



January 11, 2021

Dear NCFAR Members, Sponsors & Supporters,

As NCFAR embarks on its **20th Year of Advocacy and Education**, I am honored to present the 2020 NCFAR Annual Report ([Click Here](#) for PPT version). In 2020, your coalition continued its mission during an unprecedented pandemic in innovative ways, such as shifting from in person seminars to virtual webinars. In addition, your NCFAR [Board of Directors](#), after completing a 6-month review, voted unanimously to continue and strengthen NCFAR's critical mission into 2021 and beyond. Strategic planning is underway to sharpen and focus the implementing action program.

NCFAR's vital mission *is to sustain and increase federal funding in food and agricultural research, Extension and education (RE&E)*. Your coalition leads through unique roles—the only coalition in which 'Customers'—stakeholders who *need and benefit from RE&E outcomes*—are the leading voices in making an effective case for federal funding; provides a common forum and a unified voice, for diverse stakeholders; the only coalition whose *focused* mission is advocacy for federal funding for *BOTH inter- and intra-mural* food & ag RE&E. NCFAR seeks to *complement* the efforts of allied groups, such as APLU (BAA-ESCAP & ECOP), CAST, the AFRI Coalition, SoAR, Friends of ARS, and Friends of NASS. The actions and outcomes highlighted in this report are made possible through the ownership involvement of Members and Sponsors, with limited funding leveraged through collaborative efforts.

NCFAR continued to focus on the following areas in 2020:



Education, with a Purpose—Laying the groundwork for longer term funding success through our highly successful ['Lunch~N~Learn' Hill Seminar Series](#). **RESULTS!!!** Nearly 1,700 **attendees** reached through 7 seminars in 2020—more than *11,200 attendees through 159 seminars in 16 years*—demonstrating the value of federal funding in food and agricultural RE&E through a mosaic of leading-edge presenters and topics and that also provide timely information that help staff do their jobs. The *'education with a purpose'* objective of these outreach initiatives is *more informed and positive recommendations by hill staff to Members of Congress about federal funding for food and agricultural RE&E*.

Targeted Advocacy—Providing opportunities to give a greater voice to 'customers' and other stakeholders in support of sustaining and increasing funding in the budget and appropriations process and a strengthened farm bill research title. In a challenging budget climate, FY21 funding levels for REE were increased slightly over FY20 levels, with \$435 million for AFRI.

2021 presents *fresh challenges and opportunities* in a new Administration and Congress, including targeted advocacy in the annual budget and appropriations process, and year 17 of the 'Lunch~N~Learn' Hill Seminar Series.

Thanks to the sustained involvement and support of NCFAR [Members and Sponsors](#), the 2020 budget year ended with a balanced bottom line, and healthy reserves.

As NCFAR embarks on its 20th year of advocacy and advocacy in support of funding food and agricultural research, extension and education, your organization is well positioned to take on these critical challenges and opportunities.

R. Thomas Van Orsdall
Executive Director

NCFAR 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

[Click Here](#) for a PowerPoint (PDF) version of NCFAR's 2020 Annual Report

NCFAR as a 'customer-led' coalition took outreach and advocacy actions on a number of fronts in 2020 in support of federal funding for food and ag RE&E. Insights on the direction set by the Board can be found in the [2020 annual meeting minutes](#), with critical decisions made about the future of NCFAR 2020 reflected in the [October 19 special Board meeting minutes](#).

OUTREACH—EDUCATION WITH A PURPOSE!



The 'Lunch~N~Learn' Hill Seminar [Series](#) is *education with a purpose*.

NCFAR is working to increase hill staff awareness of, and appreciation for, the value of food and agricultural RE&E 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 moderator for NCFAR 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) other research and science-

based outcomes that need additional funding, driven by identified or anticipated real-world challenges. In keeping with NCFAR's mission to advocate funding for ALL food and agricultural RE&E, a mix of intramural and extramural speakers and projects is selected.

The 'Lunch~N~Learn' Hill Seminar series has a high brand recognition. Attendance by hill staff has been strong, and feedback from key hill staff has been positive.

16 years
159 seminars
11,200 attendees

In 2020, there were 7 seminars/webinars, with nearly 1,700 attendees. When the COVID-19 pandemic brought a sudden halt to all in-person meetings after one seminar, the NCFAR Research Outreach Committee (ROC) shifted to virtual webinars. While this allowed stakeholders from across the nation to participate, hill staff participation was limited.

Leading researchers representing a variety of disciplines from 70 institutions and agencies across the nation have presented federally funded research and extension efforts related to timely topics of interest to hill staff, agency officials and interested stakeholders. [Click Here](#) for seminar series highlights, including topics, speakers, presentations, media releases and photo collages back to the inaugural year, in 2005.

It is a major challenge to get busy hill staff to attend briefings. NCFAR's team is literally competing for their time and attention. The Research Outreach Committee (ROC) selects eye-catching titles for timely and

PLANT BREEDING FOR FOOD SAFETY
ADVANCING FARM ANIMAL MANAGEMENT TO RECOGNIZE & MANAGE PAIN
SLOWING THE SPREAD OF HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS
PLANT SCIENCE DECADAL VISION 2020-2030
ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON FOOD & AG MARKETS
CATCHING UP WITH THE CRISPR CRAZE
INTRODUCING THE NATIONAL BIO & AGRO-DEFENSE FACILITY

substantive research topics that will pique curiosity and motivate recipients to look further at the abstract to learn what the heck the seminar is about, and hopefully deciding to make time to attend. Examples are provided in the box of the first words they saw in the subject line of their e-mail invitations to our hill seminars in 2020. Our team works diligently to maintain a contacts database for about 2,000 hill staff, agency officials and interested stakeholders.

The “*brand identity*” of the “Lunch~N~Learn” Hill Seminars is well established. Hill staff have provided continuing feedback that they appreciate receiving the invitations and take away information that is useful in their own work.

The active involvement of members and supporters remains crucial to success. Members and supporters continue to be responsive to requests for speaker-topic nominations. NCFAR works to leverage limited funds through collaborative efforts—including generous sponsorships, speaker travel costs underwritten by institutions and national trade associations, and through partnering efforts such as with CAST.

How well have these “*education with a purpose*” initiatives worked in advancing NCFAR’s mission? Unfortunately, no way has been identified of measuring the impact of the seminar series as a ‘building block’ for hill staff recommendations to Members of Congress regarding federal funding. At a minimum hill staff that receive the email invitations and/or attend are more aware and informed about what federal RE&E funding provides, laying the groundwork for more positive outcomes when advocacy actions and contacts are made.

Looking ahead, the ROC is taking action to sharpen the focus and effectiveness of the seminar series. Planning is underway to coordinate “training” webinars in early 2021 to bring new Hill staff up to speed on the mission of USDA’s REE mission area. Five hill seminars/webinars more strategically aligned with major themes and priorities of the incoming Administration will initially be scheduled starting in March 2021, leaving flexibility to select additional timely topics.

TARGETED ADVOCACY ACTIONS

In keeping with its mission, NCFAR took a number of targeted actions on the advocacy front related to budget and appropriations and farm bill implementation, building the base of support for federal funding for food and ag RE&E and planned actions impacting NIFA and ERS.

Appropriations advocacy benefited from enhanced coordination and collaboration between NCFAR and APLU BAA, supporting and reinforcing their ‘one ask,’ unified approach. Selected highlights:

- [FY21 Testimony to House](#) Ag Appropriations.
- [FY21 Testimony to Senate](#) Ag Appropriations.

The Final FY21 budget signed into law near the end of 2020 as part of budget reconciliation included a modest increase in REE funding, including \$435 million for AFRI.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, NCFAR hosted timely ‘Coping with COVID’ webinars, with USDA REE leaders, university research and extension leaders, hill staff and NCFAR Board members sharing information about impacts of COVID-19 on research and extension programs and initiatives, disruptions in the food and ag system, and exchanging ideas about how to cope with the disruptions. [Click Here](#) to view panels and presentations.

NCFAR sent a [letter](#) to the incoming Biden-Harris Administration highlighting the importance of federal funding for food & ag science and offering to work with the Administration.

NCFAR played a role in facilitating other group letters, sending out action alerts about opportunities where stakeholders could add their voices in support of federal funding for food and agricultural RE&E, and signing group letters as appropriate. [Click Here](#) to access archived documents.

As I look forward to the next chapter in my life—retirement and playing hard full time—your Board leadership is working to select a new Executive Director in the near future. It has been a privilege to serve you. I know you will support the next Executive Director through your ownership involvement in advancing NCFAR’s critical mission.

Respectfully Submitted,



R. Thomas Van Arsdall, Executive Director

1/11/21