Bulletin

It was around the year 1947 when young Adrian Ricardo Ogaz, also known as “Dickie,” was first formally introduced to the lifestyle of a New Mexico farmer.

At just 8 years old, he began helping out around his father’s farm, waking up early every morning before school to tend to the sheep and milk the cows. Once his tasks were completed, he would make his way to the nearest mercantile to sell the morning’s fresh supply of cow’s milk, earning himself a little spare change.

“My dad told me, ‘If you want good shoes, you have to milk the cows and sell the bottles,’” said Ogaz, who would deliver full crates to the mercantile twice a week.

Throughout high school, Ogaz would earn his savings by slaughtering the lambs that he and his family raised on the farm. Once butchered, skinned and cleaned, he would lug the fresh, raw meat to his school in Hatch, New Mexico and sell it to his teachers.

“It taught me something,” Ogaz said. “I learned how to do these different things in my life, and those are some of my best childhood memories.”

Still, at 80 years old, there are very few things that Ogaz values more than hard work. Growing up on his father’s farm located just east of the Rio Grande River in the small town of Garfield, New Mexico, he knew that his life would always involve farming. Being exposed to every aspect of the agriculture industry at a young age taught him about the importance of diligence and overcoming challenges, one of which came early in his life as an emerging college student.

Although pursuing an education was important to him, Ogaz always prioritized his family over everything. During his first year of courses as an agricultural sciences major at New Mexico State University (then called New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts), Ogaz’ father urged him to



Dickie Ogaz at a farm machinery and vehicle auction at the Southern New Mexico Fairgrounds on Thursday, Feb. 21. (Photo by Pamela Jo Huerta)

return to the farm once business became tight. While he never returned to finish earning his degree, Ogaz instead went on to inherit his father’s farm and continues to run the family business of raising and selling crops to this day. Ogaz, who lives in Garfield, New Mexico, said Ogaz Farms is about 350 acres — most of it lies in Doña Ana County and the rest in Sierra County.

“We’ve got cotton, we’ve got alfalfa, we’ve got corn and watermelon, and we sell them there at the farm,” Ogaz said. “We have a little fruit stand, which I call our main cash flow. We also have chile. My dad never did farm chile, he mostly farmed alfalfa and cotton. But I said, ‘We’ve got to do something else, because we’ve got to diversify and try to plant other crops, and you know, make a different kind of cash.’”

By expanding the variety of crops grown on Ogaz Farms, he opened up a number of new business opportunities while increasing product demand from different states and within his own bloodline.

“I sell it all over,” Ogaz said. “We sell to California. We’ve been selling to California for many, many years, big volumes too, and well, we sell to anybody that wants it. I also sell the chile to my son at Seco Spice.”

An Ogaz family operation located

in Anthony, New Mexico, Seco Spice Co. was established by Dickie Ogaz’ son Ed Ogaz and his wife Julie in 1996. The company produces and sells organic chile powders, blends and spices made from dehydrated chile, most of which is grown and picked from Ogaz Farms.

The partnership has allowed chile farming to remain a tradition in the Ogaz family and has provided a creative way to grow the business. As the son of a chile farmer, Ed Ogaz attributes his business success to the skills he gained as a child growing up on the family farm.

“I can remember handing out sacks of chile before playing in football games,” Ed Ogaz said about his high school days growing up in Garfield. “It was hard work.”

Like his father, Ed Ogaz was raised to be diligent. At just 12 years old, he learned the ins and outs of farming, including how to irrigate, drive a tractor and tend to the crops. But above every life lesson he gained on the farm, Ed Ogaz still recalls the one bit of advice his father gave him that has stuck throughout the years: always give back.

“That’s one thing he instilled in me,” Ed Ogaz said. “I like to think I’m helping out at the high schools by giving to the athletic programs. I’m an active supporter of FFA (Fu-

ture Farmers of America), and I supply chile to Hatch Valley, Mayfield High School and Gadsden.”

As a generational farmer and long-time contributor to agricultural production in southern New Mexico, Dickie Ogaz has witnessed significant changes in the industry throughout his lifetime. Because of farmland depletions due to new developments, labor shortages and increasing competition within the industry, Dickie Ogaz is concerned about the future of Doña Ana County agriculture.

“The labor situation is the worst part,” he said. “When I started, it was

easy: you know you had sufficient labor, and the workers were real easy to work with. They were disciplined. And nowadays, you can’t depend on (workers) to be there day after day. They don’t show up, and that’s one of the main concerns we have in farming from when I started to now.”

According to Dickie Ogaz, growing populations throughout the county has posed another great threat to the farming business. New developments are often built on fertile soil, leaving little land available to grow crops.

“There have been a lot of changes,” Dickie Ogaz said. “The county has been getting more populated. Before, there was so much agriculture, and now it’s all buildings and homes. In the 60s, I was farming about 700 acres, and now I’m down to half because of that reason.”

Despite the challenges, Dickie Ogaz’ hardworking attitude has allowed him to make significant contributions to Doña Ana County’s agriculture industry. And while he could retire at any time, he doesn’t plan on slowing down any time soon.

“I enjoy it,” he said. “It’s in my blood, and you know, I just like it. Like I said, I’m doing it because I say, ‘What am I going to do if I quit?’ My roots are on that farm, and I guess I’ll be there until I die.”

Baylee Banks may be contacted at bbanks@nmda.nmsu.edu.

Did you know?

Green chile

• Doña Ana County produced almost 15,000 tons of chile in 2017, likely second only to Luna County, whose data was withheld, according to the New Mexico Department of Agriculture’s most recent statistics.

• Famous horticulturist Fabian Garcia, after which the Fabian Garcia Research Center at New Mexico State University was named, produced the first reliable chile pod, which was the beginning of the hot “Sandia” pepper. He began standardizing chile pepper varieties in 1888 and is known as the father of the U.S. chile pepper industry, according to the NMSU website.



NMSU's AgSprint: Guiding entrepreneurs in state's oldest industry

By MIKE COOK
Las Cruces Bulletin

No one had to drag him, but it really did take wild horses to get Roch Hart to New Mexico State University's Arrowhead Center agriculture technology development program.

A retired police officer and ranch manager based in Albuquerque, Hart wanted to find a humane solution to the wild horse overpopulation problem.

According to the federal Bureau of Land Management, BLM manages and protects wild horses and burros on 26.9 million acres of public lands in New Mexico and nine other western states. The BLM estimates there were nearly 82,000 wild horses and burros in those states as of March 1, 2018 and said the maximum appropriate management level was less than 27,000.

"The wheels started turning and (Hart) soon formulated his ideas and approached NMSU," according to Hart's Wildlife Protection Management (WPM) website.

WPM became one of the first AgSprint programs in 2017. Hart's technology, which allows for the remote delivery of vaccines, contraceptives and radio frequency identification (RFID) chips to help manage and catalog a healthy sustainable population "is a safe and effective solution," according to NMSU.

AgSprint is one of Arrowhead Center's suite of "sprint programs" that help entrepreneurs develop their original ideas and set up their own businesses by "covering all the bases



Participating in Arrowhead Center's 2017 AgAssembly Startup Pitch were, from left, Roch Hart, Wendy Lu McGill, Ajit Karna, Patricio Alvarez Tostado, Tracey Carrillo, Jonas Moya and Robert Hockaday. Ag Assembly invites food and agriculture technology startups from the Southwest to pitch their business ideas to executives, investors, entrepreneurs and others. (Photo courtesy of Zetdi Sloan, NMSU Arrowhead Center)

in the entrepreneurial journey" said Arrowhead Technology Incubator Director Zetdi Sloan.

"AgSprint offers innovators in agriculture the tools to perform customer discovery in a cohort setting," according to NMSU. Teams selected for the program receive education, mentorship and funding, including \$2,000 in participant support and a potential \$20,000 investment from the Arrowhead Investment Fund (AIF).

Arrowhead's holistic approach to agriculture technology development includes business support and technical assistance like a prototyping lab, field trials and pilot projects, along with online connections to patent and intellectual attorneys, accountants, engineers and more than 40 enterprise advisors across the U.S., Sloan said. It's all designed "to reduce risk and improve market viability," according to the AgSprint webpage.

The five-month AgSprint program includes up to eight participants in

each cohort, engaging in "friendly competition" as experts from companies like Intel and Dell Computers and successful entrepreneurs help each participant turn his or her idea into a marketable product, develop a customer base, negotiate governmental regulations, consider the competition, find investors and pay the bills.

"People come in with really great ideas," Sloan said, but they often haven't considered what lies ahead. "Every startup has its own challenges," she said. AgSprint works with individuals to validate their ideas and develop a niche for their unique products.

From early on, cohort members get the hang of making cold calls on potential buyers, Sloan said, and explore the entire "customer ecosystem," including how to reach the potential customers' decision makers.

Budding entrepreneurs also get to talk directly to engineers about the technical feasibility of their ideas, and they connect with researchers "who

have networks all over the world," Sloan said.

It's all done virtually so everyone, no matter how rural or remote his or her location, has equal access to all of AgSprint's assets.

"AgSprint is just what New Mexico needed for this important sector of our economy," said NMSU Chancellor Emeritus and former New Mexico Gov. Garrey Carruthers, who was one of the originators of the Sprint concept when he was dean of NMSU's College of Business.

"I am constantly amazed regarding how effective Arrowhead has been in inspiring entrepreneurs in New Mexico and assisting them in developing their business ideas and business plans."

AgSprint's guidance and support don't stop once the five months are over, as the sprint turns into a marathon.

Hart said connections made during WPM's AgSprint process are still ongoing today and that the team's

next vital hurdle is to create a RFID implementation and ID system that will allow them to chip a horse in the wild, then read that chip later.

"We are about (one and a half) months away in achieving that, I hope," Hart said in early March. "If so, the system should be complete and ready for marketing."

Hart said this system would allow anyone in the world to deliver a vaccine, ID the animal, then track it to stations anywhere it visits.

"We knew that if we could tackle the horse issue that other animals, such as deer in urban areas, feral pigs, kangaroos (and more), all could be handled with the same concept," Hart said. "It could be revolutionary in the wildlife management all over the world."

In addition to WPM, AgSprint success stories include a drone program based in Alamogordo that helps farmers deal with issues like plant diseases, water needs and soil adaptation, Sloan said. Another startup got a patent for brackish water research.

AgSprint is one of only 16 programs of its type worldwide.

"There aren't a lot of these programs related to ag tech," Sloan said. "We're making a name for ourselves here."

Applications for the next AgSprint cohort close April 4. Apply at arrowheadcenter.nmsu.edu/agsprint.

For more information, contact Sloan at 575-646-7833 or zrunyan@ad.nmsu.edu.

Mike Cook may be contacted at mike@lascrucesbulletin.com.

Arrowhead Park: Supporting ag business and innovation statewide

By MIKE COOK
Las Cruces Bulletin

Created in 2005, New Mexico State University's Arrowhead Center helped more than 700 entrepreneurs in all 33 New Mexico counties to start or grow their businesses, generating an economic impact of more than \$149 million in the

2018 fiscal year. It's also a major player in agricultural research and technology development.

"Arrowhead Center is committed to supporting AgriBusiness and the development of ag innovations across the state in conjunction with NMSU's land-grant mission," said Arrowhead Center Director and CEO Kathy Hansen. "Arrowhead hosts a

number of programs that support and advance ag technology."

Arrowhead works closely with NMSU faculty and researchers to secure legal protection of NMSU's innovative ag research products. Businesses led by ag innovators across the state can gain assistance through a suite of programs: AgSprint business

accelerator, New Mexico Small Business Assistance program, Ag Innovation Challenges supported by student teams from the College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES), and an Agri-Business Accelerator program that will be launched in partnership with the College of ACES later this year.

"Collectively, we aim for these programs to support business growth that makes a significant economic impact throughout the state," Hansen said.

Arrowhead Center manages Arrowhead Park, a 200-acre community for science, technology and business. The park is home to more than 25 active businesses and startups, ac-

cording to NMSU.

Arrowhead Center is located at 3655 Research Drive on the NMSU campus. For information, call 575-646-5575, email kmorehea@ad.nmsu.edu or visit arrowheadcenter.nmsu.edu.

Mike Cook may be contacted at mike@lascrucesbulletin.com.

New facilities shape NMSU's future in agriculture

By MIKE COOK
Las Cruces Bulletin

A general obligation bond passed overwhelmingly by New Mexico voters last November is coming up ACES for New Mexico State University.

With the \$25 million generated by the bond – plus another \$10 million the university is raising separately – the NMSU College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) will construct a food science, security, and safety facility and a biomedical research center, along with building a new animal nutrition and feed manufacturing facility that will replace a 60-year-old building on campus.

The new facilities will help transform NMSU into an international leader in agricultural research, technology and development, ACES Dean Roldando Flores said in a March 14 interview, and will bring more students and faculty to the university and provide economic development and job opportunities in Las Cruces and statewide.

“I’m excited because the three of them connect,” Flores said.

Agriculture has gone beyond the “from-farm-to-table” movement to “from farm to gut,” he said. Transforming NMSU into “a national hub” for food safety and security and focusing more on innovation and value added will mean “more sophisticated agriculture” that will produce more complex, higher-value products, Flores said. The biomedical research center will allow ACES to better understand the foods that are produced in Las Cruces and statewide and “how they behave in our gut,” he said.

“Agriculture is terribly criti-



Artist's rendering of three new buildings to be constructed on the New Mexico State University campus show 1) the food science, security, and safety facility, 2) the biomedical research center and 3) animal nutrition and feed manufacturing facility. (NMSU photo of rendering courtesy of Parkhill, Smith & Cooper)

cal for the state of New Mexico and the rest of the world,” Flores said. “We need to eat. We need to produce food.”

There is also a need “to look at agriculture somewhat differently,” he said.

Focusing more on value-added agriculture, for example, will mean that commodities produced in New Mexico can be developed into other marketable products in state instead of being shipped to other states. For example, Flores said, 98 percent of the beef raised in New Mexico is currently being exported elsewhere for processing.

With NMSU’s long tradition as an ag school, its semi-arid climate and location near a major international border, “we have all the parts (to take) a giant leap forward,” Flores said. “We can make it a reality.”

The new facilities will further ACES’ mission to serve as “an engine for economic and community development in New Mexico” by creating new agricultural products and helping farmers and ranchers develop new niche markets, the dean said. They will also allow for the addition of new

master’s and Ph.D. programs in the college, Flores said, and will enhance its distance-delivery programs and help it to connect better with and build the food-processing workforce.

Enhancing its mission will also boost student recruitment, the dean said.

“We need to develop more Fabian Garcias,” Flores said, remembering “the chile-pepper pioneer (whose) monumental achievements are continuing to inspire researchers and students at NMSU,” according to the university’s Chile Pepper Institute.

The local agricultural community is very supportive of the new agriculture facilities at NMSU, Flores said, and the college welcomes the interest and support of everyone.

“Las Cruces is an agriculture town,” he said.

The new construction should be finished by 2022, but “we’re not waiting for the buildings,” Flores said.

“We are poised to do a lot of great things.”

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How the university's new buildings will impact the economy

Food science, security, and safety facility:

- An estimated 600 students every year would use the facility, along with hundreds of people who will be there participating in outreach — such as 4-H, FFA and industry workshops.

- \$66,000 median salary, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the food science and technology field. The new facility allows NMSU to better prepare students for this path.

- Foster international collaboration with Mexico in the biosafety and food contaminant fields.



Biomedical research center:

- NMSU researchers in three colleges and seven departments will be served by the center.

- NMSU is ideally situated to address key border population health problems, such as mosquito-borne viruses, cancer and obesity.

- Increased capacity to conduct biomedical research will lead to a greater number of grants from the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Science Foundation.



Animal nutrition and feed manufacturing facility:

- Agricultural and food processing industries generated nearly \$11 billion and 51,000 jobs for the New Mexico economy, according to a recent study.

- 6,000 4-H and FFA students and families visit the Animal and Range Sciences Campus Livestock Center each year.

- More than 80 percent of courses in Animal and Range Sciences will benefit from a new facility.

- Every week, the current facility mixes 25 tons of feed to support the research and teaching mission as well as 4-H and FFA programs. With upgraded capacity and safety, the facility’s stakeholders will be better served.



— From the New Mexico State University College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences publication “Agricultural Modernization and Educational Facilities” (NMSU photos)

Saputo Cheese acquires F&A Dairy Las Cruces facility, sparking change

By **BAYLEE BANKS**
For Las Cruces Bulletin

For nearly 25 years, Las Cruces has been home to F&A Dairy Products, Inc., a major cheese manufacturing and distributing company that has produced nearly four million pounds of authentically-made pizza and deli cheeses every year since it first opened in 1995. Although proven to be a valuable asset to the New Mexico cheese production industry, the privately-owned company based in Dresser, Wisconsin has recently undergone drastic changes. Saputo Cheese USA Inc., an international cheese production company, acquired two of F&A Dairy's major manufacturing facilities last November.

F&A Dairy Products originally began as a pizza distribution business in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Brothers Frank and Angelo Terranova founded what was then called F&A Cheese Company in the 1950s. After discovering that they were able to produce better-quality cheese than what they were distributing, they decided to expand their operations by purchasing Belle Cheese in Amery, Wisconsin in 1965 and Indianhead Dairy in Dresser, Wisconsin, which they later renamed F&A Dairy. Upon merging both manufacturing facilities to form one company, F&A Dairy Products was born and found its way to the southwest, where it has resided just off Interstate 10 near Las Cruces International Airport for nearly a quarter of a century.

Saputo Cheese President and Chief Operation Officer Terry Brockman said the acquisition of F&A Dairy Products complements the activities of Saputo Cheese Inc., an international dairy company based in Montreal, Canada with U.S. headquarters in Lincolnshire, Illinois. As integration between the two companies continues, Brockman stated that F&A Dairy will soon transition its name. In the meantime, the nearly 170 people previously employed with F&A Dairy have become Saputo Cheese team members.



An assortment of cheese products manufactured by F&A Dairy Products, Inc. The F&A Dairy facility in Las Cruces was recently acquired by Saputo Cheese USA Inc. and will soon change its name.

"The company is dedicated to continuously growing our business," said Brockman, "As a dairy company, milk is our primary ingredient, and we care deeply about the way it is produced. High quality dairy products begin with high quality milk from healthy and well cared-for animals. We are committed to supporting initiatives and programs that promote communication, awareness and training opportunities for dairy production welfare issues."

Saputo uses locally produced milk from dairies in the surrounding area to manufacture a wide variety of dairy products, including cheese, fluid milk, extended shelf-life milk and cream products, cultured products and dairy ingredients. In addition to being considered one of the top 10 dairy processors in the world, the Montreal-based company is also Canada's largest cheese manufacturer, Australia's top dairy processor, Argentina's second largest dairy processor, and very highly ranked as a dairy product manufacturer in America as well.

"In the USA, Saputo ranks among the top three cheese producers and is one of the largest producers of

extended shelf-life and cultured dairy products," said Brockman.

As a successful international cheese processing company, Saputo's acquisition of F&A Dairy is sure to have a significant economic impact on Doña Ana County. Despite Saputo being a world-renowned business, New Mexico is no stranger to highly ranked dairy product manufacturing companies.

Southwest Cheese, one of the largest cheese and whey protein manufacturers in the world, is based in Clovis, New Mexico, and is a joint venture between Glanbia plc and the Greater Southwest Agency. According to its website, Southwest Cheese annually produces 388 million pounds of superior block cheese, 3.8 million pounds of milk and 29.1 million pounds of whey protein powder.

New Mexico is also home to one of nine U.S. Leprino Foods manufacturing facilities, with a plant in Roswell. The Denver-based company is considered to be the world's largest producer of mozzarella and pizza cheese, with two global joint ventures, sales offices in Asia, and more than 4,000 employees worldwide. Leprino Foods

cheese and dairy nutrition products, including lactose and whey protein, can be found in over 40 countries.

Having three international cheese manufactures in the Land of Enchantment will secure New Mexico's prominence on the world market. New Mexico is fifth in the nation for cheese production, contributing six percent of the nation's total. As one of the top 10 cheese processing plants in the world, Saputo Cheese's acquisition of F&A Dairy may result in a significant contribution to this statistic over the years.

Brockman said Saputo Cheese Inc. is committed to maintaining a high level of business integrity while pursuing growth within the company's platforms during the integration of the acquisition of F&A Dairy.

"Since its founding in 1954, Saputo's actions have been driven by the values they share and promote: efficiency through simplicity, a family-oriented environment, ownership and commitment, a hands-on approach and passion," said Brockman.

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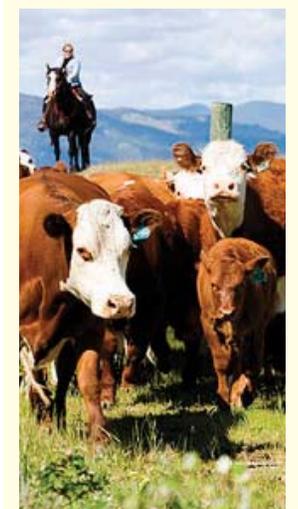
Did you know?

Ranching

• As of Jan. 1, 2018, Doña Ana County had 8,600 beef cows, up from 8,300 the year before, according to the New Mexico Department of Agriculture's 2017 New Mexico Agricultural Statistics.

• There is a livestock border crossing in Santa Teresa, in Doña Ana County, at which all cattle must pass inspection. Approximately 450,000 head of Mexican cattle come through Santa Teresa per year to be sold privately or at auction, and about 15,000 head of cattle go from the U.S. to Mexico at Santa Teresa per year, according to the New Mexico Department of Agriculture.

• In December 2018, Stampede Meat opened its first manufacturing facility outside the Chicago region in Sunland Park, New Mexico. The facility started with more than 300 employees and is expected to have a workforce of nearly 1,300 employees by 2024, according to mveda.com.





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