

**National Agricultural Research, Extension,
Education and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board**

“Farm Bill Issues Relevant to Research, Education, Extension and Economics”

**Report and Recommendations from a Focus Session on this Topic Conducted at the
NABREE Advisory Meeting held in Washington D.C.
March, 2007**

The NAREEE Advisory Board held a session during its March 8 and 9, 2007 meeting to explore Farm Bill issues relevant to Research, Education and Economics. The Board obtained background on the USDA Farm Bill Forums from Terry Van Doren, Special Assistant to the USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. Dr. Gale Buchanan, Under Secretary for Research, Extension, Education and Economics, discussed USDA’s Title VII Farm Bill proposals. The Board then heard from REE agency representatives about science opportunities under new funding in the USDA Farm Bill proposal: Dr. Antoinette Betschart, Deputy Administrator, Agricultural Research Service; Dr. Colien Hefferan, Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Extension and Education Service; Dr. Kitty Smith, Acting Administrator, Economic Research Service; and Mr. Ron Bosecker, Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

During a working lunch, Nona Darrell from the House Agricultural Committee Staff, briefed the Board about the upcoming Farm Bill, timing of sub-committee markups, and the high level of interest among House members in research funding issues. The Board members inquired of her about the need for reauthorization of the NAREEE Advisory Board and she indicated she will investigate that matter.

Other proposals for increased funding and the organization of the USDA REE agencies were presented by: (a) Dr. Jeff Armstrong, Dean of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Michigan State University (CREATE-21 proposal); and (b) Dr. William Leshner, Leshner and Russell, Inc., National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA proposal).

In addition to this input, over the past 5 years, the Board has addressed a number of topics and issued recommendations relevant to the Farm Bill. Those recommendations have been forwarded to the Secretary and members of Congress.

After considerable discussion among the NAREEE Advisory Board members representing a range of farm-oriented groups, academic institutions, other science agencies, and organizations concerned with the food system, the Board developed a set of recommendations.

Background

The NAREEE Advisory Board commends USDA’s proposal to significantly increase science funding for bio-energy and specialty crops. However, we urge Congress to consider the need for much greater funding for agricultural science including basic and applied research, extension, education, and economics, over the life of the Farm Bill to assure U.S. agriculture’s competitiveness and ability to meet society’s needs.

There has been a steady erosion of public funding for agricultural science beginning in the early 1990's. This has reduced capacity to conduct needed work and provided insufficient funding for cutting-edge science on continuing and emerging issues related to agriculture, food, feed, fuel, natural resources and rural community viability. Further, recent evidence shows that the rate of growth in agricultural productivity is declining relative to that in previous decades, thereby threatening the long-run competitive edge of U.S. agriculture in a global economy.

Recommendations

Therefore, the Board recommends that the investment in current science funding for USDA be at least doubled to:

- optimize annual agricultural productivity growth to assure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive in the global economy;
- assure capacity to meet society's need for renewable energy as well as abundant and safe food, good nutrition, rural community viability, and conservation of natural resources all in an environmentally sustainable manner;
- strengthen and improve the broader rural economy;
- increase capacity in the land grant universities, including the 1890's, 1994's and small 1862's and the American Association of State Colleges of Agriculture and Renewable Resources (AASCARR) universities with agricultural programs; and
- stimulate cutting edge and applied science for application to current and emerging issues through additional competitive funding.

The Board also recommends that improved coordination be developed between/among:

- USDA's REE intramural and extramural science programs;
- States, through multi-state collaboration in research, education and extension programs;
- USDA REE agencies and stakeholder groups;
- USDA REE agencies and USDA and other Federal government action agencies; and
- USDA REE agencies and other Federal or state science agencies.

Work Group for the Farm Bill Focus Session

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