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## Mideast, Midwest sow seeds

Israel, Ohio share farming techniques, research

By **James Hannah**  
Associated Press

Ohio farmers and researchers have begun working with their counterparts in Israel on projects ranging from beef-cattle genetics to disease-suppressing compost in hopes the relationship will open new markets for both places.

"There is great interest in the Holy Land on the part of our farmers. They see Israel as a gateway to the Middle East and other countries for their products," said Sam Hoenig, president of the Negev Foundation, a Cleveland group spearheading the initiative.

The program, launched in late 2003, has been fueled by about \$350,000 in government and private money.

Its mission is to develop the southern, largely desert portion of Israel, but researchers began with sharing agricultural



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Some work at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Developer Center has focused on developing soy-based breads that can lower cholesterol. Here, a sample was cut for analysis.

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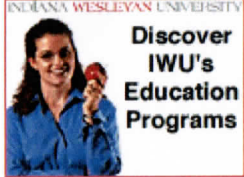
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microbes in compost to suppress plant diseases.

The scientists also have looked at energy-efficient greenhouses developed in Israel to see if they would work in Ohio, and researchers have exchanged information on cattle genetics and breeding, which leaves Ohio poised to begin exporting calves to Israel once it lifts its ban on U.S. beef imports because of fears of mad cow disease.

"Ohio is pretty much first in line because of the homework we've done and the relationships we've built in the past couple of years," Hoenig said. "From an economic point of view, it globalizes the beef industry here in Ohio."

John Stevenson, who owns a 400-acre farm in the Circleville area, was one of several farmers who went on a trade mission to Israel last year. The group visited feed lots and experimental agricultural stations.

Stevenson said he was surprised at the resourcefulness of the Israelis in dealing with less-than-ideal agricultural conditions, such as converting waste from fruit into feed for their cattle.

"You would not think they would have the feed, but they do," he said.

Hoenig said the initiative has resulted in Israeli companies looking for business opportunities in Ohio.

He said Solbar Industries Inc., which produces soy proteins, is negotiating to

research.

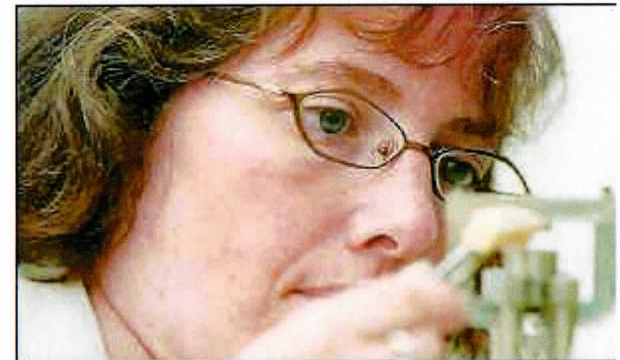
The Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center has exchanged information with Israeli scientists on health-promoting chemicals that occur in plants, with an eye toward using them in soy-based breads to lower cholesterol levels.

Another project involved the possibility of using



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Jay Laprete/Associated Press Ken Riedl placed a solvent into a test tube of bread at the food, science and technology lab at Ohio State University in Columbus.



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Yael Vodovotz, assistant professor at Ohio State, loaded a bread sample into a dynamic mechanical analyzer. One of her fellow researchers is from the University of Jerusalem.

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open a factory in the northeast Ohio town of Orrville.

If the deal goes through, the company could invest up to \$20 million and employ as many as 250, he said.

Representatives from 15 agricultural and food-related Israeli companies had a pavilion last month at the Ohio Farm Science Review, a high-profile annual exposition of farm machinery, equipment and goods in London, Ohio, between Columbus and Springfield.

In February, a group of Ohio farmers will return to Israel to meet with farmers and study how they grow their crops. The Israelis have special irrigation and fertilization technologies.

Then in May, Ohio farmers will display their products at an agricultural exposition in Tel Aviv.

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