AG SUSTAINABILITY—FIELD TO MARKET

The Role of US Sustainable Agriculture Initiatives in Global Economic Competitiveness

Washington, DC – July 9, For Immediate Release – Advancing agricultural sustainability practices in the US while meeting future needs will be the focus of a presentation at National C-FAR’s hill research seminar on Monday, July 15 at 10 am in 337 Russell Senate Office Building and again at noon luncheon in 1300 Longworth House Office Building on the House side. The featured speaker is Dr. Marty Matlock, Professor in the Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department at the University of Arkansas, and Executive Director of the University’s Office for Sustainability and Program Director in the Center for Agricultural and Rural Sustainability.

“If we are going to feed 9.5 billion people using sustainable ag practices by 2050 we will need to coordinate what we measure, how we measure, and why we measure, so that we can make the most effective decisions to insure that we continue to improve human prosperity for current and future generations,” says Matlock.

“This presentation provides an excellent example of the value of federally funded food and agricultural research, extension and education in producing the scientific outcomes and outreach needed to meet 21st century challenges and opportunities,” says Chuck Conner, President of the National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR).

Abstract: According to the USDA’s FY 2013 Outlook for US Agricultural Trade (USDA Release 0110.13, May 31, 2013), ag exports from the US will be almost $140 billion. This record export value reflects a 44.5 percent increase over the 2009 value of $96.3 billion. The value of these exports is far greater than just the economic support to US producers; they support over a million jobs, increase food security around the globe, and mitigate food price shocks that affect the well-being of over 2 billion people. The emergence of ag sustainability certification programs, especially in Europe, represents a challenge for maintaining this growth in US producer exports. Programs such as the Round Table on Responsible Soy and the Better Cotton Initiative have been developed to improve Key Performance Indicators across agricultural production sectors. Unless US producers can demonstrate compliance with their metrics, these programs will affect US producer's access to markets. Ag producers in the US are among the most sustainable in the world by almost every Key Performance Indicator. Sustainable ag initiatives in the US include Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, focused on row crops; Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops, focused on specialty crops; and the National Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture, focused on animal agriculture. We have established strong methods for benchmarking and monitoring key performance indicators across these initiatives. This seminar will provide a review of the challenge of developing and reconciling global metrics for sustainable agriculture, outline the common criteria for metrics, and provide an overview of the Field to Market Key Performance Indicators for US corn, soybeans, cotton and wheat. The role of research from Land Grant Universities and innovations from Agricultural Biotechnology Companies will be discussed.

Seminar presentations are available at http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp. The seminar is open to the public and the media.

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NATIONAL C-FAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based, and customer-led coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and extension community, serving 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’s Hill Seminar Series, now in its sixth year, regularly presents leading-edge researchers working to provide answers to pressing issues confronting the public and Congress. The Hill Seminar Series helps demonstrate the value of public investment in food and agricultural research—investment that returns 45 percent per year on average, and $20 in economic benefit from every $1 investment in food and ag research.

Go to http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp for more information about the seminar series and past topics. Interviews with National C-FAR President Chuck Conner are available by request. For additional information, go to www.ncfar.org; or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director, at tom@vanarsdall.com or (703) 509-4746.