

Remarks by Dr. Merle Pierson
Deputy Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics
At the Dedication of the Advanced Genetics Laboratory
At the National Small Grains Germplasm Research Facility (NSGGRF), Aberdeen, Idaho
August 17, 2006

Good morning. On behalf of Secretary Johans, Under Secretary Buchanan and the agencies of the Research, Education, and Economics mission area I would like to Dr. Bonman and all the ARS scientists and staff here at Aberdeen on your great new facility.

I know many people played a role in making this project a reality, including Senator Crapo, our colleagues at the University of Idaho, and our many stakeholder groups, all who deserve our thanks and appreciation.

Support from our stakeholders and the collaborative partnerships between USDA and our public universities are essential to achieving our mission in finding solutions to the problems of American agriculture.

Today, agriculture provides the nation with the safest, highest quality, and lowest cost food and fiber and now energy; American farmers are among the most productive in the world. Much of the credit for this success belongs to our public research system—the partnership between USDA and our public universities.

As you have already heard, USDA and the University of Idaho have a long history of collaboration and joint accomplishments. Partnerships between USDA and the Land Grant Universities are one of the great strengths of our public research system which has served American agriculture well for nearly 150 years.

Today, however agricultural science faces even greater challenges. Science and technology, along with economic and social changes have transformed the world's food and agricultural system from being production-oriented toward a complex interaction of consumer demands, world trade, changing energy markets, economic pressures, production efficiencies, environmental impacts, etc.

America's producers now operate in a global, diverse, and highly competitive business environment. The way we farm, process, cook, and even how we eat, are all very different today than twenty years ago.

Just as American agriculture is changing, the agricultural research system has also had to adjust.

In recent decades, the scope of public sector research has broadened significantly, while our investment in agricultural research has not.

In addition to solving national and regional agricultural problems, ARS and the Land Grant Universities must now address broad social issues including protecting the environment and conserving natural resources, improving human health, ensuring food safety, and meeting the needs of rural America.

Today, collaboration and partnerships are even more essential if we are to continue to meet the needs of America's farmers, ranchers, producers, and consumers. The partnership here between the University of Idaho and ARS is exemplary. Their accomplishments reflect proudly on the USDA/ Land Grant partnership. With this new addition I know we can look forward to many more years of great achievements on behalf of American agriculture.

And now, it is my pleasure to introduce a man who truly understands the needs of agriculture, from the Great State of Idaho, Senator Mike Crapo.