

**NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, EXTENSION,  
EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS ADVISORY BOARD**

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING AND FOCUS SESSIONS**

**Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel  
1001 14<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Washington, DC  
March 30-31, 2011**

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**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30**

**ADVISORY BOARD GENERAL SESSION**

The National Agricultural Research, Education, Extension, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board (“the Board”) met in public session on March 30 and 31, 2011, at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel in Washington, DC.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Jean-Mari Peltier (Chair, NAREEE Advisory Board), called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and asked that Board members and others in attendance introduce themselves. She noted that the condensed agenda called for the Board to spend the day deliberating the best approach to Title VII of the 2012 Farm Bill and the best way to frame and promote the message that now is the time to reverse the erosion of agricultural research by “doubling down” on the REE budget. The morning discussion would focus on how to ensure that Title VII addresses the concerns of all stakeholder groups, in order to broaden support for this investment in the USDA research budget; the afternoon discussion would focus on how to leverage the federal investment through cooperative research mechanism that also ensure that federal research is relevant to the needs of affected industries. The second morning would be devoted to Board business and consideration of the draft REE Action Plan.

**Board Business**

By unanimous voice vote, the Board approved the agenda for the present meeting and accepted the minutes of the general meeting of October 2010 and the four Executive Committee teleconferences that had taken place since that date.

Jean-Mari Peltier reported that draft reports from the Subcommittee on Specialty Crops and the Working Group on the Productivity of Agricultural Research were included in the meeting book. Specialty Crops had asked for another 24 hours of review before making its report, since the draft includes a request to Congress to modify the subcommittee’s original legislative mandate as part of the 2012 Farm Bill. The Productivity group will meet later in the day to complete its report.

Carol Keiser-Long (Chair, NAREEE Renewable Energy Committee) reported that her group would also be meeting later in the day. Their 2009 report focused on research areas in which USDA was taking the lead, and the 2010 report focused more narrowly on five specific technologies. This year’s report, which will go to Congress soon, focuses on data collection and analysis, “actability,” and on the issue of renewable vs. bioenergy. Keiser-Long also represented the Board at the recent ARS Biomass Workshop and the upcoming international biomass expo.

This led to a broader discussion of bioenergy. Edward Knipling (ARS) reported that USDA's budget, even in this area, is small relative to DOE's, but it also includes biomass conversion and coproduct utilization. Board members reported that many uncertainties remain about specific feedstocks and process streams, and that additional research is needed to narrow those uncertainties. In many cases these uncertainties involve lifecycle assessments and require engineering expertise, rather than economic; perhaps DOE or NASA can be of assistance. Other concerns include control systems, safety, and accidents; risk assessments are being conducted in the Office of the Chief Scientist. The National Agricultural Library is providing a central data repository for participants, regulators and other stakeholders. Several members suggested that university researchers, land grant and otherwise, need greater clarity and transparency on this subject, and one member suggested that this would be a good topic for a Board listening session. Members are glad to see a draft white paper on this topic in the briefing book.

### **Remarks from the Office of the Secretary**

Krysta Harden (Chief of Staff to the Secretary and former Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations) gave a straightforward assessment of the budget prospects: *everyone will feel the pain*. Nevertheless, the Secretary has said repeatedly that if anything matters, it's research. He wants USDA to set an example for other departments in dealing with the pain without abandoning the investment in the future. There will be less money, but money will be spent; the question is how much, and where. For this reason, there will be a new premium on what is reasonable, feasible, doable, and affordable. It will be the job of the Board and other advocates to make the point that a specific project or topic is vital to the future.

In response to questions, Harden added that the most recent Continuing Resolution attacks the easy target of earmarks, but future cuts will affect the real meat of research programs. Money from earmarks and set-asides won't reappear as competitive grants – it will be gone. And the prospect for 2012 and 2013 is for even more cuts. For this reason, this is the right time to start thinking about and looking for funding sources outside of USDA. But it's also the right time to do more to raise the visibility of USDA research and to better inform the public about the benefits of making the investment in "our science of food, conservation and agriculture."

### **FOCUS SESSION – ADDRESSING STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS**

#### **Leveraging Agricultural REE Funding and Increasing Prioritization**

Jean-Mari Peltier introduced the first panel by suggesting that the advocates of agricultural research need to begin planning now how they will address the REE title in the next Farm Bill. Last time we squabbled over Create21 vs. the Danforth Commission and whether to spend money on formulas or competitive grants, but in the current budget climate we are no longer having a discussion about where to spend new money. She also repeated several themes the Board had heard at its last meeting: there has been a secular decline in real funding in private agricultural research in the United States, and at the same time the focus of publicly funded

agricultural research has shifted from yields and productivity toward the environmental impacts of agriculture, but other nations – notably China, India and Brazil – have been increasing their real investments in agricultural research. Agricultural research gets relatively little compared to defense, or health, or energy, but it certainly deserves to be more than one percent of the federal research budget. Given these budget realities, the Board needs to learn more about the landscape on the Hill and the concerns of the stakeholders who will be lobbying Congress on Title VII and the larger Farm Bill.

### **Roundtable: Addressing Stakeholder Concerns through Research, Education and Extension**

Fred Clark (Cornerstone Government Affairs) asserted that the timing and content of the next Farm Bill will be driven by the budget, but agriculture committees don't want the Farm Bill to be written by Appropriations. Competitive grants have prospered in recent years because of political pressure on formula programs, and the most recent continuing resolution completely removed earmarks. At the same time, the 2012 budget will now be written using new, lower baselines. With the committee fighting over big accounts (e.g., commodities), research may actually benefit from having a lower profile – and no opponents. Nevertheless, research advocates need to achieve harmony on policy to achieve success in funding, and it would be a good idea to expand their coalition if they can do so.

Cathleen Enright (Western Growers Association) reported that her members produce half of the U.S. fruit, vegetable and nut crop, so they are natural supporters of the specialty crops initiative. She agreed with Clark that agricultural research is largely under the radar for most groups. She believes that, in the current climate, the best argument to be made for research is its contribution to the larger economy, particularly in terms of jobs and market opportunities.

Jane Demarchi (National Association of Wheat Growers) said that her members, in 21 different states, face a number of regional problems and diseases, so they acknowledge the value of agricultural research and extension. And despite a rise in privately bred seed varieties, over 78 percent of the varieties they plant have come from public research, allowing them to achieve a \$5 billion trade surplus. The association is only now beginning its grass roots planning for the 2012 Farm Bill, and research hasn't received much attention yet, but they will begin formal planning in October. In general, they liked the 2008 bill and would like to see more of the same; they didn't like NIFA, but they do see the value in greater coordination and collaboration.

Robert Guenther (United Fresh Produce Association) said that his members, who grow 300 or 400 different crops, want new technologies that will make them more competitive. They are looking for ways to increase research funding and are in the process of honing their recommendations. He believes that the Agriculture Committee will need a bipartisan coalition to get a Farm Bill through the House.

Bill Norman (National Cotton Council of America) said that cotton growers support a balanced approach to agricultural research that includes both intra- and extramural programs. ARS is their “go-to” agency for research assistance, and they recognize that cotton (like peanuts and other small crops) can’t compete with corn and soybeans in competitive grant programs. Like a lot of producers (and many land grant universities), the Cotton Council didn’t support the creation of NIFA, which is widely seen as adding a new layer of bureaucracy without adding any new money for research. At the same time, research is at best their third priority in writing the Farm Bill, after (1) commodities and (2) exports. Norman added several points that he characterized as challenges for the research title:

- Agricultural research does more with less than another other area of government research;
- Cotton Inc. tried contract research at a DOE lab and found that it was a lot more expensive than working with USDA;
- USDA needs to do more to tell its success stories and communicate the return on investment in agricultural research;
- The margins in agriculture are very small; and
- It’s important not to oversell your product or raise false expectations.

Beverly Paul (Gordley Associates) reported that research is a top priority for the American Soybean Association. Its members would like to see the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) funded at the full authorization of \$700 million, or at least at the President’s requested \$428 million, instead of the \$261 million that Congress appropriated in FY2010. The association was very disappointed that there was no money for agricultural research in the stimulus bill. They supported the Danforth proposal in the last Farm Bill.

Mark Tefteau (American Nursery & Landscape Association) reported that his industry, which represents more than one-third of all specialty crops, and more than \$200 billion in annual sales, receives less than one-tenth of one percent of USDA research spending. Above all they need a delivery system, and for this reason Tefteau (a former Extension agent) bemoaned the ongoing decline in the Agricultural Extension Service and expressed concern about further threats to the formula programs. He believes that the emphasis on competition has gone too far, and that is disenfranchises smaller companies and industries, as well as the 1890 and 1984 land grant universities. His industry, which has no checkoff for research, also finds the 100-percent match burdensome, and he also raised questions about the fairness of the review process.

Ryan Weston (House Agriculture staff, formerly American Sugar Alliance) stressed that the farm coalition is under attack and needs to hold together. This means finding and pursuing their common interests. Each group will focus primarily on what it most needs, but while his first priority might be the commodities title, he would also support research – especially if the advocates of research would also help him. But while a rising tide would raise all boats, research will have a hard time justifying special treatment as the tide goes out. The best way to make the case is to lead with the benefits of past research, and then make the case for continued investment to ensure continued results. The trick is to make it tangible, not just on the Hill but across the

country – connect the dots, all the way to the grocery store, and make it clear that increased funding for research is the only way we’ll feed and clothe the world in 2050.

## **Board Discussion**

In the discussion that followed, Board members noted that the federal research budget is becoming a zero-sum game, at best, and possibly a negative-sum game. Hence the search for other sources of research funding. Some sectors (notably cotton, wheat, and soybeans) have checkoff programs that produce considerable funds for research, but other sectors (notably horticulture and nurseries) are completely dependent on disappearing federal dollars. This breeds a sense of disenfranchisement, particularly when competitive programs seem to pay attention to the researchers rather than their industry clients. Earmarks arise precisely because industry doesn’t think it has access to the research priority setting process or sufficient representation in the peer review process of competitive grants

On the subject of messaging, members noted that ARS, land-grant universities, and industry researcher have plenty of success stories, but they’re not telling them to the right audience. Messaging needs to emphasize specifics – “this product, this job, this company” – rather than generalities. The Agricultural Extension Service itself is a notable achievement, a seamless and highly articulated national network that is the envy of other federal agencies.

## **FOCUS SESSION – COOPERATIVE RESEARCH MODELS**

### **Opening Remarks**

Steven Daley-Laursen (NAREEE Advisory Board) introduced the second roundtable by noting the Board’s growing interest in mechanisms that leverage the federal investment in agricultural research by coordinating it more closely with the research investments and activities of private industry and universities. Discussions with REE staff led to invitations to three successful cooperative research programs that might provide models for agriculture:

1. Industry-University Cooperative Research Centers (IUCRCs);
2. Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs); and
3. Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) and Environmental Security Technology Certification Programs (ESTCP).

Daley-Laursen challenged the Board to listen to these presentations with special attention to the factors that make these programs effective, increase their return on investment, and strengthen their linkages with industry. He suggested that the most successful cooperative research programs share several characteristics:

- They are topically specific;
- They advance science broadly, rather than specific products;
- They represent a mutually supportive transaction between researchers and industry; and
- They can be sold as a “value proposition.”

Other key characteristics of successful mechanisms include complementarity, integration of research with tech transfer, priority-setting procedures, and constant evolution.

### **Roundtable: Models Involving Industry, Universities and Federal Agencies**

Rathindra “Babu” DasGupta (National Science Foundation [NSF]) describe the long-established and highly successful IUCRC Program. NSF currently coordinates a total of 56 IUCRCs, some of which have been in place for over 30 years, and as a result NSF has collected plenty of data on what works and what doesn’t work. The agency provides seed money to get the center started, and a small (and declining) annual grant for up to 15 years if the center remains successful, but for the most part each center is run like a business, selling the research services of as many as 10 to 15 university partners to multiple business customers, more than half of them large companies, charging a maximum of 10 percent overhead. As a result, IUCRC is one of the most highly leveraged programs at NSF, which is able to support the entire network with only two FTEs and a \$10 million budget, precisely because industry partners are willing to pay anywhere from \$5,000 to \$25,000 apiece, and upwards of \$300,000 per IUCRC per year. In exchange, industrial partners are given first rights to nonexclusive license for royalty-free use of the resulting technology. This works precisely because the IUCRCs focus on “generic, precompetitive technology.” All research proposals originate with the business partners, and all research projects have specific benchmarks and milestones. Every two years the program publishes a Compendium of Technology Breakthroughs; other metrics are spinoff companies and jobs created.

Barry Goldfarb (North Carolina State University) gave a more detailed description of the Center for Advanced Forestry Systems (CAFS), an IUCRC that is helping the timber industry make the transition from to sustainability. Industry and universities have been doing cooperative research since the 1950s, but many of these centers were limited in size and scope, with a narrow regional focus and relatively little collaboration across disciplines. Many of these cooperatives were stressed by a round of mergers in the 1990s and but timberland divestitures in the early 2000s, but 27 forestry research cooperatives still survive today. CAFS is actually built on top of these earlier centers, but its principal role is collaboration across regions, species and disciplines. Started in 2007, it already has nine university sites and 99 industry members, including 44 full members who pay dues of more than \$25,000/yr, as well as 9 government agencies and 7 nonprofits and foundations. Total funding of \$7.2 million/yr includes over \$3 million in industry dues and less than \$1 million from NSF, including support for subordinate centers. This budget supports 23 ongoing collaborations in fields such as process modeling, forestry genomics and metabolomics, wood quality, and nitrogen cycling. Annual meetings provide an opportunity for additional networking among members and university scientists.

Judith St. John (ARS, USDA) described the Floriculture and Horticulture Research Initiative (FHRI), a research partnership of government, industry and universities that was created by Congress in response to industry’s request for a dedicated cooperative research activity in ARS. FHRI is funded by a recurring \$5 million line item (not an earmark) to build permanent

infrastructure in ARS, plus another \$2.89 million for 45 short-term research projects in FY2010, conducted by teams of scientists from ARS, universities and botanical gardens. FHRI is a “managed research program” that solicits industry input and allows industry a voice in setting priorities and selecting university researchers.

ARS also makes wide use of the CRADA mechanism, which pairs U.S. companies with ARS researchers in research that may lead to commercial products. CRADAs are a successful model for technology transfer and are widely used throughout the federal government, supplementing research budgets and allowing federal researchers to address more directly the technology needs of industry. For ARS the goal is technology transfer, not income – past CRADAs have produced 323 active licenses for 125 commercial products; of its 262 active CRADAs, 93 percent involve domestic corporations, of which 62 percent are small businesses. Most of these short-term collaborations complement USDA’s long-term research goals, and the CRADA mechanism has proven to be a vital tool in moving new technology through the pipeline from government laboratory to commercial markets.

Anne Andrews (Department of Defense) described a more specialized model that DOD has adopted for developing, validating and implementing the environmental technologies needed to ensure the sustainability of its facilities and operations. In a unique partnership between DOD, the Department of Energy, and the Environmental Protection Agency, SERDP holds workshops with industry to translate environmental requirements and industry needs into research topics. Most of these projects involve multidisciplinary partnerships that address overarching problems such as climate change and sea-level rise. ESTCP plays a complementary role by validating new technologies and gaining the regulatory approval that will allow contractors to actually implement these systems and solutions in the field. Individual projects are subject to careful review, and overall operations are reviewed by an advisory council that represents developers, regulators and end-users. Under contract, SERDP and ESTCP also provide training for DOD managers and contractors, project liaisons at specific facilities, and coordination with federal and state regulatory agencies. More information is available at the website <http://www.serdp.org/>.

## **Board Discussion**

In their discussion of these models, Board members emphasized the importance of including the right federal partners on advisory committees, and the difficulty of overcoming cultural differences not only between government researchers and industry, but also among different federal agencies. Costs are another issue – NSF is able to support 56 IUCRCs with only two FTEs and a \$10 million budget because industry partners are willing to pay anywhere from \$5,000 to \$25,000 apiece, and upwards of \$300,000 per IUCRC per year, to support research in which they will have at best a nonexclusive license for royalty-free use. This works precisely because the IUCRCs focus on “generic, precompetitive technology.” A third topic was the art and science of running such a center, which requires a rare blend of leadership, negotiation and problem-solving. NSF has been careful to accumulate examples of best practice in this area, and ongoing surveys and evaluation seem to be an important factor in keeping industry partners

happy. However, there was general agreement that cooperative research will be a valuable response to the current limits on federal funding for agriculture, and that these three models incorporate a number of features and lessons that will be of value to USDA, not least of which is the importance of listening more closely to industrial partners and reaching out to other federal research agencies. Several members expressed eagerness to see USDA work more closely with DOD in the area of soil and water contamination cleanups; NSF also has two centers that focus on soil and water contamination.

There being no public comment, the meeting recessed at 6:00 p.m. pending its evening session. During this recess, several subcommittees and working groups met to work on their draft reports.

## **EVENING SESSION**

### **Investing in a Better Future through Public Agricultural Research**

George Norton (Virginia Tech) summarized a recent commentary by the Center for Agricultural Research and Technology (CAST) on the need for publicly funded agriculture. Many of his points were familiar to the Board, which had heard presentations from Norton's co-authors, Keith Fuglie and Wallace Huffman, during its meeting in October 2010:

- Agriculture is under pressure from population growth, income growth, loss of cropland, climate change, and agricultural pests.
- Rising food prices have dangerous implications for national security, as well as economic well-being.
- Almost all of the growth in agricultural output in the past 60 years has come from productivity growth, and continued productivity growth is necessary to meet these needs in the future.
- Productivity growth can vary widely by state and region, largely as a result of long-term investment in research infrastructure.
- U.S. research expenditures, which grew by 3.2 percent from 1960 to 1990, have remained essentially flat for the past 20 years.
- As a result, the growth rate in agricultural productivity has begun to decline.
- The solution is to increase public funding for agricultural research, immediately and sharply.

## **THURSDAY, MARCH 31 ADVISORY BOARD GENERAL SESSION**

### **Board Business**

Jean-Mari Peltier called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Walter Armbruster reported that the Specialty Crops Subcommittee had held listening sessions in Texas and California to hear from the nursery and tree crop industries; additional hearings are

being scheduled in Michigan. Their draft report is should be delivered in the next week; its recommendations include changes in the administration of the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and changes in the wording of the subcommittee's legislative mandate, which were part of the 2008 Farm Bill. There was also a question, but no answer, on the topic of easing the 100-percent matching requirement. One solution would be to count federal money from outside USDA as part of the match; the matching requirement is more of a problem for the 1890 schools than for the 1860s.

## **Review and Discussion of the REE Action Plan**

Catherine Woteki (Under Secretary for REE, USDA) thanked the Board for its comments on the preliminary draft action plan, which lays out how REE will advance the goals of USDA's strategic plan. Four specific goals have emerged for REE:

1. Education (k-12, undergrad and graduate, public information);
2. Research mission (addressing the 13 goals of the strategic plan);
3. Communications (telling USDA's success stories); and
4. Cultural transformation (within USDA).

The action plan has already been reviewed by the REE agencies; the next step will be review by crop groups, academics and consumer groups. Woteki asked the Board to review it again, as well, and to serve as a communications channel for its constituencies in responding to USDA.

Different Board members suggested that the strategic plan needs more emphasis on food safety, obesity prevention, rural development, and interagency collaboration; but more generally it needs *better packaging* – a better sense of how all these parts hang together, and of how they will benefit the larger economy in terms of jobs and prices. Some members felt that the bioenergy section needs further elaboration; others asked for a clearer outline of how USDA will collaborate with other federal agencies and with state and local government; still others called for a clear statement of an integrated, overarching vision for agriculture. Several others pointed to specific statements as problematic, such as the mystifying recommendation that USDA work to “reduce protein consumption,” and the failure of the document to talk about food prices or feeding programs.

Woteki charged the Board to provide her with a summary of these comments, and to review and comment on the six draft scientific white papers that were distributed in their meeting books, and to work with REE staff in taking these documents to the next level of detail and specificity. In particular, she asked the Board to each of these documents with regard to:

- Adequacy of agenda;
- Portfolio of intra- and extramural resource utilization;
- Models for better leveraging; and
- Other priorities for which similar white papers should be developed (e.g., exports, horticulture, scientific literacy).

To influence planning for the FY2013 budget, these comments should be received not later than the end of June, and better by the beginning of that month. Woteki recognized that this was short notice, but since it is the first time she has so charged the Board it would be best to

## **Board Business**

The Board accordingly organized six working groups to review and comment on the six scientific white papers, with the following members:

1. Food Safety – Heldman (chair), Clark, Boyd, Starkey, Smith-Edge;
2. Global Food Security – Ishii (chair), Boyd, Clark;
3. Nutrition and Obesity – Smith-Edge (chair), Castille, Childs, Cox, Paige, Taylor;
4. Climate Change – Hamburg (chair), Levine, Daily, Paige, Cox;
5. Sustainability – Wolf (Bender, Schult, Waukechon, Starkey, Cox);
6. Bioenergy – Levine (chair), Reddy, Taylor.

Board staff will poll absent members to see which assignments they prefer, distribute contact information, and arrange for conference calls and other supporting resources. Members pointed out that this review is being conducted on an expedited basis that will not allow for the Board's usual review and consensus approach. Accordingly, it was moved and seconded that these working groups will use a common, prescribed process and format, and that the resulting reports will be explicitly characterized as collections of individual comments and opinions of the Board's members, and not as the official position of the Board as a whole. By unanimous voice vote, the Board adopted the following procedures:

- The six working groups will write their reports using a common “template,” to be developed by the chairs and Executive Committee;
- Board members will “self-identify” their comments on the papers to which they contribute;
- Each chair will collect and collate comments on his or her respective topic, using the common “template;”
- Chairs will forward their respective papers to the Executive Committee through the Board office;
- Executive Committee will forward the six papers to appropriate USDA staff authors as the interim comments of individual Board members;
- Individual Board members will receive copies of all six papers as forwarded to USDA staff, and each member will be free to append personal comments to any and all reviews;
- The Board will publish formal comments and recommendations on the six white papers once it has been able to follow its usual review and consensus process.

The Board did not set dates for its next meeting. Board staff will canvass members for exact dates. The fall meeting will include an extra half day for new-member orientation and reports from mission agencies. Members nevertheless expressed satisfaction with the new day-and-a-half format, although they asked that Board business be handled at the beginning of the meeting, rather than at the end. In order to expedite and balance the meeting, one member also suggested a guideline that he called the “50-percent rule” – never let any presentation exceed 20 minutes,

and never allow the time taken up by presentations to the Board to exceed the time set aside for discussion by the Board. Another member raised questions about the confusing proliferation of committees, subcommittees, working groups, and planning groups, and about the exact rules under which the Board governs itself. The immediate answer was that the Board's meetings are subject to *Robert's Rules of Order*, but other questions remain. Steve Hamburg volunteered to work with the Executive Director and the USDA Office of General Counsel to prepare a more formal set of rules and procedures for the Board.

There being no public comment, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

- \* Working groups will review and compile preliminary comments on draft scientific white papers and on the evolving action plan.
- \* Planning groups will compile reports on planning for the Farm Bill and on models of collaborative research.
- \* Board staff will work with USDA counsel to clarify and update the legislative mandate for the Board, its subcommittees, and their activities and reports.