



NATIONAL COALITION FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

January 20, 2010

Dear National C-FAR Members & Supporters,

I present to you the 2009 National C-FAR Annual Report. The actions and outcomes highlighted in this report are underpinned by hard team work and leveraged partnerships and collaborative efforts. National C-FAR implemented an action program focused on three areas: (1) laying the groundwork for longer term funding success through our highly successful “Lunch~N~Learn” Hill Seminar Series; (2) targeted advocacy in support of increased funding in FY10 budget and appropriations; and (3) providing input to the farm bill implementation process related to funding for USDA’s food and agricultural research, extension and education (RE&E) mission.

The successful ‘Lunch~N~Learn’ Hill Seminar series leveraged limited resources and informed nearly 650 attendees in 2009 about the value of federal funding in food and agricultural RE&E through a mosaic of leading-edge presenters and topics and that also provided timely information that help staff do their jobs. Hill staff attending included a diverse mix of chiefs of staff for Members and Committees, legislative directors and assistants working the issues, as well as interns who will become future hill staff and leaders. Targeted advocacy efforts of your customer-led coalition helped contribute to positive RE&E funding outcomes for FY10.

The [minutes](#) of the January 4, 2010 Board meeting reflect the thoughtful discussion and strong leadership recommitment to National C-FAR’s mission and program. The Board directed the Research Outreach Committee (ROC) [[click here](#) for Jan 4 report] and staff to continue to focus National C-FAR’s limited resources in 2010 on what the organization has proven to be more effective at and best suited for—the successful Hill Seminar Series—while remaining actively engaged and supportive as appropriate in advocacy.

National C-FAR’s leadership decision to continue to focus resources on “education” initiatives is motivated by the ultimate goal and National C-FAR’s mission—*To sustain and increase federal funding in food and agricultural RE&E*. Seminars and related education and outreach efforts are intended to increase understanding and awareness among hill staff and other policy makers and stakeholders about the value of public investment in food and agricultural RE&E, so that decisions about funding such programs will be more informed and value-based and hopefully thereby result in sustained and increased funding.

President Obama’s commitment in his inaugural address and in subsequent statements to return the nation to a course guided by sound science offers fresh hope. However, our task will not be easy. The non-results of spirited but efforts to secure and retain RE&E funding in the stimulus package were instructive. The significant increase in funding for AFRI for FY11 offers renewed hope, but budget realities and challenges ahead are sobering.

With leadership largely in place and implementation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) moving forward, these dynamics can serve as effective platforms of change that make food and ag RE&E more competitive in the quest for increases in funding to the levels needed to provide the scientific outcomes our nation needs. I look forward to working with you in 2010.

Respectfully Submitted,

R. Thomas Van Arsdall, Executive Director

NATIONAL C-FAR 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

OUTREACH—LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR FUNDING INCREASES

'Lunch~N~Learn' Hill Seminars—Nearly 650 Attendees in 2009:

The objective of the seminars is to increase hill staff awareness of, and appreciation for, the value of food and agricultural REE and their important outcomes. This effort lays the necessary foundation of knowledge for maintaining existing funding levels, and for achieving future funding increases when the budget climate improves. The National C-FAR moderator and guest presenter at each hill seminar are tasked to ensure the seminars stay “on message” by highlighting (1) the contribution of federal funding to the project, and (2) additional research and scientific outcomes that need additional funding, driven by identified or anticipated real-world challenges.



In keeping with National C-FAR’s mission to advocate funding for ALL food and agricultural RE&E, a mix of inter-mural and intramural speakers and projects is selected. Others who have tried to host briefings and seminars for hill staff know it is a major challenge to get busy hill staff to attend. So when over 1,000 busy hill staff, agency officials and interested stakeholders look at their e-mail invitations and reminders to each NC-FAR seminar, here are examples of the first words they read:

**The Green Connection • From Stump to Pump • Porcine Nirvana • One Health?
Soybean Fields Forever • When Good Food Goes Bad
Finding Our Way (and Our Food) • Water, People and the Future (Ag)**



The Research Outreach Committee team selects eye-catching titles that will pique curiosity and motivate the recipient to look further at the abstract to learn what the heck the seminar is about, and hopefully decide to make time to attend.

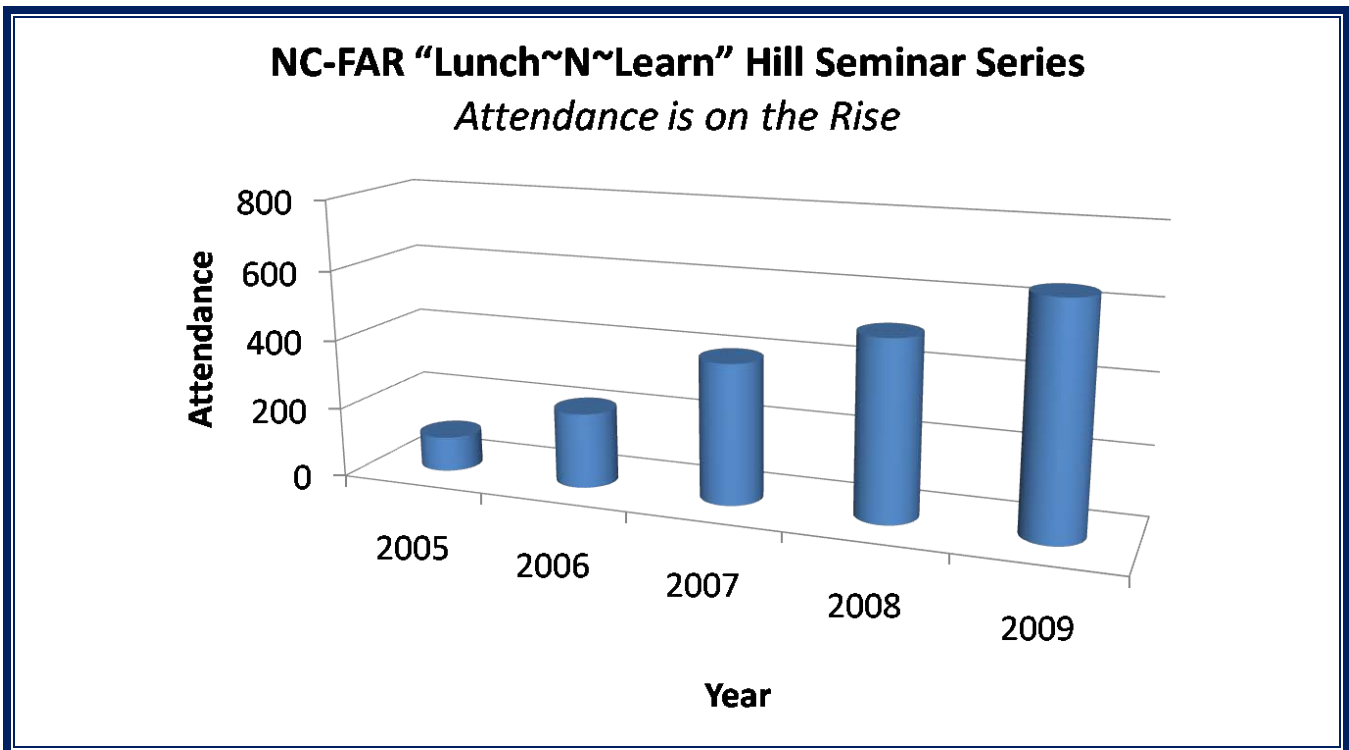
The Research Outreach Committee (ROC) has sought feedback from hill staff, and the seminar series has evolved and improved by listening carefully and incorporating their good recommendations. The “brand identity” of the “Lunch~N~Learn” Hill Seminars is now well established and positive.

Hill staff have provided feedback that they really appreciate receiving the invitations and take away information that is useful in their own work. Professional hill staff ask to be added to the invitation list for future seminars.



The active involvement of members and supporters remains crucial to success. We work hard to leverage limited funds through collaborative efforts—including generous sponsorships, speaker travel costs underwritten by institutions and national trade associations, and partnering efforts such as with CAST. Liaisons for the key research agencies in USDA have served as a valuable resource in the ROC by helping to identify outstanding seminar speakers and timely topics. Based on the principle that busy hill staff are more likely to respond when they receive invitations from people they know, an action request is sent in advance of each seminar to National C-FAR members and supporters, providing an easy way for each to support the outreach effort by sending a personalized invitation to their own hill staff contacts.

How well has it worked? Attendance by hill staff has been strong and growing, and feedback from key hill staff has been positive. Over the past 5 years, National C-FAR has hosted a total of 40 seminars—10 in 2009 alone. Over 1,900 hill staff have attended the seminar in the past 5 years—nearly 650 in 2009. Leading presenters from 40 institutions across the nation from a variety of disciplines have served as a resource on timely topics to hill staff, agency officials and interested stakeholders. [Click Here](#) for more highlights.



National C-FAR is the only organization to produce these types of outreach on a consistent basis, and does so effectively. Hill staff and policy makers are targeted with a steady, ongoing drumbeat throughout each year that remains on message in the overall effort to make the case for increasing federal investments in food and agricultural RE&E.

ADVOCACY ACTIONS

Outreach to the Obama Administration:

National C-FAR sent a [letter](#) in early 2009 to then President-elect Obama urging him to embrace a funding action plan that increases funding by at least 25 percent in the coming year with a goal of doubling federal investment in food and agricultural RE&E within four years—including funding for AFRI at the fully authorized level as soon as practicable. Excerpts:

“As you lead the national dialogue on two of the nation’s highest priorities – Americans’ health and the nation’s economy -- the National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR) urges that new federal investment be made in food and agricultural research and related areas.”

“Increase AFRI Funding. As an important part of funding increases, National C-FAR urges your Administration to increase funding for the new AFRI (section 7406 of PL 110-246). *Money matters!* Unless sufficient funding is achieved, the best concepts about how to organize and conduct research won’t be able to deliver the results needed by our Nation. Adequate funding is critical to implementing AFRI and realizing its potential. Current funding levels remain inadequate, and National C-FAR urges the Administration to embrace a funding *action plan that increases funding by at least 25 percent in the coming year with a goal of doubling federal investment in food and agricultural RE&E within four years.*”

National C-FAR followed up with a [letter](#) to USDA Secretary-designee Vilsack reinforcing the same message.

The National C-FAR Board also met and had a productive exchange with Dr. Rajiv Shah shortly after his nomination, and National C-FAR leadership has worked to engage in similar dialogs with NIFA Director Roger Beachy and other leaders.

Budget & Appropriations:

National C-FAR filed comments and sent letters at appropriate points in support of increased funding for food and agricultural RE&E during the evolution of FY 2010 ag appropriations and 302(b) budget allocations. The FY10 ag budget enacted into law contained a major increase in funding for AFRI and modest but important increases in other areas of the USDA RE&E mission. Examples:

- [Letter](#) to key Appropriators in support of including AFRI funding in stimulus package.
- [Comments](#) to House Ag Appropriations in support of FY10 AFRI/RE&E funding increases.
- [Comments](#) to Senate Ag appropriations in support of FY10 AFRI/RE&E funding increases.
- [Letter](#) to Conferees in support of FY10 AFRI/RE&E funding increases. Excerpt:

“The National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR) strongly supports the \$295.2 million provided for USDA’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) in the Senate-passed bill and urges you to sustain this level in conference. This is a major step toward the goal of increasing funding for AFRI to the fully authorized level of \$700 million annually. National C-FAR opposes taking funds from other RE&E programs in USDA to fund AFRI.

National C-FAR also supports the higher level of funding in FY10 in the two bills for each other part of USDA’s RE&E mission, including: the remainder of the Cooperative State, Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) beyond AFRI, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS) and Forest Service (FS).”

Through action alerts and requests, National C-FAR endeavored to provide members and supporters with timely opportunities to add their voices to the process, including as co-signators to group letters. Examples:

- [Group Letter](#) to House Ag Appropriations in support of FY10 AFRI/RE&E funding increases.
- Group Letter to Senate Ag Appropriations in support of FY10 AFRI/RE&E funding increases.

Where deemed appropriate, National C-FAR joined as a signatory to letters being circulated by allied groups in support of increased funding.

Farm Bill Research Title Implementation:

National C-FAR was selectively engaged in implementation of the Farm Bill in 2009, responding to requests for input on the USDA Road Map, NIFA and AFRI. The input of National C-FAR members was sought at critical junctures. National C-FAR worked to stay “on message” concerning our stated mission of increasing RE&E funding in every statement, letter and comment.

National C-FAR submitted comments to USDA concerning the establishment of NIFA. Excerpts:

“National C-FAR believes the Institute and the programs it will manage is a major new tool that, if properly funded, will help the Administration realize the President’s stated objective of restoring science to national policies and programs. We respectfully submit that while the decisions to be made about how the Institute will be organized and managed are important, the far greater challenge in these difficult times will be to secure the funds needed.”

“Funding is the fuel that will drive the engine of the new AFRI and other programs managed by the Institute.....If USDA’s RE&E mission continues to be starved for funds, the Institute is destined to fall short of not only its potential but of the outcomes this nation needs for the food and agriculture system to remain successful.....National C-FAR’s support for a National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the creation of AFRI and other reforms in USDA’s mission in the recently enacted Farm Bill was principally motivated by the hope that such reforms would help result in increased funding.”

National C-FAR submitted [comments](#) to USDA concerning the USDA Road Map. Excerpts:

“National C-FAR believes that if adequately funded the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the Agriculture and Food Initiative (AFRI) and the other programs REEO coordinates will help the Administration realize the President’s stated objective of restoring science to national policies and programs. We respectfully submit that while the roadmap is important, the far greater challenge in these difficult times will be to secure the funds needed.”

“At the risk of oversimplification, funding is the fuel that will fuel the RE&E engine and determine how effectively the roadmap will be implemented. If USDA’s RE&E mission continues to be starved for funds, any roadmap is destined to fall short of not only its potential but of leading to the outcomes this nation needs for the food and agricultural system to remain successful.

- The unfortunate reality is that RE&E funding for USDA has been flat at best for at least the past 2 decades, despite much greater demonstrated needs.
- The success of literally every other mission area in USDA—of every other Title in the Farm Bill—is dependent in large part on scientific outcomes and translational education through the RE&E mission.
- National C-FAR’s support for NIFA, AFRI and other reforms in USDA’s RE&E mission in the recently enacted Farm Bill was principally motivated by the hope that such reforms would help result in increased funding.
 - It is incumbent on USDA, stakeholders in the RE&E and “customer” communities, and the Congress to find the will and a way to increase investments in this vital mission area and turn our shared hope into an operational reality.”

“This quest starts with articulating a compelling case to fund unmet needs. To help prepare the best case possible for enhanced funding, National C-FAR urges USDA to make it a priority to identify current and future challenges to the food and agricultural sector and the RE&E needs and resource requirements to respond to those challenges in the coming years in a timely and effective manner and to articulate those needs eloquently and effectively.

USDA and the Administration should base annual budget requests for its RE&E mission on such a needs assessment, including a robust funding stream for the RE&E programs coordinated by REEO.”

National C-FAR President Joe Layton [testified](#) at an oversight hearing held by the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit and Research regarding implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill Research Title. Excerpts:

“Increased funding is critical to achieving the intended objectives of the historically underfunded Research Title, for both extramural and intramural programs. It is important to include investments in both fundamental and applied research.”

“Federal funding for food and agricultural RE&E represents a top national priority and a necessary long-term national commitment. Our support for increased funding includes both the intramural and extramural programs at USDA. I agree with President Obama’s statement that, ‘Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, our environment, and our quality of life than it has ever been.’ President Obama recently committed to a major increase in investments in research, declaring at the annual meeting of the National Academy of Sciences that the United States will ‘devote more than 3 percent of our GDP to research and development.’ I believe that major increases in funding for food and agricultural RE&E must be a part of this vision for our nation’s future.”

“I believe we are in a period of opportunity where the chance to improve research funding exists -- IF all of us in agriculture can come together. Already, I have seen production agriculture – crops and livestock as well as specialty crops – coming together with the unified message that we believe a rising tide lifts all boats.”

“National C-FAR, the American Soybean Association and others in the stakeholder community bear a commensurate responsibility in implementing the new programs under the Research Title, in articulating needs, and in making the case for increased funding.”

National C-FAR participated in and [supported](#) USDA’s event at the National Press Club launching NIFA. Excerpt:

“We are all customers—farmers and consumers—who are dependent upon our food and ag research programs for sound answers,” Layton said. “We must seize this historic opportunity to come together in support of increased federal funding for both fundamental and applied research if we are to expect our researchers to provide the science-based outcomes needed to meet multiple challenges we are facing, both known and unknown.”

[Click Here](#) for a PowerPoint presentation that provides a good overview of National C-FAR, its mission and action program.

R. Thomas Van Arsdall
Executive Director

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