

May 25, 2009

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FROM: Nick T Place, Chair
Northeast Region Extension Directors

SUBJECT: REEO Roadmap Input
REE-2009-0001

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input regarding the development of a roadmap for agricultural research, education, and Extension for the US Department of Agriculture. Such input will help towards ensuring a bright future through the formation of this new coordinated effort within the Research, Education and Economics (REE) mission area. We believe that here are many opportunities to strengthen the services provided by USDA REE on behalf of the citizens of this country.

In the call for stakeholder input, there were six questions posed for input consideration. On behalf of the Northeast Region Extension Directors, we have noted suggestions that we feel are appropriate for consideration in the development of the REEO Roadmap.

1. What types of current and future critical issues (including those affecting citizens, communities, and natural resources) does agriculture face that no USDA entity could address individually?
 - a. Water (quantity, quality, infrastructure, efficiency)
 - b. Climate Change (adaption, mitigation, policy)
 - c. Energy efficiency, conservation, and production
 - d. Food Systems, food safety
 - e. Food Security and hunger
 - f. Nutrition and health
 - g. Entrepreneurship development among youth and adults
 - h. Connecting agriculture and food production to urban, suburban and rural consumers
 - i. Family and community food production and safety
 - j. Ecosystem services and management
 - k. Landowner cooperation across geo-political boundaries

- l. Exotic and invasive species
 - m. Science, engineering and technology literacy for youth
 - n. Access to data and information through high speed technologies for local decision making and business development
 - o. Community sustainability
 - p. Disaster preparation and community resilience
2. What criteria should USDA use to prioritize science (i.e., research, education and extension) investments to address these issues:
 - a. The magnitude of the impact on the environment and population
 - b. Ability to generate economic returns
 - c. Long term benefits to citizens, consumers and communities
3. How might USDA better coordinate science among its various agencies and with its partners?
 - a. Give priority to funding programs and projects where appropriate linkages have been developed and utilized
 - b. Focus programs on interdisciplinary issues rather than departments, agencies, or other funding units
 - c. Assure that agencies avoid duplication and work together by taking advantage of the strengths and uniqueness's of each agencies primary mission, for example take advantage of the Cooperative Extension System's education and outreach missions throughout the established county network to fulfill the educational needs of all agencies
 - d. Prioritize funding where leveraging of alternative resources (state, local, commodity, NGO) is demonstrated
4. Provide examples where agricultural sciences are successfully coordinated for maximum benefit. Why are they successful?
 - a. SNAP-Ed is successful because it leverages dollars by directly engaging the communities receiving the service. It also takes advantage of the Extension System's community education expertise
 - b. eXtension is successful because it takes advantage of the best expertise available regardless of physical location, so duplication is reduced and/or eliminated. It also takes advantage of public and/or private partnerships that enhance anytime, anyplace service for constituents
 - c. Multi-state projects such as: Atlantic Water Program, Sustainable Ag Research and Education Program (SARE), Integrated Pest Management (IPM), NE Sun Grant, and Regional Rural Development Centers are successful because they focus on major issues, they take advantage of regional expertise, and they are multi-function (i.e., research, Extension, education) as most appropriate for addressing the issue; and these efforts include other appropriate partners

- d. Sea Grant integration with Land Grant Extension is highly successful in a number of complimentary program areas; i.e. natural resources, water quality, aquaculture, community development, etc.
 - e. The Specialty Crops Grants Research Initiative successfully leverages the federal contribution with commodity and NGO funding sources.
 - f. The requirement for integrated program activity in the Agricultural and Food Research Initiative encourages partnerships between research, extension and education
5. Provide examples where agricultural sciences are not coordinated effectively. Why is coordination lacking? What are the barriers?
- a. Agencies are appropriated money for activities that are inconsistent (and in some cases conflicting) with their primary mission: e.g., NRCS receiving funding for education when their primary mission is enforcement.
 - b. Appropriations process is out of alignment: e.g., Forest Service appropriation process is through the Department of Interior, where CSREES (NIFA) appropriations are through the Department of Agriculture.
6. What else might USDA do to improve coordination of science; enhance its ability to identify issues and prioritize investments; and elevate its role in science implementation and coordination?
- a. The Secretary of Agriculture needs to provide Cabinet level leadership for coordination of science research and community education.
 - b. USDA needs to engage in futuring activities that help them anticipate and address priority needs.
 - c. Activities need to be issues/problem focused rather than department/agency focused.
 - d. Start with the needs of the consumer—have a consumer orientation.
 - e. Assure integrated projects that include Extension incorporate significant Extension program work.
 - f. Ensure independence of the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture through direct reporting linkage with the Secretary of Agriculture.

Again, on behalf of the NE Region, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input for implementation of this important coordination effort. We believe that this is a critical time for our country, and our land grant universities are in a good position to address the issues and concerns facing us today and into the future. Moreover, our Cooperative Extension system is well positioned to provide strong educational programs that can make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities across the United States. We are happy to further discuss any of the above ideas or respond to questions at your request.

Sincerely,

Nick T. Place
Chair, Northeast Extension Directors