SAFELY CROSSING THE FOOD CHAIN
The Economics of Reducing Food Risk

Washington, DC – July 29, For Immediate Release – Economic research on alternatives to reducing health risks in food will be the focus of a presentation at National C-FAR’s hill research seminar on Thursday, August 1 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. Julie A. Caswell, Professor in the Department of Resource Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

“Federal funding has allowed economics research to enhance the safety of our food system along the entire supply chain by understanding incentives to deliver safe foods from farmers to table,” says Caswell.

“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: Economic research supports targeted risk reduction efforts by counting the costs of food risks in health and business terms and by identifying incentives to improve safety. In health terms, an economist measures, for example, the costs of people contracting food borne illnesses from particular food/pathogen combinations. In business terms, economists measure the financial losses (market share, liability payments, and international trade) for companies associated with food borne illness events and the likely costs of improving food safety. Economic research helps policy-makers better understand industry and consumer behaviors and responses to incentives for improving food safety, as well as the market and individual forces influencing these behaviors. Industry and consumer responses can then be considered and integrated into federal laws such as the Food Safety Modernization Act. Questions still remain about the interaction of regulatory and private/third-party certification systems in improving food safety. Furthermore, it is not yet well known how the structure of the certification industry impacts the likelihood of achieving regulatory standards. Researchers ask questions such as: Is the current structure of regulatory and certification activities a dependable means to implement federal food safety laws? Where do potential conflicts of interest arise and therefore systematic risks exist in these systems? Addressing these questions with economic research will help to assure success in the implementation of new systems and to avoid pitfalls. This information is not only important to the viability of the food system, but to the future of the food and agricultural sectors.

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.