

NU exhibit to focus on shaping the future of food

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Like many of us, a lot of University of Nebraska-Lincoln scientists are thinking about food, day-in, day-out, all the time. The difference is that their focus is helping to shape the future of food, both locally and internationally.

“The University of Nebraska is an unquestioned international force in food research that is benefitting the global community, and NU’s Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources has been a driving force behind that continuing research,” according to NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor Ronnie Green.

IANR’s role in “Shaping the Future of Food” will be the focus of a series of exhibits at the annual Husker Harvest Days show in Grand Island Sept. 14-16.

The all-new show focus and themed exhibits mark the third year that UNL Extension experts and Agricultural Research Division scientists will concentrate their Husker Harvest Days exhibits and presentations into a well defined topical area of current interest and concern to Nebraskans. This theme-based exhibiting approach debuted in 2008 with “Water” and continued last year with “Crops for the Future.”

“IANR has worked hand-in-hand with agribusiness and producers to make Nebraska a global leader in agriculture and food research through groundbreaking, imaginative thinking and unmatched in-the-field extension education,” Green said. “We want to use Husker Harvest Days as a venue for showing Nebraskans how what we do in our labs, classrooms and Extension programming will help make their farms, their businesses, their lives better.”

This year’s displays focus on some innovative but sometimes little known research currently being conducted by IANR faculty and staff.

One is the Gut Function Initiative, aimed at discovering how each of us processes nutrients differently.

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Show goers also will be exposed to the emerging field of nutrigenomics, or how nutrients affect gene expression and health. Part of that research is focused on how Nebraska crops could help fight disease and improve immunity.

“Functional foods” is a display on matching your diet with your DNA to target individual health and disease prevention. Another exhibit focuses on UNL’s international leadership in food allergy research.

Still more exhibits look into growing opportunities for Nebraska farmers and ranchers to diversify with local foods, the near limitless possibilities of improving meat products, food safety and food entrepreneurship and development with the help of UNL’s Food Processing Center.

Next door to the familiar Husker Red exhibit building will be the equally Husker Red Mobile Diagnostics Lab with its state-of-the-art tools and information for early detection of potential threats to plant health and yield.

Additionally, a central information booth will help answer questions on a variety of extension and research-related topics, provide copies of helpful NebGuides and direct those needing help to Extension experts in their local area.

Extension also will be promoting its new food website, food.unl.edu

Also on display at Husker Harvest Days will be the high definition television Market Journal remote production van that supports Market Journal programming.

There will be plenty for potential students and their families to see, as well. They will be able to explore a full range of enrollment options and find information on courses of study through the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, School of Natural Resources and Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis, among others. The successful Nebraska Leadership Education/Action Development program also will be at the show.

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IANR has been part of Husker Harvest Days since the first show in 1978. Its Husker Harvest Days show themes will continue to change to reflect areas of concern and focus for the state's producers, agribusinesses and natural resources concerns, every year or every other year, Green said.

UNL's familiar Husker Red exhibit building is on the south side of the showground at Lot 321.