

Weaver Receives 2015 Cotton Genetics Research Award

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NEW ORLEANS – Dr. David B. Weaver, a cotton breeder who has dedicated his career conducting plant breeding research and educating generations of undergraduate and graduate students at Auburn University, is the recipient of the 2015 Cotton Genetics Research Award.

The announcement was made here today during the 2016 Beltwide Cotton Improvement Conference, which convened as part of the National Cotton Council-coordinated 2016 Beltwide Cotton Conferences. In recognition, Dr. Weaver received a plaque and a monetary award.

Dr. Weaver, a professor in Auburn's Agronomy & Soils Department, began his career in the late 1970's publishing on cytoplasmic male sterility in cotton and then forged a successful career as a soybean breeder before re-starting a cotton breeding program in 2001 that has enhanced U.S. cotton.

One of his nominators, Dr. Jodi Scheffler, a USDA Agricultural Research Service geneticist and the previous year's Cotton Genetics Research Award recipient, said that among Dr. Weaver's accomplishments were his evaluation of the 1) effect of genes for resistance to reniform nematode on agronomic and fiber quality traits; 2) impact of exotic germplasm introgression on cotton agronomics and 3) effect of selection and inbreeding methods on fiber quality traits. He also discovered sources of resistance to reniform nematode and heat tolerance with upland germplasm.

Dr. Scheffler noted that Dr. Weaver, who has received numerous teaching awards at Auburn, not only has earned the respect of cotton breeders and geneticists in both the public and private sectors but has served "as an excellent advisor and mentor to the young men and women who will succeed us, and as a result of his leadership, hopefully surpass us."

For example, a recently published study by one of Dr. Weaver's graduate students demonstrated the effectiveness of a unique method of evaluating heat tolerance in cotton and led to the discovery of cotton germplasm lines with higher levels of tolerance to heat than the current adapted types. As a result of his extensive work on the genetics of cotton nematode resistance and management, Dr. Weaver was asked to write the book chapter entitled, "Cotton Nematodes," for the recently published *American Society of Agronomy Cotton Monograph*.

Dr. Weaver's dedication to his students was echoed by Auburn's Agronomy & Soils Head Dr. John Beasley, Jr., who said that when Dr. Weaver retires, "it will be extremely difficult to find a faculty member that is more dedicated to students and their professional improvement. And he does all that while still running a very successful cotton breeding program."

Another nominator, Dr. Wayne Smith, a professor, cotton breeding at Texas A&M University, said Dr. Weaver has published in 11 scientific journals and been active in the Beltwide Cotton Conferences since assuming cotton breeding responsibilities. Dr. Weaver also was selected as a Fellow of both the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Science Society of America.

Dr. Weaver holds a B.S. and a M.S. in Agronomy from the University of Georgia. He earned his Ph.D. in Agronomy from Purdue where he was a graduate teaching and research assistant before joining Auburn in 1981.

U.S. commercial cotton breeders have presented the Cotton Genetics Research Award annually since 1961 to a scientist for outstanding basic research in cotton genetics. The Joint Cotton Breeding Committee, comprised of representatives from state experiment stations, USDA, private breeders, Cotton Incorporated and the NCC, establishes award criteria.

Source: National Cotton Council