



eXtension: Tapping the Power of Cooperative Extension

The Cooperative Extension System is on the threshold of a profound transformation that will build on its historic mission and redefine how it organizes and distributes its most treasured resource: practical knowledge supported by education and peer-reviewed science.

The initiative is eXtension, an Internet-based tool that will provide fast and convenient access to objective, science-based information on a range of subjects, including: food safety; homeland security; lawn and garden; agriculture; natural resources, energy, and environment; community development; personal financial management; youth development; families; and nutrition and health.

Here are three reasons why this new initiative is so exciting:

- eXtension will create a direct, 24-7 link from consumers to university-based extension and research experts throughout the United States, not just those within a consumer's own state or community. (Local extension professionals will, of course, continue to be available for face-to-face follow-up.)
- eXtension will harness resources deep within America's land-grant universities, aggregating knowledge that at present is disaggregated across the country.
- eXtension will stand out in the online information marketplace because

its content will be reviewed by nationally recognized scientists and extension specialists and follow consistent standards to ensure that the educational materials are valid, concise, and easy to use.

BETTER SERVICE TO A LARGER CUSTOMER BASE

Through eXtension, the Cooperative Extension System has the opportunity to serve its existing customers more effectively and extend the university system to new audiences, who will undoubtedly find the rich and diverse knowledge of benefit in both their personal and professional lives.

HELPING COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS AND EDUCATORS HELP US

Beyond these direct public benefits, eXtension will provide extension professionals in 3,000 county locations with critical up-to-the-minute intelligence, data, and materials. This will enable these professionals to spend less time searching for and packaging information and more time in direct consultation with the public. Enhanced client outcomes will surely result.

NATIONAL CONTENT WITH LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Although eXtension will be a universal point of entry into the Cooperative Extension System, state and local identity will be preserved through the use of university-specific banners across the top of every page. There will also be direct links to resources

and professionals at state and local offices and users will be able to receive assistance that is customized to their needs and interests.

A MODEST INVESTMENT FOR A BLOCKBUSTER RETURN

The eXtension initiative was started in FY 2005 with a modest \$2.8 million investment: state and territorial Extension services provided an across-the-board commitment of \$2.3 million and USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service contributed \$500,000.

Now, Congress can and must play an important role in the further development and future success of eXtension. NASULGC supports the establishment of a new Smith-Lever 3(d) line item within the CSREES budget and urges Congress to provide \$3 million for this new funding line in the FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

