



NATIONAL COALITION FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

March 15, 2013

Comments To: President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST)

RE: PCAST Leadership on Recommendations to Strengthen Agricultural Research Enterprise

The National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR) commends PCAST for your December 2012 *“Report to the President on Agriculture Preparedness and the Agriculture Research Enterprise.”* We respectfully request that PCAST remain engaged beyond the release of this report through targeted actions, to help realize the potential good that your recommendations can help accomplish.

In particular, National C-FAR asks PCAST in your advisory capacity to urge the Administration exercise its science leadership in two ways:

- PCAST should urge the Administration to act expeditiously by *establishing the implementation committee* recommended in your report to serve as a forum to receive stakeholder input and a mechanism for considering how to proceed expeditiously in considering and acting on some or all of the report's other important recommendations.
- PCAST should provide determined counsel to the Administration in its budget deliberations, reinforcing your *recommended funding increases for agricultural science*.

As the members of PCAST are well aware, the current budget process is resulting in serious decreases in science funding, at the very time when the nation's interests require increased investments to meet critical future challenges, many of which your report articulated. The best concepts about how to organize and conduct food and agricultural research, extension and education will be hamstrung unless sufficient funding is provided.

National C-FAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based and *customer-led* coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation and natural resource organizations together with the food and agricultural research and extension community in unified support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension and education (RE&E). The nation's publicly funded food and agricultural RE&E enterprise is a means to vitally important ends. More information about National C-FAR is available at <http://www.ncfar.org>.

The term “*customer*” embodies the diverse array of stakeholders who need and benefit from the outcomes that the publicly funded food and agricultural RE&E enterprise will produce.

National C-FAR also bears weighty responsibilities in this process, such as evaluating the PCAST recommendations, and making the case for implementing any recommendations our organization supports.

Toward these ends, for your information National C-FAR is pleased to report on the following actions:

- National C-FAR sent a letter (*attached for your reference*) to the President on January 9. In brief, National C-FAR urged the President to act on the following recommendations in the report—
 - Establish an implementation committee, *with stakeholder input a key component*; and
 - Include recommended funding increases in the Administration's budget proposals moving forward.

National C-FAR also supported the PCAST report's recommendation to increase the federal investment in agricultural research by \$700 million per year as a vital first step.

- National C-FAR is in the process of evaluating the recommendations in the PCAST report. In conducting that due diligence, National C-FAR has taken a number of steps involving our membership, including—
 - Facilitating two dialogues with PCAST Acting Executive Director Heather Hartman Scholz; and
 - Facilitating discussions with USDA Under Secretary Woteki and with the leadership of NIFA, ARS and ERS.
- In parallel, National C-FAR's leadership convened a long-planned "Summit" as the first step in better engaging business leaders in the food and agricultural sector last December to discover what their views are about the future of federal funding for food and agricultural RE&E, what the food and agricultural business sector may have at stake, and what actions they may be willing to take in moving forward.
- Our customer-leadership has been involved in exploratory dialogues over the past few weeks with selected leaders in the food and agricultural sector.
- National C-FAR also working to coordinate more closely with coalitions whose missions are similar.

These steps are being taken to inform debate and decision making in the evolution of National C-FAR's policy positions at our annual meeting on April 16. One of our goals is to keep PCAST informed about any changes in our position and actions in the coming months.

National C-FAR believes the nation has a serious deficit in federal funding for food and agricultural RE&E, just as the nation has a budget deficit. This food and agricultural science funding deficit is long running and unsustainable. Failure to address this research funding deficit will have real negative consequences, not just to our food and agricultural system but to the entire U.S. economy and global food security.

National C-FAR stands ready to work with the Administration, PCAST, the Congress and other stakeholders to achieve the vital outcome of an effective and sustainable, publicly funded food and agricultural RE&E enterprise that will contribute to providing the scientific outcomes needed to help meet our nation's food and agricultural challenges.

The clearly demonstrated need to strengthen the food and agricultural research enterprise is reinforced by the analysis and recommendations presented in the PCAST report. NOW is the time to act—to grow investment in our nation's food and agricultural research enterprise to a sustainable level.

Thank you in advance for continuing to be a thoughtful, creative and compelling voice in the process of moving forward in strengthening the federally funded food and agricultural RE&E enterprise.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachment—January 9, 2013 Letter to the President