



## **Improving Research And Extension**

### ***Better Research, More Competitive Agriculture***

If we redesign the USDA–university partnership to be more effective and re-invest in agricultural research, we can help farms produce the renewable raw materials, energy sources, environmental goods and services and nutritional foods that will both enhance our competitiveness in global markets and create new domestic markets. The Creating Research, Extension and Teaching Excellence for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (CREATE-21) task force has proposed a significant reorganization that:

- Truly integrates the research, teaching, and outreach conducted by universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture;
- Is more responsive, accountable and focus on solving problems;
- Gives stakeholders a louder voice in setting national, regional and local priorities;
- Makes sure research is delivered into the hands of farmers;
- Helps us educate and train the next generation of researchers and farmers;

### ***Status Quo: Research is Failing to Keep Pace When We Need It Most***

The tremendous success of agriculture in this country is largely a result of the research and technology infrastructure that began in 1862, with land grant universities, agricultural experiment stations, Extension agents and USDA providing better plants, ways to grow those plants and the technologies to plant, harvest, process and deliver final products. Studies consistently find high rates of returns (49-62 percent) for the public’s investment in agricultural research. Despite this record, since the 1970s, funding has been stagnant. In 1989, the National Academy of Sciences warned: *“U.S. Farmers cannot compete with the price of labor in many countries, where it is far lower than in the United States. And, for the same reason, they cannot compete with the cost of fertile land in other countries. The single resource U.S. farmers can draw upon to capture the leading edge is science and technology.* But it took another decade of level funding and the dissatisfaction of Congress for the Land Grant University system to take a critical look at its 150-year old partnership and try to improve it.

The current system:

- Divides food, agricultural and natural resources research programs among three USDA agencies: Agricultural Research Service, Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, Economic Research Service and the U.S. Forest Service Research and Development. No clearly identified “lead agency” means frequent duplication, a lack of integration and no way to address critical national issues (e.g. the role of food and nutrition play in obesity).
- Contributes to the inability of land grant universities to focus and integrate their activities.

## Farm Bill 2007 Policy Recommendations

- Has led to a slow and steady decline of federal funds over the last three decades – further damaging the system’s overall effectiveness.

### ***A Better Approach to Research, Extension and Education***

The CREATE-21 proposal incorporates the best features of the existing structure at USDA into a new independent agency. This approach:

- Shifts research, extension and education towards a supply and demand orientation as agriculture becomes more multi-functional and produces a wider array of raw materials and environmental amenities.
- Features a problem/solution-centered funding approach (e.g. NIH).
- Sets performance measures and ensures greater accountability.
- Addresses the perception that formula funds are long-term entitlements.
- Helps eliminate excessive duplication in the land-grant university system.
- Uses competitive grants as the preferred distribution method.
- Enhances the relevancy, adequacy, responsiveness, and sustainability of the USDA-land grant university partnership.
- Better integrates the partnerships programmatic activities.
- Improves the partnership’s ability to attract appropriate resources to meet goals expressed by Congress and addressed by USDA.
- Encourages active, broad-based stakeholder engagement and responds to stakeholder priorities through flexible application of resources.

### ***How it works:***

The CREATE-21 proposal consolidates the agencies, programs and activities within the USDA’s Research, Education and Economics mission area into a National Institute, a new independent agency reporting directly to the Secretary of Agriculture:

- The Institute will manage a broad and integrated portfolio of programs, organized by problem/solution areas and funding mechanisms.
- A diverse National Stakeholder Advisory Committee will guide the Director and solicit input from local, state, tribal and regional stakeholder groups to identify immediate, emerging and future needs for research, extension, education and international programs.
- The Institute will tightly integrate research with extension and teaching.
- Funds will be doubled within seven years (to \$5.352 billion/year), with 70 percent of new funds going to competitive programs. Capacity programs maintain and expand the intramural research capability within USDA (e.g. ARS) and the research, extension, education and international capability of university partners while competitive programs focus on solving problems of pressing multi-state, national or international significance. The ratio of capacity to competitive funding evolves from 90/10 to a more equitable 58/42 over seven years.
- States will continue to be required to match federal funds.