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## UAS Precision Ag Public Education

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By Patrick C. Miller | February 05, 2015

In between teaching electrical and computer engineering at Mississippi State University, serving as director of the university's Geosystems Research Institute and conducting precision agriculture research with unmanned aerial systems, Robert Moorhead finds time to educate the public about UAS.

On the day I talked to him about MSU's precision ag UAS research projects, Moorhead had already participated in four meetings in which he'd talked to farmers about employing UAS in their everyday operations. He discussed FAA regulations, safety and UAS reliability.

"There's a lot of smoke out there and a lot of things people don't think about," he explained. "Sometimes people don't understand all the issues and so they'll go buy something thinking that it will do something it won't do. There's a lot of education going on."

The good news for those do-it-yourselfers who want to invest the time in learning to operate their own UAS, Moorhead said the off-the-shelf technology is getting better.

"There are a couple companies that are coming pretty close to allowing you to get something off the shelf that you can fly and will provide data," he noted. "They can help farmers find the areas they need to look at to reduce foot traffic into the field."

However, he also believes that most farmers don't want to be UAS pilots, IT specialists and data analysts. Instead, most in agriculture will turn to consulting firms that buy the equipment, train the personnel and provide farmers with the information they need to make better decisions about their crops.

As UAS become more automated and can operate more autonomously, it's possible that farmers will become more interested in the timely, detailed information they supply and less interested in learning the fine points of aeronautics, sensors, platforms, FAA regulations and data collection.

And thanks to precision ag research being conducted by Moorhead and others in Mississippi, that point is getting closer every day.

