



March 1, 2005

The Honorable Robert Bennett
United States Senate
Senate Dirksen 431
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennett:

The Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM) endorses the creation of a National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA). CoFARM is a coalition of 23 professional scientific organizations with a combined total of 130,000 members dedicated to advancing and sustaining investment in our nation's research portfolio. A broad-based research portfolio can help assure the safety, security, and availability of food, feed and fiber for our nation.

The proposition to establish NIFA is applauded by the members of our organizations. CoFARM has long been a vocal proponent for increased investment in the portfolio of competitive research programs that address the complex issues facing the nation's food and agricultural systems. Furthering federal investment in agriculture research is critical. Publicly funded agricultural research has earned an annual rate of return of 35% according to the USDA's Economic Research Service (Agricultural Economic Report Number 735). This rate of return suggests that additional allocation of funds to support research in the food and agricultural sciences would be beneficial to the U.S. economy. In the same vein, funding for NIFA must not come at the expense of existing USDA research programs, which are crucial to furthering development of basic science for our food and fiber system.

CoFARM concurs with the USDA NIFA Task Force that research funded by NIFA will complement research already being conducted by USDA and make that research more relevant to agriculture. Furthermore, NIH, NSF and other federal agencies coordinate their research priorities in an effort to increase synergies among the agencies. In a similar manor, it is envisioned that such an approach would be adopted by USDA with the establishment of NIFA which will enhance agricultural research that encompasses many disciplines that are inclusive of the economic, nutritional, social, biological, and environmental sciences.

As you lead the Congress in deliberation of this issue please consider CoFARM as a resource for information in your efforts to improve the food and agricultural research capacity of our nation. The expertise of our collective membership is available to help in your efforts.

Sincerely,

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¹ Report of the Research, Education and Economics Task Force for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, July 2004

CoFARM Member Societies:

- o American Dairy Science Association
- o American Phytopathological Society
- o American Society for Horticultural Science
- o American Society for Microbiology
- o American Society for Nutritional Sciences
- o American Society of Agronomy
- o American Society of Animal Science
- o American Society of Plant Biologists
- o Council of Entomology Department Administrators
- o Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics
- o Crop Science Society of America
- o Federation of Animal Science Societies
- o Institute of Food Technologists
- o Poultry Science Association
- o Society of Nematologists
- o Soil Science Society of America