

World Water Day sparks discussion of groundwater safety

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Monsanto to host groundwater safety demo

Irrigated farm acres increased by nearly 1.3 million acres across the U.S. between 2002 and 2007, with Nebraska accounting for nearly a million additional acres, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

Although Nebraska is home to the world's largest known aquifer, the Ogallala Aquifer, water issues are in the forefront of farmers' minds, especially after last year's historic drought.

The mission of the Monsanto Learning Center in Gothenburg has always revolved around water management and utilization, researching ways to help farmers manage drought. Using World Water Day as a platform, the Gothenburg site hopes to spark a meaningful discussion in the community about the importance of water conservation and groundwater safety.

World Water Day, celebrated annually on March 22, is a United Nations initiative to focus attention on the importance of freshwater. The public is encouraged to support the effort by eliminating the use of tap water for the day.

In honor of World Water Day, this year the Gothenburg site is incorporating groundwater safety into its Progressive Ag Safety Day on April 11. Monsanto employees partner with the Progressive Agriculture Foundation® to host Progressive Ag Safety Days, which provide life-saving information to local children about farm safety and health practices.

Sixth grade students from Gothenburg, Cozad and Brady will be participating in this Progressive Ag Safety Day, which will include a demonstration on groundwater safety.

The groundwater safety demonstration will include the construction of a replica aquifer. Chan Mazour, Learning Center manager, hopes the replica will help participants better understand that there is water 25 feet under the very ground they are standing on. Attendees will also build ice cream sundaes to replicate aquifers.

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“We hope the kids will think of aquifers every time they eat an ice cream sundae after this demonstration,” Mazour said.

Agriculture accounts for 80% of the consumptive water use in the United States, according to the USDA, so it is important for current and future Nebraska farmers to understand the importance of water conservation and groundwater safety.