

FEATURE – USDA STUDIES TASTIER FRUIT

INTRO: If you think certain fruits used to taste better, you might be right. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more about an effort to make fruit taste better. (1:40) (refeed from 3/08)

FRUITS HAVE BEEN BRED OVER TIME TO ENHANCE QUALITIES LIKE FLAVOR, APPEARANCE AND DURABILITY. BUT SOME U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RESEACHERS SAY SOMETIMES FLAVOR HAS BEEN SACRIFICED TO STRENGTHEN OTHER QUALITIES. U-S-D-A AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE SCIENTISTS IN WINTER HAVEN FLORIDA ARE FOCUSED ON WHAT CONSUMERS WANT FROM FRUIT.

Anne Plotto, Post Harvest Physiologist, USDA ARS: Our aspect is to make sure that all of this effort that has been put into production, breeding, production for taste, storage, we want to make sure that that is followed through all the way down to the consumer.

WINTER HAVEN RESEARCHERS USE GROUPS OF TASTE-TESTERS. TO FIGURE OUT THE FLAVORS OF DIFFERENT FRUIT VARIETIES.

Plotto: We train people, we calibrate them with standards so they act as an instrument and say this fruit, this apple, this strawberry has a level three of sweetness because they have a reference standard.

And here they have been trained to rate several descriptors, sweetness, sourness, bitterness.

WHICH PLOTTO SAYS IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT PLACES CAN LIKE DIFFERENT FLAVORS.

Plotto: The macintosh apple is mainly grown in Maine and Canada. The people in the northeast like these tart apples. In south and California they grow all of these gala and fuji apples that are very sweet and those consumers prefer sweet apples.

THE TASTE-TESTING INFORMATION WILL BE PASSED ON TO GROWERS TO HELP THEM DECIDE WHAT FRUIT VARIETIES TO GROW. IN WINTER HAVEN FLORIDA FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.