



AgBioWorks Initiative office created at university By TOM BERRY

Staff Writer

Murray State University agriculture officials have announced the formation of the West Kentucky AgBioWorks Initiative office at the college's Regional Business Innovation Center.

During the university's Regional Agri-Energy Field Day Thursday at Pullen Farm, President Dr. Randy Dunn was on-hand to accept a check for \$62,000 that will create an office for the regionwide agri-energy effort on-campus. The program is a joint venture by West Kentucky Center for Emerging Technology, MSU's Regional Business Innovation Center, the MSU School of Agriculture, College of Science Engineering and Technology, College of Business, the Regional Stewardship and Outreach Office and Memphis AgBioWorks Foundation and BioDimensions, Inc.

During the program, a check was presented to Dunn by Roger Thomas, executive director of the Governor's Office of Agriculture Policy. Dunn said he was excited by the project and what it could do to improve the quality of life for all Kentuckians.

“We are trying to position western Kentucky as a leader in the BioWorks partnership,” Dunn said. “All of us have a role to play and we are just glad to have a part in that.”

Thomas said partnering leaders in the state's agricultural economy with those in the renewable energy innovation industry was one of the best moves Gov. Steve Beshear made when he took office.

“This partnership is very, very important. He was on top of it and moved to put the two together,” Thomas said, pointing out that Beshear's vision will not only be good for Kentucky, but the entire nation by helping to wean the U.S. away from dependence on foreign oil and provide a natural, renewable energy resource for the future while also aiding the state's farm economy.

Wayne Hunt, an agri-businessman from Hopkinsville, said western Kentucky is very important as a leader in the development of renewable energy resources such as corn and other biomass-biofuel products that can be used to provide much of the state's energy needs in the future.

“And farmer participation is key to success,” Hunt said.

The initiative focuses on positioning western Kentucky as a leader in the future bio-economy where the basic building blocks for industry and the raw materials for energy derived from renewable crop and feedstock assets will create new jobs and help to improve the quality of life in the region.

“Our purpose is to build infrastructure to achieve advances in high growth sectors, capitalizing and building our telecommunications, bio-agriculture and energy and environmental sciences strengths,” said Loretta Daniel, director of the Regional Business Innovation Center at MSU.

The initiative is designed to implement the results of a five-state, 98-county study conducted by the Battelle Technology Partnership Practice and led by the Memphis Bioworks Foundation. The study surveyed entities in western Kentucky and concluded that there is significant opportunity and need to develop biomass businesses, ensure that farmers and foresters have profitable opportunities and commercialize alternative sources of energy such as oilseeds, sugar crops, and other biomass crops as well as trees. The completed study is available for download at www.agbioworks.org

The bioeconomy is an emerging global sector that involves using renewable agricultural and forestry materials to replace petroleum in the development of biobased products, while increasing the availability of healthy-local food. The new industry is considered one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world and is projected to be a \$125 billion global market in the near future, according to a news release from MSU.