K-State breaks ground on Global Center for Grain and Food Innovation

New facility will combine expertise of grain, food and animal researchers and faculty

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Kansas State University has launched a project that will bring together two of its strongest agricultural programs under one roof.

The university held a groundbreaking ceremony on May 17 for the Global Center for Grain and Food Innovation, to be located just off the corner of Claflin Road and Mid-Campus Drive. The new building – estimated for completion in Fall, 2026 – will connect Weber Hall and Call Hall, which also will undergo renovations.

It will also bring faculty and staff from the departments of animal science – including food science -- and grain science together, allowing them to work side-by-side on more projects.

Ernie Minton, the Eldon Gideon Dean of K-State’s College of Agriculture, said the center is the third groundbreaking in the university’s Agriculture Innovation Initiative, a multi-year push to upgrade and expand facilities in grain, food, animal and agronomy research. When completed, the Agriculture Innovation Initiative is anticipated to top $210 million raised from a combination of state, private and university funds.

K-State has previously held groundbreaking events for the Agronomy Research and Innovation Center and the Bilbrey Family Event Center, both due for completion in Fall, 2025. Renovations to Weber and Call Hall – which include an updated meat lab, a learning pavilion, upgraded classrooms, student collaboration space, a renovated dairy processing plant and modern research labs – are scheduled for Dec. 2027.

The Global Center for Grain and Food Innovation “is part of an ambitious plan to make Kansas State University the Next-Generation Land Grant University,” Minton said during the May 17 groundbreaking. “We want to be the example of what a land grant university should be in the 21st century.”
In addition to connecting Weber and Call halls, the Global Center will include a new retail space; modern milling and baking labs; pilot plant; and shared space to bring together faculty in animal science, food science and grain science.

Minton said 30% of the space in the new building will be dedicated to collaboration between public and private groups, “fostering an interdisciplinary environment for effective problem-solving.”

“I hope that everybody understands that this isn’t a change at all,” said Chris Mullinix, advanced instructor of animal sciences and industry. “If anything, it’s a renewed commitment to everything we’ve ever been, and that’s what is exciting to me.”

Hulya Dogan, interim department head for grain science, said the Global Center for Grain and Food Innovation will be the new home for her department’s faculty and staff, replacing the aging Shellenberger Hall.

K-State’s Department of Grain Science and Industry offers the country’s only undergraduate degrees in milling science, bakery science and feed and pet food processing – and in fact, is one of only a few in the entire world to do so. The department reports 100% job placement rate in those degree programs.

For students, Dogan said, the new building will contain “the latest technologies so that they are able to enter the workforce immediately after graduation.”

The Department of Animal Sciences and Industry also is highly regarded, having been tabbed last fall as the country’s No. 1 animal science program by CollegeRaptor. Also, ScholarGPS placed K-State’s animal science program in the top 10 among U.S. colleges.

K-State President Richard Linton called May 17 “a big day for the College of Agriculture, a historic day for K-State, and a transformational day for Kansas agriculture and our agriculture and food industry stakeholders.”

“Get ready,” he said. “Things are going to look and feel different at Kansas State University. Our agriculture impact locally and globally will reach new heights because of this project.”

Linton pointed to the entirety of the Agriculture Innovation Initiative, which will create four new buildings and three remodeled spaces.

“These facilities will support cutting-edge research and learning,” Linton said. “We will have interdisciplinary lab spaces and areas dedicated to helping foster partnerships with industry. Students can expect larger, more accessible classrooms outfitted with the latest technologies and suitable for remote learning. There will also be unique learning spaces, like the arena pavilion, a pilot plant and a test kitchen.”

“This is an achievement that we should all take pride in.”

Learn more about K-State’s Agriculture Innovation Initiative at www.k-state.edu/ag-innovation.