



Strategic Plan

2000 – 2005

May 2000

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strategic Plan of the Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions for 2000 – 2005 represents the best thinking of a select committee of CoFARM member society representatives who met and established the following directions in the winter of 1999 - 2000.

Vision:

The Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions is to provide the scientists' perspective on national agricultural research issues and the benefits of science to society.

Mission:

CoFARM is the premier coalition of scientific and professional societies in agricultural and life sciences that

- **uses the best possible scientific information to inform policy makers of the value and benefits of agricultural research;**
- **educates its individual society members about opportunities for input to national science policy issues;**
- **provides a unified voice on broad scientific policy issues.**

Goal:

To achieve a substantial increase in federal funding directed to agricultural research.

Objectives and Strategic Directions:

Objective A: Convene a One-Voice Coalition

- A1. Form a "One-Voice" Coalition.
- A2. Prepare a one-voice coalition plan.
- A3. Implement the plan with help of other groups.

Objective B: Make a Strong Case For Emerging Needs for Agricultural Research Funding

- B1.** CoFARM will identify key issues affecting agricultural production, distribution and consumption in a pamphlet intended for wide distribution.

Research is needed on the interplay between biological, physical and social systems to address these issues, the pamphlet will explain, with support from multiple federal agencies.

Objective C: Document Agricultural Research Benefits

C1. Summarize summaries of the benefits of agricultural research and condense them into a coherent message.

C2. Develop talking points and documents that express the essentiality of agricultural research to society.

C3. Implementation.

Objective D: Activate, Train, and Target Scientist Communicators

D1. Initiate a Scientific Advisory Council.

D2. Develop training video on communicating with Congress with partner.

D3. Foster relationships.

D4. Identify other opportunities to further the CoFARM mission.

This Strategic Plan for 2000 - 2005 is expected to guide CoFARM in focusing on activities that will shape the identity of agricultural research funding for the future.

I. PROLOGUE

"We need more agricultural research, not less...We should not back up on research, we should intensify research.... The national government has a responsibility and an obligation to support adequate research." - President Clinton - National Rural Conference -April 25, 1995

"The highest investment priority in Washington should be to double the federal budget for scientific research. No other federal expenditure would create more jobs and wealth or do more to strengthen our world leadership, protect the environment and promote better health and education for all Americans. For the security of our future, we must make this investment now." – Newt Gingrich – Washington Post – October 18, 1999.

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to strengthen strategic directions CoFARM would take by setting forth a plan of activities that is mission-oriented and have subsequent impact on increased funding levels for agricultural research.

In October of 1999, the Strategic Planning Committee (Appendix B) met for the first session and the CoFARM Steering Committee finalized this Plan, which when implemented, will stimulate further growth and development of CoFARM.

This is an important time in history for CoFARM. Agricultural research funding is at an all time low. Now that CoFARM is under new leadership, this is the perfect opportunity to reassess the effectiveness its current activities and identify priorities and goals. CoFARM strives to be an effective organization in the governmental affairs arena. Many of the CoFARM's current activities, including providing information to congressional staffers and members of Congress, stand to benefit from an enhanced and more specific plan of action to achieve greater impact.

This plan is expected to guide CoFARM in focusing on 'high payoff' activities that will shape the identity of agricultural research funding for the future.

II. VISION

CoFARM must take aggressive advantage of our uniqueness. We are the only coalition in the Washington DC area, of agricultural and life sciences scientific societies that is focused on policy and funding for agricultural research. We represent over 75,000 scientists who represent a large scientific knowledge base. We must collectively speak with a unified message. Therefore, the Strategic Planning Committee developed the following Vision for the future.

CoFARM Vision

The Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions is to provide the scientists' perspective on national agricultural research issues and the benefits of science to society.

III. MISSION

CoFARM Mission Statement

CoFARM is the premier coalition of scientific and professional societies in agricultural and life sciences that

- **uses the best possible scientific information to inform policy makers of the value and benefits of agricultural research;**
- **educates its individual society members about opportunities for input to national science policy issues;**
- **provides a unified voice on broad scientific policy issues.**

IV. SITUATION ASSESSMENT

The situation assessment included an examination of CoFARM's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). This section outlines the SWOT analysis for both internal and external factors. The lists that were developed by working groups among the Strategic Planning Committee are in Appendix C. The Objectives and Strategies selected are aimed at addressing these strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Strengths

CoFARM has an established foundation from which to expand, where there is a high level of trust among constituents. We have a dedicated and knowledgeable Steering Committee in place that has an open nature of communications and interactions. Our primary advantage is that we accomplish synergistic efforts and outcomes relative to the level of resources.

Externally, CoFARM has a multi-disciplinary commitment to agricultural research . We have good research society support due to a perceived relevance of product. We service a large community, with unique goals and objectives. There is a growing level of recognition by Land-Grant administrators.

Weaknesses

As any organization, CoFARM has weaknesses. There is no mechanism to mobilize action by membership of member societies. The Mission has narrowly focused on USDA Budget. The membership has been limited to professional societies. Historically, we have lacked an agenda for action, but this is being addressed through this strategic planning effort. Additionally, there are competing agendas of member societies and allied groups. We have insufficient budget for full time staff, and are dependent on volunteers. Not all member societies are represented on the Steering Committee, and we therefore, have limited direct society membership participation.

Externally, CoFARM does not have a champion. We are not recognized as a player. The focus of invited guests has been with administration, not congressional leaders and staff. There is limited follow up with invited guests

Opportunities

CoFARM has endless opportunities. We should create or expand partnerships with numerous groups. By broadening the membership, we can better achieve our Goal and increase the CoFARM budget. We could consider creating an associate membership category and open membership to selected commodities. We could send a letter to prospective contributors along with a list of CoFARM accomplishments.

The need to increase communication is a major opportunity. Internally, we could broadcast fax to get member sign-on to position papers; e-mail legislative alerts to member societies and individual members. Externally, we could develop a public information plan. We could promote agricultural research accomplishments, advertise in Hill Rags, and promote agricultural research importance to Congressional Science Fellows.

There is an opportunity to improve CoFARM name recognition. This could be done in several ways, including selecting a Public Service Awardee, conducting semi-annual caucuses that are topical, do a Congressional Science Fellow orientation for agricultural Fellows, submitting testimony House/Senate/USDA/ priority setting, having a spokesperson to talk about CoFARM to various stakeholders.

Exploring endowment possibilities would increase our capability to reach the Goal. This could be a process action team task.

Threats

Potential internal threats include losing focus or never achieving focus, due to being divided unnecessarily and losing sight of common ground. The level of ambition of CoFARM exceeds our limited resources. There is a continual threat of the lack of willingness to volunteer. The lack of budgetary resources in CoFARM is a major threat.

Externally, CoFARM could suffer from a failure to exploit our strengths, due to lack of buy-in by partners and by member societies. The changes in political atmosphere – budget, policy, and organizational context are a continual threat, and one in which we have no control. We say that there is a circular firing squad analogy to the agricultural community. Cultural and traditional hindrances cause a lack of trust in the scientific and agriculture community. The perceived negative images of agriculture and agricultural research by both consumers and legislators contribute to this lack of trust. In addition there is a loss of understanding of rural America in Congress and by the general public.

V. GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

CoFARM Goal:

To achieve a substantial increase in federal funding directed to agricultural research.

Objective A: Convene a One-Voice Coalition

Objective B: Make a Strong Case for Emerging Needs for Agricultural Research

Objective C: Document Agricultural Research Benefits

Objective D: Activate, Train, and Target Scientist Communicators

Objective A. Convene a "One-Voice" Coalition

Action: CoFARM will unite a “One-Voice” coalition of agricultural interest groups—academia/university/ land grants, commodity, industry, natural resources, environment, consumer, others?—which will work with Congress to increase funding for agricultural research .

Rationale: The agriculture community has historically provided Congress and the Administration with varying and mixed messages regarding priorities and requests for agricultural research funding as a consequence of continued emphasis on parochial interests at the expense of others in their own community. Policymakers exploit these differences among the agricultural community to keep agricultural research funding stagnant. The ever-decreasing number of congressional champions for agriculture, due to both retirement and rapidly growing urban populations and consequent increases in representation of urban congressional districts, only serves to exacerbate this situation. In contrast, the biomedical research community, unified behind a single message to double funding for biomedical research, has accomplished unprecedented increases in research funding for the National Institutes of Health. The National Science Foundation recently implemented a similar approach that has already yielded a marked increase in research funding. Learning from these successes, the agriculture community can develop a single unified message for Congress and the Administration that ultimately will lead to a doubling of agriculture research funding within 5 years.

Strategies:

- 1. Form a “One-Voice” Coalition composed of all agriculture interest groups.**
- 2. Prepare a one-voice coalition plan to achieve a doubling in agricultural research funding within 5 years.**
- 3. Implement the plan, with the help of other groups.**

Budget:

1. If limited interest at beginning, CoFARM members, mainly steering committee, take on all tasks with little or no support from outside. Funds limited or absent.
2. If initial great interest and CoFARM brings together majority of agriculture community, the One Voice effort will take off on its own. All partners will contribute. Flexibility will exist to hire lobbyists and support services, etc.

Outputs: Under CoFARM's leadership, before May 2001, i.e. in time to affect FY 2002 budget, there will be a consensus message/document developed by the One-Voice coalition which advocates a doubling in agricultural research funding in 5 years. One-voice strategy and efforts will be in-place at federal level. Ideally, the result will be a newfound Congressional/Administration support for a substantial increase in agricultural research funding.

Objective B. Make a Strong Case for Emerging Needs for Agricultural Research Funding

Action: CoFARM will declare the need for multiple- agency funding of agricultural research.

Rationale:

American agriculture faces many pressing issues that involve dynamic interactions among the earth's biological, physical and social systems. Advances in food safety, for example, will require pathogen-management systems that take into account human attitudes, behavior, and health while limiting reliance on pesticides. Livestock production will advance through the development and testing of alternative systems that match the output obtained from concentrated production facilities without the accumulation of animal waste, odor and community opposition.

Federal support is needed for a NEW KIND of agricultural research – one that examines the interplay between biological, physical and social systems. CoFARM calls upon USDA and other federal agencies to fund agricultural research involving behavioral, biological, social, chemical and physical interactions that affect, sustain, or are modified by living organisms, including humans. Because of its breadth in scientific disciplines, CoFARM sees the need to balance the quality and quantity of agricultural products against environmental impacts on the one hand, profitability and quality of life on the other. Research is needed to achieve this balance.

The proposed approach will advance the frontiers of knowledge on key unresolved issues. It will foster holistic, systemic thinking and interdisciplinary collaboration that is where Congress is nudging agricultural research. In contrast, basing Request for Proposals on substance alone (the contemporary practice) reinforces disciplinary silos. Today's issues occur at the edges of scientific disciplines, not the centers. Expanding the frontiers of today's disciplines requires a major federal investment.

Strategies:

1. **CoFARM will develop a pamphlet that describes key issues affecting agriculture and the nation's well-being, to support the thesis that a new kind of research is needed on the interplay between biological, physical and social systems. The pamphlet will help Federal Agencies and decision-makers understand agricultural research in its broadest sense, and see its relevance to their missions.**

Budget:

1. CoFARM will incur initial costs, but will seek funding from partners to cover costs of document production, publication, and web site introduction.

Outputs: A pamphlet on the need for a new kind of research on the interplay between biological, physical and social systems, will be published by August, 2001, and used as a primary communication piece. The CoFARM member societies and the proposed Scientific Advisory Council (see Objective D) will use the talking points to communicate with Congress and others.

Objective C. Document Agricultural Research Benefits

Action: CoFARM will work with appropriate individuals and organizations to improve documentation of the benefits from current agricultural research, as well as the potential benefits from increased future funding.

Rationale: There is a need to improve communication of the importance of agricultural research to Congress and the public. The benefits of agricultural research must be captured in a way that the general public can understand. Therefore, it would be useful to facilitate development of an appealing document or other product that improves understanding of both benefits and the potential benefits from future research.

Strategies:

- 1. A team of CoFARM scientists and partners will accumulate published summaries of the benefits of agricultural research and condense them into a coherent message.**
- 2. Talking points, as an attractive document both hard copy and electronic, should be developed that express the essentiality of agricultural research to society. These talking points will be used by the CoFARM Scientific Advisory Council (see Objective D) and by CoFARM member societies when communicating with Congress and others.**
- 3. Conduct an implementation plan to distribute and communicate the document to Congress and other customers and stakeholders.**

Budget:

- 1. CoFARM will incur initial costs of assembling a viable team, including conference calls, travel expenses (should be nominal or zero), office supplies, and postage.**
- 2. CoFARM will seek funding from partners to cover costs of document production, publication, and web site introduction.**

Outputs: A summary of agricultural research benefits will be published by August, 2001, and used as a primary communication piece. The CoFARM member societies and the proposed Scientific Advisory Council (see Objective D) will use the talking points to communicate with Congress and others.

Objective D. Activate, Train, and Target Scientist Communicators

Action: CoFARM will identify, train and support a core cadre of established scientists in the skills needed to communicate the value of increased federal investments in agricultural research.

Rationale: In order for CoFARM to successfully implement its other strategic objectives, it will be important to have full participation from its individual member societies. One way to achieve this is to bring together one or two scientists from each of the member CoFARM societies as a Scientific Advisory Council or Committee (SAC) to the CoFARM Steering Committee.

Strategies:

1. Initiate a Scientific Advisory Council (SAC).

a. The SAC would be comprised of scientists from a broad range of disciplines, with society staff Steering Committee members and chairperson serving as ex-officio members. To allow for continuity, the CoFARM Steering Committee should require SAC members to serve at least a two-year term if possible.

b. SAC and other scientists should receive a training session on communicating with Members of Congress. CoFARM steering committee volunteers would organize the training session.

c. The SAC and selected scientists would make visits to Capitol Hill during key times in the budget and appropriations process. These visits should be a coordinated effort by CoFARM steering committee staff.

d. The SAC should formulate funding recommendations with scientific reasoning that brings justification and accuracy for increases in the USDA and other agencies research budgets, while taking into consideration the funding recommendations of other organizations in the One Voice Coalition.

2. Develop training video on communicating with Congress with partner.

a. Partner with NERA to develop a training video that teaches scientists how to communicate with Congress.

3. Foster relationships.

- a. The SAC should foster relationships with USDA political appointees and national program directors do communicate research opportunities for increased funding.
- b. Appoint a representative to liaison with NAREEEB Board members, or possibly a NAREEEB member would be appointed to SAC.

4. Identify other opportunities to further the CoFARM mission.

Budget:

1. CoFARM will incur cost of monthly teleconference call meetings.
2. CoFARM will incur cost of annual face-to-face meeting location and breakfast or lunch for the day of the meeting.
3. CoFARM will incur costs of training activities such as guest speakers, printed materials or staff time. Fees for speakers and materials will fall in the two to three thousand dollar range. However consultants will work with Steering Committee to develop the training session and draft the materials specific to agricultural research advocacy.
4. Individual member societies will incur cost of travel, lodging, and food per diem expenses associated with the SAC's activities.
5. Individual member societies may also be billed for certain activities associated with or sponsored by the SAC that furthers CoFARM's efforts

Outputs: By the end of year 2005 more than 50 scientists from selected, diverse universities will have received a minimum of 20 hours training on science advocacy and marketing skills. Each trained scientist will have made a minimum of 3 contacts with members of Congress and 6 contacts with congressional staff members to explain the benefits to society, the economy and the environment of current and future agricultural research investments.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND TIMING

A plan for implementation of the Objectives is depicted below.

VII. REPLANNING

The Strategic Planning Committee recommends that a new strategic plan be developed from scratch every 7-10 years with a new strategic planning committee. Thus, a new committee would be established in 2006 to take a fresh look at CoFARM and its environment and to develop a new strategic plan.

In the meantime, the Strategic Planning Committee as presently constituted should routinely reassess the Objectives and Strategies and recommend changes as appropriate.

APPENDIX A

ACRONYMS

ARI	Agricultural Research Institute
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
CARET	Council on Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching
CAST	Council of Agriculture and Science and Technology
CoFARM	Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions
CSREES	Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
ECOP	Extension Committee on Organization and Policy
ERS	Economic Research Service
ESCOP	Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy
FASEB	Federation of American Societies for Experimental Society
NAREEEB	National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board
NERA	Northeast Regional Administrators
NSF	National Science Foundation
REE	Research, Education, and Economics
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

APPENDIX B STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Agricultural Research Institute	Richard Herrett	ariherrett@aol.com
American Phytopathological Society	Sue Tolin	stolin@vt.edu
American Society of Animal Science	Bob Zimbelman	rgzimbelman@cs.com
American Society of Agronomy	Karl Glasener	kglasener@erols.com
American Society for Horticultural Science	Bruno Quebedeaux	bq1@umail.umd.edu
American Society for Microbiology	Mike Andahazy	mandahazy@asmusa.org
American Society for Nutritional Sciences	Tracy Lawless	tlawless@faseb.org
	Robert Rucker	rbrucker@ucdavis.edu
Council on Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics	Tracy Hewitt	
	Tamara Wagester	tamarawagester@cfare.org
Crop Science Society of America	Karl Glasener	kglasener@erols.com
Northeast Regional Administrators	David MacKenzie	dm184@umail.umd.edu
Federation of Animal Science Societies	Barbara Glenn	bglenn@faseb.org
Federation of Animal Science Societies	Warren Parris	wparris@faseb.org
Institute of Food Technologists	Jack Cooper	jlc@fien.com
Poultry Science Association	Wayne Kuenzel	kuenzel@wam.umd.edu
Rural Sociological Society	John Michael	jmichael@reeusda.gov
Soil Science Society of America	Karl Glasener	kglasener@erols.com

APPENDIX C

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

Strengths

Internal

- Established foundation from which to expand
- High level of trust among constituents
- Dedicated and knowledgeable Steering Committee in place
- Open nature of communications and interactions
- Synergistic efforts and outcomes relative to the level of resources

External

- Multi-disciplinary commitment to agricultural research
- Research Society support
- Perceived relevance of product
- Service to a large community
- Uniqueness of goals and objectives
- Level of recognition by Land-Grant administrators

Weaknesses

Internal

- No mechanism to mobilize action by membership of member societies
- Mission Statement narrowly focused on USDA Budget
- Narrow membership, limited to professional societies
- Lack of an agenda for action (being addressed through this effort)
- Competing agendas of members and allied groups
- Insufficient budget for full time staff (dependent on volunteers)
- Fragmented institutional memory
- Not all members are represented on the Steering Committee
- Limited Society membership participation

External

- Do not have a champion
- Not recognized as a player
- Focus of invited guests has been with administration, not Congressional leaders and staff
- Not personally reviewing the brochure with Congressional leaders and staff
- Limited follow up with invited guests

Opportunities

Create or expand partnerships

- Commodity groups
- Reilly Foundation and others
- CAST
- ESCOP
- CARET
- Congressional partnerships
- REE Appointees
- CSREES
- Ag. Advisory Board
- NSF
- ARS and other agencies
- FASEB
- The Science Coalition
- ARI

Broaden membership to increase CoFARM budget

- Create associate membership category
- Open membership to selected commodities
- Send letter to prospective contributors along with a list of CoFARM accomplishments

Increase communication

Internal

- Broadcast fax to get member sign-on to position papers
- E-mail legislative alerts to member societies and individual members

External

- Develop public information plan i.e. press operation
- Promote ag. accomplishments
- Advertisements in Hill Rags
- Promote ag. importance to Congressional Science Fellows
- Show and tell

Improve CoFARM name recognition

External

- Select Public Service Awardee
- Semi-annual caucuses that are topical
- Congressional Science Fellow orientation for ag. Fellows
- Submit testimony House/Senate/USDA/ priority setting
- Outreach to K-12 about ag. Research
- Having spokesperson to talk about CoFARM to ag. advisory board at public meetings

- Show and tell reception on Hill

Explore endowment possibilities

- Process action team task
- Goal to increase CoFARM budget

Threats

Internal

- Loss of membership dues as a result of plan
- Losing focus or never achieving focus
Ambition vs. limited resources
- Being divided unnecessarily
- Lose sight of common ground
- Loss of institutional memory
- Loss of interpersonal ties between members
- Lack of willingness to volunteer
- Lack of budget

External

- No control over Congress
- Lack of buy-in by member societies
- Failure to exploit our strengths
- Change in political atmosphere – budget, policy, organizational context
- Lack of trust in scientific community / agriculture
- Lack of buy-in by partners
- Cultural and traditional hindrances
- Ignoring human component to ag. Research issues
- Inability to find “champion” / partners
- Negative image of agriculture i.e. spoiler of environment / factory farms
- Negative image of agricultural research i.e. research in pocket of commodity groups / industry
- Lack of trained scientists
- Lack of coordination within and between agencies
- Circular firing squad
- Retirement and turnover among legislators and staff
- Lack of subject matter expertise among legislators
- Lack of scientific “pork”
- Loss of understanding of rural America
- Congressional perception of agricultural research
- Quality of leadership within agencies (secretary, under-secretary, administrative)

APPENDIX D

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS and GROUPS with INTEREST IN CoFARM

**Agricultural Research Institute
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology
Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching
Commodity groups
Congress and Congressional committees
Department of Health and Human Services
Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy
Extension Committee on Organization and Policy
Environmental Protection Agency
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Food and Drug Administration
National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges
National Institute of Health
National Science Foundation
Reilly Foundation
Research!America
The Science Coalition
US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service
US Department of Agriculture, Cooperative State Research Extension and Education
Service
US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service
US Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service**