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**Cochran, head of UA System’s Division of Agriculture, announces retirement**

By Mary Hightower  
U of A System Division of Agriculture

**Fast facts**

* Cochran to retire Sept. 30
* Career spanned 39 years
* Began as a professor in agricultural economics

(973 words)

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LITTLE ROCK — After guiding the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture through a decade of growth, vice president for agriculture, Dr. Mark J. Cochran, will retire effective Sept. 30.

Under his leadership as a UA System vice president, Cochran encouraged the growth of the entrepreneurship and commercialization of research products and fought hard to obtain funding to continue the Division of Agriculture’s research and extension work, enabling the traditional land grant mission to remain strong in Arkansas.

“After 39 rewarding years in the University of Arkansas System, retirement is not a decision that was made casually or in haste,” he said. “It’s been an honor to lead the Division of Agriculture and there is still much that can be accomplished. However, the time has come to pass on that responsibility to the next leader of the division and to enjoy time with my family and especially my granddaughter.”

Cochran said one of the most satisfying aspects about his time within the Division of Agriculture was that its people and work “probably touch more lives than any other institution in higher education.”

“We are the only higher education institution that has faculty and staff in all 75 counties of Arkansas and programs that reach from cradle into adulthood,” he said. “I’m particularly proud of the impact made on youth by our 4-H program and how that impact will continue into the future.”

Through the outreach of the Cooperative Extension Service and the research from the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, Cochran said he was proud of the division’s role in providing Arkansas’ largest industry with vital, science-based best practices and new technologies and by serving the state in the continual improvement in sustainability and natural resource management.

“Our work starts with the research discoveries and ends with extension education,” Cochran said. “From the work of the 4-H program to prepare young people to meet the world’s challenges, to our many extension and research programs that have improved lives of people across the state and increased economic vibrance of our communities, the division does what no other organization in Arkansas can do and is a truly unique part of the UA System.”

“The land grant mission is as relevant today as it was in the beginning,” Cochran said. “We are fortunate to have highly qualified faculty, county agents, staff and leadership who are well positioned to continue to make a difference for Arkansans of all walks of life in all counties of the state.”

Cochran said he was also proud of the partnerships the division has with UA-Fayetteville, UA-Monticello and Arkansas State University to ensure high-quality education for students in agriculture, forestry and life sciences.

Cochran counts as one of his most prized achievements as a faculty member was the creation of the COTMAN program, which earned him both a John W. White Team award and Arkansas Cotton Achievement in 1999. COTMAN is a computer tool aimed at helping cotton growers make better management decisions for their crop, especially the end-of-season decisions on when to terminate insect control, start harvest and how management practices can alter the crop’s development.

Among Cochran’s accomplishments was attaining the first increase in the Division of Agriculture’s recurring funds in more than a decade. Under his leadership, division faculty and staff adapted in-person activities to online platforms to continue delivering services as COVID-19 emerged, while simultaneously restructuring and merging all of its business and human resources functions into one system for greater transparency.

**Advocate for Arkansas ag, rural communities**

In his role, Cochran maintained the Division of Agriculture’s focus on its mission to agriculture and rural communities in Arkansas.

“Dr. Cochran has been an unabashed cheerleader for Arkansas agriculture for many years, and he will be missed,” said Dr. Donald R. Bobbitt, president of the University of Arkansas System. “Although conducts his business in a very calm and professional manner, Dr. Cochran is a fierce advocate for the needs of the farming community in this state.

“The list of advances that have occurred during his time as vice president is indeed impressive and they include the recruitment of distinguished scientists to the state, as well as the formation and funding of new state of the art research farms to support modern agriculture. Dr. Cochran achieved all this during a period of flat or declining state funding which makes his accomplishments all the more remarkable.”

Bobbitt said “the Board of Trustees and I now have the difficult task of trying to replace Dr. Cochran with someone who shares both his technical expertise, as well as his love for this state and its farming communities.”

Bobbitt said he will spend the next few weeks visiting with stakeholders across the UA System and the state’s agricultural community to determine steps for identifying the next leader of the division.

**Joined in 1982**

Cochran’s tenure as system vice president began in January 2011. He had previously served as associate vice president and head of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, the research arm of the Division of Agriculture. Prior to his appointment as AVP, Cochran spent a decade as head of the department of agriculture and agribusiness at the University of Arkansas.

From August 1987 to August 1988, Cochran was a visiting professor at Texas A&M in the department of agricultural economics. His research focused on the incorporation of risk management components into expert systems and simulation models. He joined the division in 1982 as an assistant professor in what was then called the Department of agricultural economics and rural sociology.

An Arizona native, Cochran earned a bachelor’s in agricultural economics from New Mexico State. At Michigan State University, he earned a master’s in agricultural economics and a minor in environmental and natural resource economics. He earned his Ph.D. in agricultural economics, with minors in environmental and natural resource economics, production economics, public policy, and systems science.

To learn about extension programs in Arkansas, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service agent or visit [www.uaex.uada.edu](http://www.uaex.uada.edu/). Follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @AR\_Extension. To learn more about Division of Agriculture research, visit the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station website: [aaes.uada.edu](https://aaes.uada.edu/). Follow on Twitter at @ArkAgResearch. To learn more about the Division of Agriculture, visit <https://uada.edu/>. Follow us on Twitter at @AgInArk.

**About the Division of Agriculture**

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation’s historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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