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## World crop experts meet in St. Louis

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ST. LOUIS, Oct. 26 (UPI) -- More than 1,300 plant genetics experts are meeting in St. Louis to focus on safeguarding and increasing the world's food supply, officials said.

Nearly half of those attending the International Plant Molecular Biology Congress are from overseas, said **Perry Gustafson, a University of Missouri geneticist** overseeing the conference.

A recent United Nations report said hunger was worsening throughout the world, especially in parts of Africa where Ethiopia last week requested emergency food aid for more than 6 million people, The St. Louis (Mo.) Post-Dispatch reported Monday

"If you understand plant biology, or animal biology, you will manage to find a way to produce more food," said Gustafson, whose work targets gene manipulation in cereal crops.

The Biology Congress showcases the latest developments in agriculture and biotechnology, Monsanto chief of technology Robb Fraley told the Post-Dispatch.

"The challenges are global and require global solutions," Fraley said.

## **Global food security a hot topic at St. Louis summit of plant scientists**

ST. LOUIS | The world's top plant scientists kicked off a weeklong meeting Monday aimed at improving global food security.

An estimated 1,300 scientists were expected to attend the International Plant Molecular Biology Congress, which hasn't been to the U.S. in 20 years.

Those attending have expertise in plant genetics, evolution and physiology, **Perry Gustafson, a University of Missouri adjunct professor who is heading this year's gathering**, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Much of their research centered on global food security, he said.

This year's congress is dedicated to scientist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug, who developed a type of wheat that helped feed the world and fostered a movement that saved 1 billion people from starvation. Borlaug died last month at age 95 in Dallas.

The U.N. food agency reported this month that a record 1 billion people worldwide are hungry and that the number will increase if governments do not spend more on agriculture. It said 30 countries now require emergency aid, including 20 in Africa.

**A panel on feeding the planet under the challenges of climate change will be hosted by the University of Missouri**, featuring the Missouri Botanical Garden's director, Peter Raven, and scientists from Kenya, Australia and Austria.

Other panels will address drought, Chinese medicine and cancer cure, and the challenge of doubling food production over the next 20 years to keep pace with population growth.

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## **Global food security summit to tackle climate and population issues**

By The Associated Press

October 26, 2009 | 2:21 p.m. CDT

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# The New York Times

**AP** Associated Press

## Low Milk Prices Have Dairy Farmers Killing Cows

### MU MENTION PG.2

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Published October 27, 2009

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) -- After burning through \$1 million in savings and seeing no end to their losses, dairy farmers Jake and Lori Slegers figured they didn't have much choice -- they had to kill the cows.

So one day last summer their sons tagged all 1,571 cows, loaded them onto trailers at their farm south of Fresno, Calif., and watched them rumble away to a slaughterhouse.

Lori Slegers said her husband came into the house and broke down.

"He said it was the hardest thing he ever had to do," she said. "Luckily, my boys could do it."

Growing demand in developing nations drove up milk prices when times were good, and dairy farmers expanded their herds. But the global recession hurt exports and left farmers with too much milk on their hands. Milk processors cut the price they were willing to pay farmers, in many cases below what it cost to produce milk.

In the past year, hundreds of farmers have come to the same conclusion as the Slegers: The only way to raise prices is to reduce the supply, and that means killing cows. In some cases, whole herds have been turned into hamburger. In others, farmers have kept their best producers and sent the rest to slaughter.

The Slegers turned to an industry-run program called Cooperatives Working Together, or CWT, which pays farmers going out of business to kill -- rather than sell -- their cows and help remaining dairy operations by reducing the milk supply. Until this year, the 6-year-old program had paid

for about 275,000 dairy cows to be slaughtered. This year alone, it has paid for more than 225,000 to be killed.

In addition, individual farmers are sending cows to slaughter at a pace of about 55,000 per week, said Robert Cropp, a professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin. At that rate, about 3 million cows could be killed in a year.

Lifelong dairy farmers Keith Sammon, 55, and his brother, Mark, 53, decided to sell their herd to CWT last summer after considering the low milk prices, the cost of modernizing their operation and some personal health issues.

Keith Sammon recalled the somber mood as he loaded the 80 cows onto livestock trailers one Sunday morning at their farm in Faribault, Minn.

"As we milked the cows ... it was pretty quiet, but then my son came out with my granddaughter, who was 10 months old and she was just beginning to walk around. Just having her around made it easier," Keith Sammon said. "We would load the cows for a while and then go back and play with her for a while. It kind of took your mind off of it."

The slaughter has helped some. Dairy farms pay CWT 10 cents for every hundred pounds of milk they produce. As the cows have been killed, the price processors pay for milk has gone up an average of 66 cents per hundred pounds of milk, said **Scott Brown, an assistant research professor for dairy livestock at the University of Missouri-Columbia**.

Consumers haven't seen prices go up because processors still pay dairy farmers much less than the retail price, Cropp said. In fact, grocery store prices may still drop some because the milk supply remains much greater than the demand, he said.

That's because even as thousands of cows are killed and many farmers call it quits, others are increasing their herds. In Wisconsin, the nation's second-largest dairy producer after California, the number of cows increased to about 1.25 million in August, up about 5,000 from the year before, according to state figures.

**STORY CONTINUES.....**

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## **Inventor's \$100K win to fund freight idea**

**Ex-MU prof has second career.**

By T.J. Greaney

Monday, October 26, 2009

A former **University of Missouri** professor has won \$100,000 from a San Francisco-based organization that promotes "encore careers" for older adults.

Henry Liu, 73, invented a way to use the waste from coal-fired power plants to manufacture environmentally safe bricks. The process cures, waters and compacts at room temperature the byproduct known as "fly ash," producing a material similar to clay.

According to the National Science Foundation, 25 million tons of fly ash from coal-fired power plants is recycled each year, typically as additives in concrete. However, 45 million more tons of the ash become waste. That waste is often stored in large detention ponds and was the culprit in an environmental disaster in Kingston, Tenn., last December when a dike gave way and swamped 300 acres of land with a toxic ash mixture.

Liu's technology has been licensed for production and commercial use by companies in 11 nations, including the United States, China and India. Liu hopes that in 10 years, half of all the bricks manufactured and used in the United States will be made with fly ash.

Liu worked for 35 years as an engineering professor at MU and retired 10 years ago to focus on his inventions. He and four other inventors older than 60 were selected for the top prize from about 1,000 nominees.

"He works harder today than ever before," Liu's son, Jeffrey, wrote in a statement. "He's always wanted to change the world. Success to my dad isn't about making money. It's about leaving the world a better place."

Liu said he plans to use the money, in part, to pursue projects through his for-profit business, Freight Pipeline Co., headquartered at 2601 Maguire Blvd. in southeast Columbia.

He created the company to further his belief that the future of freight transportation will not be via rail, sea or air, but through a network of underground pipes. The network of tubes filled with air or water that Liu envisions would move wheeled capsules about the size of small boxcars long distances. The technology employs an electromagnetic pump that Liu and three former MU colleagues invented.

In a 2004 feasibility study, Liu showed that if his system of pipelines were used to move freight in New York, it could reduce annual truck traffic by about 10 billion vehicle miles. He touts it as a way to conserve land, reduce greenhouse gases and better protect cargo from terrorist attacks.

Liu said his second career has been as gratifying as his first.

“I’d like to see within my lifetime that those technologies that I invented and spent many years researching be used,” he said. “That motivates me more than anything else.”

The Encore Careers campaign is run by Civic Ventures, a think tank that focuses on baby boomers. Liu and other winners of the \$100,000 Purpose Prizes, announced today, will be honored this weekend at Stanford University.

Other 2009 honorees include parents of a Sept. 11, 2001, attack victim who created a foundation to treat trauma victims, an American Indian who has championed alcohol recovery services and a telecommunications entrepreneur who brought broadband to an Appalachian community to help link farmers to big-city restaurateurs.

Reach T.J. Greaney at 573-815-1719 or e-mail [tjgreaney@columbiatribune.com](mailto:tjgreaney@columbiatribune.com).

# EDITOR & PUBLISHER

## Will E-readers Help Save the Newspaper Industry?

By Mike Shields/Mediaweek  
Published: October 26, 2009

**NEW YORK** E-readers will save the publishing industry. E-readers will become the mobile equivalent to the eight track tape.

The answer, of course, likely lies somewhere in between these two extremes. But if you're a newspaper publisher facing a struggling — some would say dying — industry, it's hard not to get caught up in wishful thinking. And if you're a gadget fetishist, it's hard not to work yourself into a lather. At least two major e-readers launched in the past month (one just last week), and secret plans for e-readers from Microsoft and Apple have been leaking on blogs left and right. By early next year, we may be looking at a dozen entries in a category that was once a geeky cul de sac.

So are we all going to ditch paper and read everything on some sort of digital device?

Probably not in 2010, but there's reason to believe that the audience for e-readers will grow significantly in coming years. Predicting an iPhone-like breakout is perilous (and probably as likely as predicting the iPhone's huge success five years ago). Thus, few inside the publishing world realistically see e-readers as a lifeline; most view it as a promising alternative distribution channel — and one for which they might actually get paid. Most also recognize that e-readers present numerous challenges. **"There is an optimism among publishers," says Roger Fidler, program director for digital publishing at Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri. "But nobody is seriously saying this is going to save the industry."**

Fidler is leading a digital publishing alliance and has conducted research on e-reader usage. He says most publishers are looking at e-readers as simply a fourth platform for delivering content—besides print, Web and mobile.

Much of the general optimism about these devices comes from the flood of new entries hitting the market. Only last week, Barnes & Noble rolled out its "nook," while the week prior paper upstart Plastic Logic announced the "Que." Those join the Sony Reader and Amazon's Kindle, which have enjoyed modest success. Stirring up even more buzz are heated rumors that tech giants Apple and Microsoft are set to produce competing reader/mini computing devices that will take the category to another level.

"Apple could be a real game changer if they come out with a really cool device," says Fidler.

And, perhaps surprisingly, bloggers are gaga over Microsoft's rumored Courier. Gizmodo recently called it "astonishing."

While new tech lust may drive some early adopters, Fidler believes that two more powerful, institutional forces could spur adoption in coming years: colleges and business. "I wouldn't be surprised to see schools require e-readers at some point," he says—particularly if they can replace heavy textbooks. That would help draw in younger demographics to e-readers; to date, the average Kindle user is around 40.

Plus, Fidler predicts that cost and green-conscious companies may encourage employees to start using e-readers as document readers. That's one of Plastic Logic's targets with the Que.

Yet even if e-readers take off, publishers aren't counting on them as absolute saviours. "It's

important to remember that print is still the lion's share of our revenue," says Raymond Pearce, vp, circulation at The New York Times. "I don't see that changing in the near term. I get very skeptical about people saying that these readers will save the newspaper business. I don't view it as a print replacement."

Indeed, it's hard to see e-readers as a substitute for the printed page, since most of the current products in the marketplace have not been built with newspapers and magazines necessarily in mind. Both the Kindle and Sony Reader are first and foremost about reading books. Of course, that could change, if companies like Apple consult with publishers as they design new generations.

For the past few years, Kindle users have been able to subscribe to various newspapers, magazines and blogs. Amazon doesn't release any subscription numbers, but publishers say interest has been on the modest side.

According to Gordon McLeod, president of The Wall Street Journal Digital Network, when it comes to his company's Kindle partnership, he has some likes and dislikes. For one, the device helps the Journal reach a potentially new audience. Plus, the Kindle "teaches people to pay for content, which is not happening in other platforms."

On the downside, the Kindle doesn't carry any advertising, something that McLeod and others would like to see change. The early adopter, highly literate e-reader audience would surely attract advertisers, once it hits a critical mass. "Advertisers will be there. I have no doubt," says Fidler. "But until these companies can say, We've got 100,000 readers [on digital devices], advertisers are unlikely to test."

A more immediate concern of McLeod's is the fact that Amazon – not the Journal—owns the relationship with its subscribers on the Kindle and decides what to charge them. "For our Kindle subscribers, we don't know who they are or where they live," gripes McLeod. "I would not do the same deal [again.]"

McLeod's attitude is shared by others in the business, a potential sticking point with Apple. Many speculate that when Apple re-releases its Tablet device, it may look to centrally control all books and subscriptions sold through the device, like it does with iTunes. "That's not attractive for publishers," notes Pearce.

Apple's Tablet, and probably Microsoft's Courier, also present another challenge for publishers looking to replicate the print subscription model digitally—depending on what form they actually take. Currently, both the Kindle and Sony readers are designed for reading and reading only.

If this new wave of devices end up being mini-computers that offer easy, compelling Web surfing—won't that inhibit true e-reading of newspapers and magazines? In other words, why subscribe to a digital version of The New York Times if you can simply log onto NYTimes.com via your Apple Tablet and read the site on a portable, yet paper-sized screen? It's just another reason many newspaper and magazine publishers are weighing whether to charge subscriptions for their online content.

"Publishers need to think holistically about e-readers," says Pearce. "Consumers will bounce around. If e-readers are more print-like, with no Web browsing, we have pricing leverage. In the other case, our leverage is different. The bigger question is what happens with the convergence of screens over time."

-- Nielsen Business Media

*Mike Shields/Mediaweek (mshields@nielsen.com)*