THANK YOU again for taking time from your busy schedule to participate in this important undertaking. We appreciate that you are among the best of the best!

Objective
The National Coalition for Food & Agricultural Research (National C-FAR) hosts Lunch-N-Learn seminar-style presentations by experts on topics of highest interest to Congress. The purpose of the seminar series is to promote appreciation of the importance of food and agricultural research by providing relevant, timely research results on issues facing elected and administration officials, as a means of facilitating more informed—and hopefully more favorable—staff recommendations to Members of Congress about food and agricultural REE funding.

Guidance
You have been invited to be a seminar speaker because (1) your research area is relevant to issues facing Congress and (2) because you have earned a strong reputation as an effective communicator. To help you know who your audience is, we would like to share some lessons learned over the past year from Congressional staff and previous speakers:

- **Finish your presentation on schedule** *(earlier leaves time for more Q&A)—budget 25 minutes maximum.*
- **Refrain from commenting on politics and policies,** and reviewing the merits of your institution (you will have pressure from those back home to “lobby”, but that is not the purpose of these presentations).
- **Incorporate the ‘Carl Sagan’ factor**—Hill staff are bright, highly motivated, but not for the most part not experts in your area of research. It is imperative that you provide the context for your research, and especially explain the implications and benefits of your results.
- **Apply the KISS principle** [as my academic advisor constantly admonished me, “keep it simple, stupid!” ☺] as appropriate to your PowerPoint presentation – fewer slides, readable slides (shown on large LCD monitors).
- **Tell them where they can go for more information on the topic.**
- **Handouts**—Your choice. Liaison may assist. One-pager and/or handout version of PowerPoint presentation. Count? Always an educated guess. Start with 80, and check with us closer to the date.

*Additional comments and context on these suggestions are provided on the following page.*

Don’t hesitate to contact your designated National C-FAR seminar liaison or Executive Director Tom Van Arsdall [(703) 509-4746 or tom@vanarsdall.com] if questions or suggestions. We stand ready to work with you to make the seminar an outstanding success and your participation one that you value.
Speaker Suggestions—Additional Comments

- **More on Rule #1:**
  - Budget a *maximum* of 25 minutes for your presentation. We’ve never had anyone complain when the speaker finished earlier. ;-)
  - The moderator will be tasked to work with you to conclude the presentation by 12:35.
  - Feedback from staff is that most attendees will check out physically and/or mentally after about 30 minutes. Even if they are still there physically, most staff will be thinking about the work they need to get back to, checking their PDA’s for e-mails, etc.
  - That gives you the luxury of **20-25 minutes for your presentation**. While that may seem short by lecture standards, it’s a wealth of time compared with the 5 minutes you would be allotted for congressional testimony. A staffer would likely have even less time to brief his or her boss.
  - Several key staffers have counseled that if a presenter can’t get the desired message across effectively in 15 minutes or less, it probably won’t happen.
  - Finishing on time provides up to 15 minutes for a good Q&A session where you can provide more content or context where interest is expressed. You can also use this time to cover additional points or embellish earlier comments.
  - For those individuals who would like to visit further, that can happen informally after we conclude the session.

- **Make the connection between research and federal funding.** This seminar series’ primary purpose is to lay the groundwork for more informed and hopefully more favorable future funding decisions on federal funding for REE.

- **Please refrain from commenting in the context of policy advocacy, and especially politics!**
  - This “education with a purpose” seminar series is consciously limited to an education & outreach role, with the long-term objective of staff making more informed and hopefully positive recommendations to their Members when funding decisions are being made.
  - National C-FAR’s advocacy is through other venues, building on the seminar series. Our mission is to sustain and increase overall REE funding, not specific areas.

- **Your role as an effective communicator** is arguably more important for this seminar series than the outstanding research you are discussing.
  - Shape your presentation to the intended audience. The Hill staff audience is bright and motivated, but spread thin and extremely busy. Most seminar participants will not have significant expertise in the topic being discussed, at least from a research perspective.
  - Certainly it is important to brief the audience on the exciting research being conducted. However, for this audience, *the implications and potential benefits of the research and its outcomes are likely to resonate more* than the details of the research itself.
  - Minimize the use of technical terms and jargon. Translate into terminology the audience is likely to understand.

- **PowerPoint presentation tips:**
  - *Readability is important.* Feedback from hill staff is that “busy” slides packed with a lot of information are difficult to read and follow, and indeed may detract from the presentation. Presenters have the option of providing handouts with more information.
  - *Include only those slides you plan to use.* One key staffer indicated his pet peeve was when a presenter flashed up a number of slides only to skip past them.
  - *Apply the KISS principle.* To the extent appropriate, use key words, with sufficiently large font for readability. In some settings the screen size will be limited.
  - *Consider providing the PowerPoint presentation slides as a handout.* 4-6 slides per page, color or gray scale. Something for staff to take notes on.

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