

# Black farmers eye Ethiopian crop for niche in Kan.

WICHITA, Kansas (AP) — When Kansas farmers Gary and Gil Alexander were approached with the idea of growing teff, an Ethiopian cereal grain, they were intrigued by the crop's connection to Africa.

The cousins, who are descendants of former slaves who first settled the north-

western Kansas town of Nicodemus, decided to plant their first teff crops there last spring in hopes of finding a cultural niche.

"Teff is a crop grown primarily in Ethiopia, and using the connection between Ethiopia and Nicodemus being a Black settlement, we thought teff would be some-

thing to try," Gil Alexander said.

Backed by a grant from the Agriculture Department, the Alexanders and other Black farmers planted test plots earlier this year. So far, they are reporting good news.

"It grew well in western Kansas," said Sarah Evert, a graduate student at Kansas

State University who is studying the teff crops. She said the grain was "pretty drought-tolerant and hardy."

Ethiopians use teff to make a flat bread that is a staple in their diet. The crop's low gluten content makes it an alternative to wheat for people who are sensitive to gluten.

Edgar Hicks, a grain marketing consultant in Omaha, Neb., approached the Alexanders with the idea of growing teff.

A native Louisianan with no family ties to Nicodemus, Hicks has nonetheless been drawn to the all-Black settlement.

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, thousands of former Black slaves — known locally as "Exodusters" — flocked to the fertile Kansas prairie in search of a better life. Of the half-dozen or so Black settlements there, only

Nicodemus survived. The town, about 300 miles west of Kansas City, is now a protected National Historic Park site.

Just three Black farmers still toil the land around Nicodemus, and the Kansas Black Farmers Association is comprised of only about a dozen Black farmers who are still left on their family farms.

"Times are so tough for farmers now," said Hicks, who got a \$197,000 grant last year to fund teff research in Kansas. "Tough times have made people more open to look at this as not so much a crackpot-type thing."

Gil Alexander agrees. "The farmers are not getting a fair shake," he said. "We raise a lot of wheat, a lot of sorghum. I've raised my best sorghum crop ever this year, and it's not worth anything."

Gary Alexander recently harvested the last of his 2 acres of teff. The plot was small enough to be cut with hedge trimmers.

It reminded him of the old days, when farmers would still cut wheat by hand and big shocks of wheat would stand in the fields. He knows of at least one commercial grower in Oklahoma who grows hundreds of acres of teff, enough to run his combine to harvest it.

Someday, big teff fields could dot the countryside around Nicodemus.

But not even those farmers who are toying with growing it in hopes of supplementing their income expect it will ever become a primary crop.

"This is wheat country," Gil Alexander said. "The plains of Kansas have always been wheat country, and I don't see that changing."

## Jobs

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million.

A HUD-commissioned assessment of the first empowerment zones found mixed results from 1995 to 2000. Although many individual projects were creating jobs and reviving neighborhoods, the study found no widespread, sustained job creation.

"There is little evidence to indicate that major reform or 'reinvention' occurred," the assessment said.

After President Bush took office in 2001, grants were phased out in favor of tax incentives.

"You can give somebody a one-time grant, but if you can cut their taxes each and every year, that's serious coin, potentially," HUD's Sullivan said.

Today, there are 59 federally designated urban empowerment zones and re-

newal communities, from Boston to Cleveland to San Antonio and Los Angeles.

But HUD said it has not compiled the necessary data for a comprehensive review.

The department announced in 2002 that businesses in those zones were eligible for an estimated \$17 billion in federal tax incentives through 2009. But it is unable to say how many companies are taking advantage of the incentives — or how much money they are saving.

One tax credit, for hiring workers who live in empowerment zones and renewal communities, generated \$207 million in credits in 2002, according to the Internal Revenue Service. Sullivan said HUD is working with the IRS to generate more data on the tax incentives.

## Stress

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humans," said Judy Cameron, a senior scientist at the OHSU Oregon National Primate Research Center.

The monkey study provides strong evidence that stress exposure early in life can have dramatic, long-last-

ing effects that persist into the teenage years and perhaps even adulthood, she said.

The behavior of the monkeys appeared similar to children who develop a form of attachment disorder characterized by withdrawal from

social interactions.

Dr. Ronald Dahl, a University of Pittsburgh psychiatrist, said the study provided "unique insights into these developmental interactions in ways that cannot be achieved in controlled studies in humans."

## AIDS Day

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versely affects health and may exacerbate disease progression. Third, and most important, because of these linkages, we must recognize that drug abuse treatment is HIV prevention."

Cindy Miner, deputy director of the office of science policy at NIDA, stresses that the report is not just about needles.

"We're talking about all drugs. Not just intravenous, but the use of alcohol and the use of other drugs that will cause kids to do things that they otherwise wouldn't do," she said.

"They can truly make poor decisions that lead to risky behaviors such as unprotected sex or probably do something or engage in these behaviors with somebody that they might otherwise wouldn't. We need a lot of dialog centered around this problem, an area that has really been ignored."

Intravenous drug users

alongside male homosexuals have been among the highest risk categories for HIV/AIDS, but expanding the drug connection to risky behavior is relatively new, Miner points out.

"I think the people are talking about drugs. But, they're not talking about the consequences of drugs and certainly one of the consequences is HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases."

The NIDA report, released at a Washington, D.C., press conference, comes on the heels of a recent announcement by the CDC that the number of newly diagnosed HIV infections among African-Americans has declined an average of 5 percent a year for the past three years, although Blacks are still 40 percent of AIDS cases diagnosed, while only 12.3 percent of the U.S. population.

The disproportionate number of Black teenagers

and young adults with HIV is not new. According to CDC data reported through December 2001, African-Americans were the largest group of youth affected by HIV. They accounted for 56 percent of all HIV infections ever reported among those aged 13-24. But, it hasn't been reported enough, the NIDA says.

The public service announcement, featuring two teenage actresses, Mahbi and Rebecca Hollingsworth, also a Duke Ellington student, will be publicly aired on videos in some chain stores, such as Circuit City, Best Buy, Costco, and Sears in observance of World AIDS Day. World AIDS Day Observers will wear red ribbons to call attention to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS around the world. Mahbi, 16, says she hopes teenagers will get the bottom line about HIV and apply it to themselves: "It's not slowing down. It's not stopping anywhere."

## Museum

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more than 115 years ago with African-American soldiers who had served in the Civil War being denied the right to march in a parade honoring military soldiers," said Norton.

"There were more than 100,000 Blacks who served, and all they wanted was to march. Once they were denied the right to march, it morphed into the idea among those who supported them to honor them with a museum all their own. Over the years, it morphed into the very museum we are establishing today."

Ensuring that the museum would be placed within the corridor of other museums — and in an area conducive to foot and automobile traffic — made finding the perfect spot tricky. But as the site assessors found, there were plenty of plans and alternative plans to be had.

Plexus Scientific Corp., an engineering and infrastructure consulting firm, and PageSoutherlandPage, an architectural and engineering firm, conducted the site evaluation study.

"We have looked at drawings both past and present to decide where the best plans for [the] District are," said William A. Brown, executive vice president for PageSoutherlandPage. "Analysis has been made of each site. These assessments include how construction and the museum itself with affect traffic, utilities, and views from the site."

"Two possibilities were determined for each site, which we called scenarios. We will not be the ones to make the decision, the Smithsonian will. What we can tell you is that each of these possibilities is accessible by Metro."

Poussaint, who serves as the executive director of the National Visionary Leadership Project, believes, like Norton, that whichever site is chosen, the Smithsonian will be fair and just. She also feels the decision is a long-awaited one. "There is a special meaning in this city for African-Americans whose very descendants were among those soldiers and those who have been fighting to get this mea-

sure seen to completion," said Poussaint.

Anyone wishing to comment on the four possible museum sites may write to Sheila Burke, deputy secretary and chief operating officer of the Smithsonian, who will gather all comments and forward them to the Board of Regents. Her address is: P.O. Box 37012, SIB 219 MRC 040, Washington, D.C. 20013-7012.

The four sites under consideration are:

### The Arts and Industries Building

Located between Jefferson Drive and Independence Avenue at Ninth Street S.W., the site is adjacent to the Haupt Garden and the Smithsonian Castle on the south side of the Mall. It is near the Smithsonian Metro.

### The Monument Site

Located between Constitution Avenue, Madison Drive and 14th and 15th streets N.W., immediately west of the National Museum of American History, the site is on the Mall at the base of the Washington Monument. It is near the Federal Triangle Metro stop and the proposed underground Monument Visitors' Center.

### The Liberty Loan Site

Located at 14th Street S.W., just south of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing Building, overlooking the Tidal Basin and at the foot of the 14th Street Bridge, the site is occupied by a government office building that would most likely need to be demolished. It is one block south of the Holocaust Museum and two blocks from the Mall, adjacent to the Tidal Basin and the Jefferson Memorial.

### The Banneker Overlook Site

Located at the south end of 10th Street at the end of L'Enfant Plaza Promenade, the site is nearly four blocks from the Mall, on an axis with the Smithsonian Castle. It is the terminus of L'Enfant Promenade.

The site is the location of the Benjamin Banneker Park and memorial site. The site overlooks the Southwest waterfront along Maine Avenue. L'Enfant Promenade crosses I-395, which is adjacent to the site. It is near the L'Enfant Plaza Metro.

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