

## Exec says research cuts harm ability to compete

PHOENIX, AZ — U.S. farmers' ability to compete in the world is threatened by cuts in research funding that are tied to the current farm income situation.

Speaking to the Farm Foundation here today, Dr. Owen J. Newlin warned that the publicity supported U.S. agricultural research system "is being

weakened at a time when it should be strengthened." Dr. Newlin is a vice president of Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., a major developer of genetically improved crop varieties and other technology for agriculture.

Newlin cited the current situation at Iowa State University, typical of the institutions which invest state and federal dollars to increase the productivity of agriculture. State funding for ISU's Agricultural Experiment Station, measured in constant dollars, has grown by only 16 percent in the past 18 years following two decades of rapid growth that began in the 1950's. Federal funds have grown slightly but their future is jeopardized by balanced budget act, Newlin said.

Budgets for agricultural research in many farm-oriented states are suffering due to reduced state revenues, Newlin pointed out. In four of the past six years, Iowa State has had to give up part of its state appropriation during the budget year due to shortfalls of state revenue.

Such emergency cuts are particularly harmful because they cannot be spread widely throughout the research system, Newlin pointed out. Generally, these cuts must be made by reducing graduate student support, leaving vacated faculty-research positions unfilled and postponing equipment repair and purchases.

agricultural research funds,

Newlin says, is that it deprives U.S. farmers of future increases in productivity that will allow them to compete in world agricultural trade. "Farmers in the U.S. are competing with those in other countries of the world," Newlin pointed out. "Technology sweeps across international borders...the best we can hope for is to position U.S. agriculture at the leading edge of technology in order that our competitors do not obtain a technological advantage over us."

Newlin defended efforts to increase productivity of U.S. farmers during a time of surplus food and fiber production. Higher productivity reduces unit costs of production, he said, which explains farmers' rapid acceptance of genetically improved crop seeds, pesticides, fertilizer, irrigation and tillage practices that reduce costs without corresponding yield decreases.

Newlin proposed two steps to assure that U.S. farmers remain competitive in agricultural trade.

First, he said, research administrators must reduce duplication. While it is desirable to have more than one research

group working on a particular problem in order to encourage different approaches, excessive duplication must be eliminated. "The cost of high technology equipment mandates that not every university can achieve excellence in all fields," Newlin said.

Second, Newlin said, those who appropriate funds for our state universities must assign a higher priority to productivity-enhancing research. Investments in agricultural research have been shown to produce 35 to 50 percent annual returns to the public, he said. Unfortunately, the public is largely unaware of the role that ag research has played in holding food costs, at such a low level.

"Today's productivity is the result of investments in ag research made 10 to 20 years ago," Newlin declared. "The lack of adequate funds for agricultural research today should alarm all who understand that basic research, particularly the development of new biotechnology techniques, is of a long range nature and cannot be turned on and off at will."



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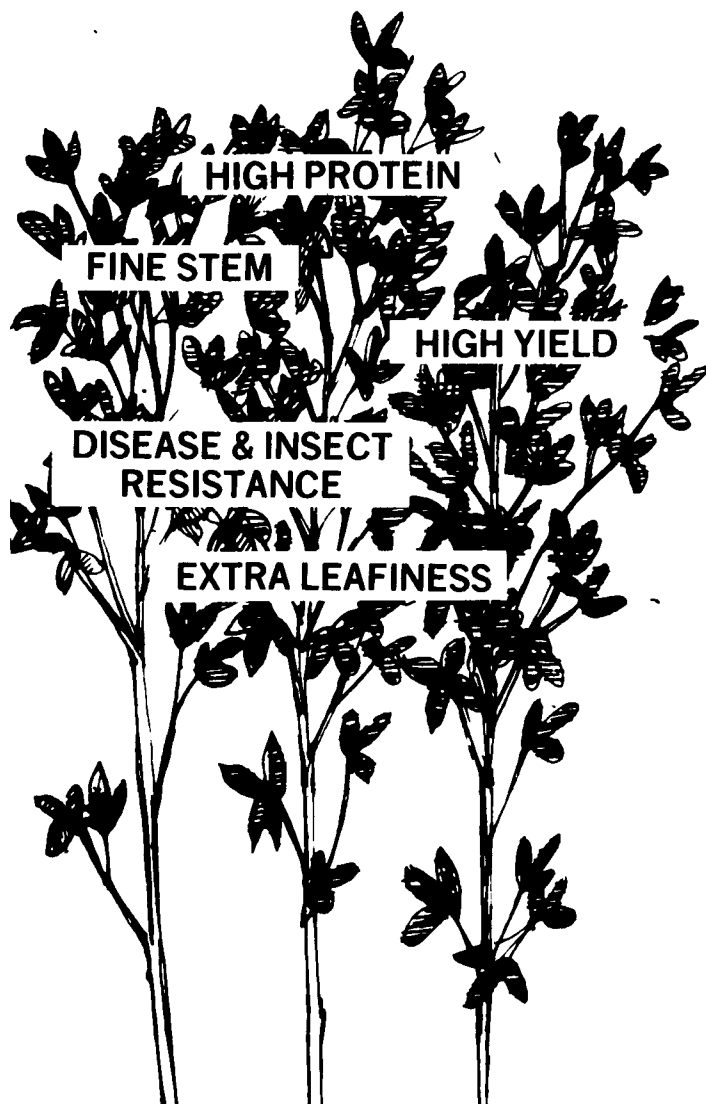
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