



VEGETABLE, FRUIT IMPROVMENT CENTER

COLLEGE STATION - There's a lot more to agriculture than just driving a tractor.

And you might be surprised to know some of the carrots, onions and peppers you have in your fridge were developed right here at Texas A&M.

You are what you eat.

"There's so much stuff out there, so many produce," Jose Perez, a PhD student, said.

Researchers at Texas A&M have been at the forefront of finding connections between food and health.

"We gave the maroon carrot and the regular orange carrot to breast cancer recovery patients, so we found that their beta carotene levels were increased," Bhimu Patil, director of the Vegetable & Fruit Improvement Center, said.

"I work with this asian vegetable called bitter melon, and it's very true to its name, it's very bitter, but it has a whole bunch of anti-diabetic properties," Perez said.

To test the produce, the scientists freeze dry the fruits and vegetables and crush them into a powder.

The vegetable and fruit improvement center at Texas A&M celebrated twenty years of studying and developing produce.

"As we do the research, even if it tastes bad you're not going to eat it so it's important for us to develop fruits that are tasty and healthy," Michael Harris, an undergrad researcher, said.

Americans consume less than two servings of fruits and veggies per day, and the center wants to see that number grow.

"Almost 30,000 people can be reduced of heart diseases or prevented with heart diseases if we increase one more servings per day of fruits and vegetables," Patil said.

For Perez, the inspiration for his research with bitter melon hits close to home.

"I'm from South Texas and there's a lot of diabetes down there."

ORIGINAL LINK: <http://kagstv.com/News/KAGSNews/ID/2830/Texas-AM-Vegetable-and-Fruit-Improvement-Center#video>