



NATIONAL COALITION FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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May 1, 2009—via E-mail

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair
The Honorable Jack Kingston, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

RE: FY10 Appropriations—Increase Funding for Food and Agricultural RE&E

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Kingston:

The National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR) urges the Subcommittee to increase federal investment in food and agricultural research, extension and education (RE&E) as a critical component of federal appropriations for FY10, including at least **\$300 million for the new Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)**.

President Obama has acknowledged the need for a major investment in research, saying 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.” We support President Obama’s goal, and advise you that food and agriculture research must be a part of his vision.

The potential payoff is enormous for both Americans’ health and the nation’s economy. Federal investments in food and agricultural RE&E have brought profitability to production agriculture, found solutions for difficult conservation and environmental challenges, addressed the many issues of food safety, and provided the baseline for our whole knowledge of human nutrition.

Now, RE&E must seek solutions for feeding growing populations, dealing with climate change, developing sustainable fuel production, maintaining ecosystem health, and assuring all people food security and proper nutrition. Now is the time to grow investment in our nation’s agricultural research enterprise and build on the successes of the past by increasing funding for a variety of food and agricultural research, extension and education efforts, and in particular the new National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and AFRI.

National C-FAR urges the Subcommittee to *increase funding for AFRI to at least \$300 million in FY10 with a goal of funding AFRI at the fully authorized level as soon as practicable, and by FY13 at the latest.* AFRI, the successor to USDA's National Research Initiative (NRI) and the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS), is an integrated approach that takes research and innovation beyond the development phase, into implementation through contemporary education and extension programs. National C-FAR opposes taking funds from other RE&E programs in USDA to fund AFRI.

NIFA, AFRI and other recent reforms offer a new opportunity to transform USDA's RE&E mission. AFRI will support research on key problems of national and regional importance in biological, environmental, physical, and social sciences relevant to agriculture, food, and the environment on a peer-reviewed, competitive basis. Additionally, AFRI should enable USDA to continue leveraging a portion of its RE&E funds fostering the development of partnerships with other federal agencies that advance agricultural science.

National C-FAR also supports the Administration's FY10 requests for other parts 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).

The Research Title of the Farm Bill represents the nation's *signature federal investment in the future of the food and agricultural sector.* Other Farm Bill titles depend heavily upon the Research Title for tools to help achieve their stated objectives. Public investment in food and agricultural research, extension and education today and in the future must simultaneously satisfy needs for food quality and quantity, resource preservation, producer profitability and social acceptability.

Tools provided through RE&E are needed to help achieve safer, more nutritious, convenient and affordable foods delivered to sustain a well nourished, healthy population; more efficient and environmentally friendly food, fiber and forest production; improved water quality, land conservation, wildlife and other environmental conditions; less dependence on non-renewable sources of energy; expanded global markets and improved balance of trade ; and more jobs and sustainable rural economic development. Societal demands and expectations placed upon the food and agricultural system are ever-changing and growing.

Multiple examples, such as those highlighted below, serve to illustrate current and future needs that arguably merit enhanced public investment in research, extension and education so that the food and agricultural system can respond to these challenges on a sustainable basis:

- ◆ **Strengthened bio-security** is a pressing national priority. There is a compelling need for improved bio-security and bio-safety tools and policies to protect against bio-terrorism and dreaded problems such as foot-and-mouth and "mad cow" diseases and other exotic plant and animal pests, and protection of range lands from invasive species.
- ◆ **Food-linked health** costs are high. Some \$100 billion of annual U.S. health costs are linked to poor diets, obesity, food borne pathogens and allergens. Opportunities exist to create healthier diets through improvements in the food supply and in consumer knowledge and implementation of dietary guidance.

- ◆ Research, extension and education are key to providing to solutions to **environment and conservation** challenges related to global warming, limited water resources, enhanced wildlife habitat, and competing demands for land and other agricultural resources. Rural water conservation and development of drought-resistant crops have evolved from a good idea to a necessity.
- ◆ It is a *highly competitive world for food* and agriculture and rural America. There was considerable debate during the last Farm Bill reauthorization about how expanded food and agricultural research, extension and education could enhance **farm income** and **rural revitalization** by improving competitiveness and value-added opportunities.
- ◆ Energy costs are escalating, dependence on petroleum imports is growing and concerns about greenhouse gases are rising. Research, extension and education can enhance agriculture's ability to provide **renewable** sources of energy and cleaner burning fuels, sequester carbon, and provide other environmental benefits to help address these challenges, and indeed generate value-added income for producers and stimulate rural economic development.
- ◆ Population and income growth are expanding the **world demand** for food and natural fiber and improved diets. World food demand is projected to double in 25 years. Most of this growth will occur in the developing nations where yields are low, land is scarce, and diets are inadequate. Without a vigorous response, demand will only be met at a great global ecological cost.
- ◆ Regardless of one's views about **biotechnology** and genetic resources, an effective publicly funded research role is needed for oversight and to ensure public benefits.

Publicly financed RE&E is a *necessary complement to private sector research*, focusing in areas where the private sector does not have an incentive to invest, when 1) the pay-off is over a long term; 2) the potential market is more speculative; 3) the effort is during the pre-technology stage; and 4) where the benefits are widely diffused. Public research, extension and education help provide oversight and measure long-term progress. Public research, extension and education also act as a means to detect and resolve problems in an early stage, thus saving American taxpayer dollars in remedial and corrective actions.


The USDA, ERS September 2007 Economic Brief titled, "Economic Returns of Public Agricultural Research," shows the average social rate of return to public investment in agricultural research is nearly 50 percent. However, federal funding for food and agricultural research, extension and education has been essentially *flat for over 20 years*, while support for other federal research has increased substantially. Public funding of agricultural research in the rest of the world during the same time period has outpaced investment in the U.S., leading to competitive concerns. There also are vast areas where the public will trust only U.S. federal investments in research – a case in point is human nutrition research.

By any measure, federal funding for food and agricultural research, extension and education – which has declined about one-fourth since FY 2003 -- has failed to keep pace with identified priority needs. Allowing this decline to continue is likely to irrevocably harm our responses to human needs and competitive forces. It is imperative to lay the groundwork now to respond to the many challenges and promising opportunities ahead through federal policies and programs needed to promote the long-term health and vitality of food and agriculture for the benefit of both consumers and producers. Stronger public investment in food and agricultural RE&E is essential in producing research outcomes needed to help deliver beneficial and timely solutions on a sustainable basis

National C-FAR serves as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension and education. National C-FAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based and *customer-led* coalition established in 2001 that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation and natural resource organizations together with the food and agriculture research and extension community.

We agree with President Obama that, "Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, our environment, and our quality of life than it has ever been."

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M. Stephanie Patrick".

M. Stephanie Patrick, President