Farmer have to consider new products, emerging technology, and alternative management practices to stay competitive and to feed a growing population. What works in one part of the country may not be well adapted to northwestern Ohio.

Fortunately, area farmers have the Northwest Agriculture Research Station (a part of Ohio State University’s research system) to assist with this process. This 247-acre research station is similar to many of the farms in our area, having fine-textured soils, flat topography, and drainage concerns.

The Northwest Research Station is located in the southwestern corner of Wood County. For over 65 years, it has provided local research information to assist farmers with new methods and techniques to improve farm profitability and environmental stewardship.

Investigations today involve the major agronomic crops grown in this region: corn, soybeans, and wheat. In the past, farmers would have seen livestock studies and commercial vegetable.

Vegetable research moved to the Vegetable Research Station in Sandusky County, and sugar beets left with the sugar processing plants. Other potentially new crops have been evaluated at the Northwest Station, such as sunflowers, canola, camelina and malting barley.

Livestock has moved to other state research stations where livestock is more abundant than northwestern Ohio. However, research on manure application methods continues at the Northwest Research Station.

The station is nationally known for research on drainage issues and soil compaction as well as information obtained from its long-term tillage plots. The station has been an important site in the development of many of Ohio’s public wheat and soybean varieties.

Currently, Ohio State University researchers are using the farm to develop and evaluate new varieties and hybrids, develop cropping practices to increase yields and protect the environment, and develop effective management strategies for insects and diseases.

Researchers are also using the station to address the algae concerns in Lake Erie by investigating the rates and application methods of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizer. Other studies are looking at new approaches to nutrient management, alternative fertilizer products, and cover crops.

Extension educators from surrounding counties also have applied research studies at the station. These studies include cover crop evaluations, alternative crops, and nutrient management practices.

Each summer, the research station has a field day/open house for farmers and the public to see research in action and be able to interact with professors from Ohio State University about current and future research.

This year’s presenters will be covering subjects relevant to farmers and the public. For the Lake Erie concerns, individuals have the opportunity to learn about no-till systems and fertilizer application methods.

Since soybeans are important to the local economy, individuals will have the opportunity to see the latest research on disease management systems and the potential to grow soybeans after barley.

Speaking about barley, individuals will be able to learn about the emerging malting barley industry in Ohio. More than rumor, Ohio will soon have a malting processing facility to meet the growing demand of craft breweries. The processing facility will want locally-grown barley.

The field day/open house will be Thursday, June 21, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Details of the tour and speakers are:

- “Management of Seedling Diseases, Wise Choices for Seed Treatments, Potential Herbicide Interactions, and Better Cultivar Selection” — Dr. Anne Dorrance, plant pathology state specialist, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) and OSU Extension.
- “Identifying and Developing Winter Barley Adapted to the Great Lakes, Midwestern and Northeastern State Regions” — Dr. Eric Stockinger, barley breeding research, OARDC.
- “Agronomic Management of Winter Malting Barley and Double Cropping Soybean” — Dr. Laura Lindsey, soybean and small grain state specialist, OARDC and OSU Extension.
- “Fertilizer Placement Options for Different Management Systems” — Dr. John Fulton, precision agriculture state specialist, OARDC and OSU Extension.

The field day is an excellent time to see the latest research studies, visit with OSU researchers, and network with other area farmers.

Northwest Research Station is located about one-half mile northeast of Hoytville at the corner of Range Line and Oil Center roads (4240 Range Line Road, Custar 43511).

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Lentz can be heard with Vann Wickerham on weekdays at 6:35 a.m. on WEIN, at 5:43 a.m. on WKXA-FM, and at 5:28 a.m. at 106.3 The Fox.