

Researchers help farmers battle drought

Agricultural producers in Oklahoma, and surrounding states, have recently struggled through two extreme drought years. Researchers at Oklahoma State University's Biobased Products



Mahalingam

and Energy Center are looking for solutions to help crop production during these trying times.

"We are increasingly facing long drought and heat spells here in Oklahoma and also in the rest of the world," said Mali Mahalingam, associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at OSU.

Mahalingam and his team of researchers are focusing on two major objectives: understanding the functions of key genes involved in plant stress signaling and developing a gene inventory for switchgrass.

Identifying key regulatory genes involved in important biomass associated traits, such as tillering, will provide valuable biomarkers for the switchgrass breeding program.

Mahalingam not only has an impact on agricultural producers through his research at OSU, but also on students in his classes.

"One of the greatest delights of being in academia is the interaction with students," he said.

It was those very students that nominated and recommended him for the Phoenix Award for Outstanding Faculty Member, which is an entirely student-led award from the OSU Graduate and Professional Student Government Association.