

News and Events

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SUPPORT FOR LAND GRANTS IS KEY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH IN WISCONSIN AND ACROSS THE MIDWEST, REPORT SAYS

There's an important message for Wisconsin in a new report that details the role that land-grant universities play in generating jobs and economic growth, according to those who lead agricultural research and extension efforts here.

"Agriculture is a \$60-billion-a-year industry in Wisconsin. It generates about 350,000 jobs, a significant share of which are in urban areas, and at a time when other sectors have been struggling, agriculture has been a stabilizing force," says Rick Klemme, Dean of UW-Extension's Cooperative Extension Service, a member of the committee that commissioned the study. "This documents the extent to which this economic activity is fueled by publicly funded research and extension work in agriculture, food and nutrition, bioenergy and related fields."

The study, "Power and Promise: Agbioscience in the North Central United States," prepared for 12 land-grant universities by the Battelle Institute, makes the case for sustained or expanded federal, state and local support for North Central State's land grant universities, agricultural experiment stations and extension services. "Now is not the time to short-change investment in the fundamental institutions underpinning economic growth in agbiosciences," the authors note.

"That's certainly applies to us," says William Tracy, interim Dean of the UW-Madison's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. "We're very good at leveraging our public funding with support from the private sector, individuals and non-government organizations. But public support provides the backbone for our work in agriculture, food and nutrition."

The reports says that these institutions “are essential in not only driving agbioscience research and agricultural technology, but also in getting these findings into the hands and minds of those who can transform that information and innovation into greater production, economic vitality and new ‘green’ jobs across the United States.”

The Batelle report notes that the North Central States represent just 21 percent of the land mass of the U.S., but are home to:

- An agriculture industry valued at \$125 billion with more than 2.4 million jobs
- 45 percent of the nation's ag export production
- 80 percent of U.S. soybean and feed grain production
- 45 percent of U.S. livestock exports
- Ten of the top 25 U.S. food manufacturers
- Two of the five largest seed genetics companies
- Two of the world's largest ag equipment manufacturers
- 90 percent of the nation's ethanol production
- More than 800,000 farms and more than 88,000 companies (2009)

The report focuses on the central role the North Central states play in the nation’s agriculture and forest industry. It describes the region as a place where agricultural commodities and biomass are being transformed into renewable fuel, green chemicals, functional foods, and the next generation of plastics and where research, innovation and technology are helping producers grow more with less land, energy and water.

The report is available online at
www.uwex.edu/ces/nccea/documents/battellefull2.pdf

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