COMBINED AG RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS—(1) CAST REPORT ON MANDATORY LABELING FOR GMO FOODS, and (2) CROP BREEDING AS ROOT OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Washington, DC—April 25, 2014, For Immediate Release – The National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR), the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST), the American Society of Plant Biologists, the Agronomy, Crop and Soil Science Societies and the Modern Agricultural Caucus are collaborating to combine two research seminars, on the impacts of mandatory labeling for genetically modified food (new CAST report) and crop breeding as the root of American agriculture. The combined seminar will be presented from noon-1:30 pm in 1300 Longworth House Office Building. The labeling seminar will also be presented in 337 Russell Senate Office Building at 10 am.

The presenter on the CAST labeling report is Dr. Alison Van Eenennaam, Department of Animal Science, UC-Davis. The presenters on the crop breeding presentation are Dr. Sally Mackenzie, University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Dr. Jorge Dubcovsky, UC-Davis.

“Bottom line, we need better communication regarding the scientific issues and the possible legal and economic consequences of mandatory GMO food labels,” says Dr. Van Eenennaam, one of the authors of the CAST report.

“These presentations provide excellent examples 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).

CAST REPORT ABSTRACT: Although genetically engineered (GE) products are used around the world, their use in food products has become a contentious issue for some consumers. A key point in the resulting debate centers on proposals regarding the mandatory labeling of GE food. Many U.S. states are considering legislation to mandate such labels. This publication outlines arguments for and against labels, the costs involved with process-based labeling, and experiences in countries that use mandatory GE labeling. The authors start from the premise that hundreds of independent studies have determined that foods made using GE ingredients are safe. They gather factual information to produce a peer-reviewed publication that clarifies the potential impacts of mandatory labeling. Proponents of mandatory GE labeling cite the right to know what is in their food as an important attribute of a democratic society. Opponents argue that voluntary market-based labeling currently provides consumers who wish to avoid GE food with that choice, and that mandatory GE labeling will increase the cost of food for all consumers with no associated improvement in human health or food safety. Seemingly contradictory studies are cited to support opposing views—informed discourse about this emotional issue is hard to find. The authors examine key aspects of the arguments, as well as legal issues and economic impacts, and finish with a call for better communication about the issue.

CROP BREEDING ABSTRACT: As the debate over methods of plant breeding and GMOs continues, the scientific community has a responsibility to educate stakeholders on the science behind these issues. Join our experts in a discussion about the science of GE technology, the challenges and the societal benefits of plant breeding, and the Decadal Vision for plant science.

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 tenth 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.