



900 Second Street, NE, Suite 205  
Washington, DC 20002  
Phone: 202-408-5382, Fax: 5385

**Comments to the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST)  
on behalf of  
The Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM)**

**September 30, 2002**

The Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM) appreciates the opportunity to comment before the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). CoFARM is a broadly based coalition united by a commitment to advance and sustain investment in our nation's fundamental and applied agricultural research. CoFARM was formed in 1990 to better advocate the benefits of food and agricultural research. Since then, public investment in agricultural research has become erratic and may be inadequate to meet the challenges of the next century. CoFARM's 21 member societies represent over 130,000 individual investigators from scientific and professional organizations.

CoFARM applauds PCAST's concern for a balanced federal research and development investment as the Council strives to advise the President on issues regarding federal investments in science and technology in the formulation of the FY 2004 budget. However, we are concerned that the heavy focus on the physical sciences and engineering in the PCAST letter would result in other disciplines that have not shared in NIH's wealth being unjustifiably ignored. Let me draw on USDA's highly regarded National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (NRI) the primary source of federal agricultural research funding, as an example of just such an oversight. From 1992 to 2002, the NRI has seen a 6% decrease in funding in constant dollars. Moreover, since the inception of the NRI in 1991, funding for this competitive grants program has reached barely one-fifth of its \$500 million authorization. With that in mind, CoFARM requests that the Council:

- **Change the language in the PCAST report and letter to President Bush to make it clear that references to large increases in funding for life sciences pertain solely to the biomedical sciences (i.e., medicine, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology).** Specifically, in summary statement #3, "biological and life sciences" should be altered to read "life sciences (i.e., medicine, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology)". Otherwise, as summary statement #3 currently reads, the sentence is inaccurate.
- **Offer all disciplines including the plant and animal sciences, food technology, microbiology, nutrition, rural sociology, and economics the opportunity to provide input to the PCAST panel seeking testimony from the public and private sector concerning funding needs for research and development.** Given that to date we have not seen Appendix A, we do not know whom the PCAST subcommittee interviewed. CoFARM also asks that the document prepared by the RAND Corporation, upon which many of the PCAST recommendations were based, be made available to the public.

**Member Societies**

- o American Dairy Science Association
- o American Institute of Biological Sciences
- 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 Agricultural Engineers
- o American Society of Agronomy
- o American Society of Animal Science
- o American Society of Plant Physiologists
- o Crop Science Society of America
- o Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics
- o Entomological Society of America
- o Federation of Animal Science Societies
- o Genetics Society of America
- o Institute of Food Technologists
- o Poultry Science Association
- o Rural Sociological Society
- o Society of Nematologists
- o Soil Science Society of America
- o Weed Science Society of America