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# **Meullenet earns Excellence in Leadership award from Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors**

By John Lovett

U of A System Division of Agriculture

## Fast facts

* Jean-François Meullenet is first Arkansas leader to receive distinguished regional award
* SAAESD represents 15 land-grant universities in the South
* Dedication, knowledge, and leadership during covid pandemic cited by colleagues

(707 words)

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FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — The director of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, the research arm of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, was recently named the 2022 recipient of the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors’ Excellence in Leadership award.

Jean-François Meullenet, director of the experiment station and senior associate vice president for agriculture-research, is the [first representative of Arkansas](https://saaesd.org/guidelines/saaesd-leadership-award/) to be recognized for the prestigious award from the association. SAAESD facilitates cooperation of regional and national research through 15 land-grant university agricultural experiment stations in the southern United States, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

“Dr. Meullenet has consistently demonstrated outstanding leadership at all levels, from local to regional to national,” said Gary A. Thompson, executive director of the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors. “While his leadership has had a lasting positive impact on agriculture at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and throughout Arkansas, I also see a positive trajectory impacting agriculture across the country.”

Meullenet’s long-running service to several agriculture research organizations, breadth of knowledge, and his leadership during the covid pandemic, were listed by colleagues in their nomination for the distinction.

“Dr. Meullenet possesses great organizational skills and an outstanding work ethic which has served the organization well during a very difficult time,” Robert A. Gilbert, dean for research and director of the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, wrote in his nomination letter. “The Excellence in Leadership Award is meant ‘to recognize those who have served the Southern Experiment Stations, SAAESD, and the national Land-Grant System with exemplary distinction’ and Dr. Meullenet clearly meets these criteria.”

Robert W. Godfrey, retired director of the University of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Experiment Station and professor of animal science, noted Meullenet’s commitment to service on many committees to benefit both Arkansas and the southern region.

“His passion for agriculture, and especially the southern region, is evident in all that he does,” Godfrey said in his nomination. “In discussions, both personally and in a group setting, he has always been very thoughtful in presenting his ideas and was able to speak intelligently about a wide variety of topics related to agriculture administration and research.”

In addition to serving as treasurer and past chair of the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors’ executive committee, Meullenet is on the executive committee of the [Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy](http://escop.info). ESCOP is the representative governing body of the Experiment Station Section, a unit of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities Commission on Food, Environment, and Renewable Resources, and the Board on Agriculture Assembly. Meullenet is also the incoming chair of the ESCOP communication and marketing committee. ESCOP handles continuing business, organization, and policy issues on behalf of the state agricultural experiment station directors and administrators.

Nathan McKinney, senior associate vice president for agriculture-research with the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station and chair of the SAAESD’s multistate research committee, noted that Meullenet also serves on the Joint Cotton Breeding Committee, and is an administrative advisor for the Delta Region Farm Management and Agricultural Policy Working Group. Meullenet also provides administrative support for projects focused on specialty crops, food systems, and the U.S. potato gene bank.

“He recognizes that we cannot be as effective alone as we can be as active members of SAAESD,” McKinney writes. “Our accomplishments will be measured, in large part, by collaborated efforts and a teamwork approach, which JF models daily. By all measures, Dr. Meullenet is deserving of the Excellence in Leadership Award.”

In addition to his Agricultural Experiment Station duties, Meullenet [was recently selected to serve as interim dean](https://aaes.uada.edu/news/meullenet-dean-bumpers-college/) of the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences at the University of Arkansas beginning July 1. He has served as director of the Agricultural Experiment Station since 2018, after being named interim director in 2017. Before that, he was head of the Food Science Department and director of the Institute of Food Science and Engineering, posts he held since 2010.

"I am very grateful for this award from my colleagues with the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors," Meullenet said. "It is a high honor that provides notoriety to the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and the state's agricultural community on a regional and national level."

To learn more about Division of Agriculture research, visit the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station website: [https://aaes.uada.edu/](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faaes.uada.edu%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cfmiller%40uark.edu%7C5cd2aea2b12c4dfceb9c08d942da0e9d%7C79c742c4e61c4fa5be89a3cb566a80d1%7C0%7C0%7C637614326581623988%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=aepGh27NgEgSYv9mb8nggzA%2BaUdOhXMw7e6sspVov8c%3D&reserved=0). Follow us on Twitter at [@ArkAgResearch](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FArkAgResearch&data=04%7C01%7Cfmiller%40uark.edu%7C5cd2aea2b12c4dfceb9c08d942da0e9d%7C79c742c4e61c4fa5be89a3cb566a80d1%7C0%7C0%7C637614326581633943%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=nH1djoLMIYNT7ERwtQMektp5RVjEjY1B93nJK%2BhyjJE%3D&reserved=0).

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## 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.

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