NATIONAL COALITION FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Media Advisory

PUTTING ENERGY IN TO GET ENERGY OUT

Energy Issues Affecting Corn/Soybean Systems: Challenges for Sustainable Production

Washington, DC – January 17, 2012, For Immediate Release – Energy issues in corn/soybean systems is the subject of National C-FAR's inaugural Research Hill Seminar for 2012 on Monday, January 23, at 10 AM in 337 Russell Senate Office Building and again at a 'Lunch~N~Learn' at noon in 1302 Longworth House Office Building. The featured speaker is Dr. Doug Karlen, supervisory soil scientist with the USDA–ARS at the National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment in Ames, Iowa.

"Quantifying energy issues associated with agricultural systems, even for a two-crop corn and soybean rotation, is not a simple task," says Karlen, lead author of the CAST issue paper. "It becomes even more complicated if the goal is to include all aspects of sustainability."

"This presentation provides an excellent example of the value of federally funded food and agricultural research 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 & Agricultural Research (National C-FAR).

This Issue Paper examines energy issues associated with and affecting corn/soybean rotations by first defining the size of the system from both a U.S. and global perspective and then establishing boundaries based on the Farm Bill definition of sustainability. Corn/soybean systems are themselves best described as "systems of systems" or even "systems within ecosystems" because of their complex linkages to global food, feed, and fuel production. Two key economic challenges for decreasing energy use are (1) overcoming adoption barriers and (2) demonstrating the viability of sustainable bioenergy feedstock production. It is also important to look beyond direct energy consumption to address the complex economics affecting energy issues associated with corn/soybean systems. To help address the complex energy issue, life cycle assessment is used as a tool to evaluate the impact of what many characterize as a simple production system.

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

****

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.

CAST is an international consortium of scientific and professional societies, companies, and nonprofits. It assembles, interprets, and communicates credible science-based information regionally, nationally, and internationally to legislators, regulators, policymakers, the media, the private sector, and the public. All CAST Commentaries and Issue Papers are available online without charge at www.cast-science.org.