



July 24, 2010

WSSA President's Report:

This year has already been especially rich with opportunities to give voice to our discipline and we have had a number of important occasions to do so.

When the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program request for applications (RFAs) was released with little opportunity for funding Weed Science research, extension or education, WSSA developed an advocacy program that sent our message of disappointment loud and clear. I greatly appreciate the contribution of our Executive Committee in developing this, the support of our Public Awareness Committee in ramping up the volume, and the collective voice of all the Regional Societies in committing to the message. This advocacy effort went forward with clear discussions at NIFA and press releases that were widely cited in trade articles, newspapers and even radio talk shows. We do know that NIFA has heard us and their response is hopeful; now we will see if they can deliver. The NIFA response our efforts (letter attached) indicates that more money may go to foundational programs including one for Weed Science, that money will likely be directed to weed resistance issues. Also, NIFA will be more clear in indication that Weed Science fits into its biomass, climate adaption and mitigation and food security challenge grant areas. Dr. Beachy also indicated that NIFA will not support separate funding lines for the Section 406 programs, since this has long been their position, this was no surprise. Lee will continue to seek funding congressional appropriators as the DSP has for the last 8 years. This effort highlights in the importance of WSSA advocacy and has added to the society's credibility with groups like CropLife America, crop commodity groups and government agencies. I appreciate incredible productivity of our Public Awareness Committee and we thank them deeply for their efforts. We also appreciate the efforts of Dave Mortensen and Adam Davis from the WSSA Research and Competitive Grants Committee for their substantial effort in developing resources for our response as well as Mike Barrett for the first draft of our letter to NIFA. In addition, both Dave and Mike represented WSSA in separate USDA-NIFA stakeholder workshops held this year.

It is quite clear that we are positioned now as a Discipline because the past national investment in Agricultural Science. However, we've seen that over the years, the attraction to the study of agriculture has declined and a growing skills gap is developing. The difficult trend can be seen in the steady disappearance in faculty positions in agriculture at the state and land grant universities; this only serves to steer students in the basic sciences away from the agricultural sciences at the very moment job opportunities are expanding. The education of a sufficient number of broadly trained and appropriately specialized new Weed Scientist represents one of the greatest challenges to the profession. To meet this need, the *Coalition for a Sustainable Agricultural Workforce* was

developed with the able leadership of Emilio Oyarzabal at Monsanto; this group is a partnership of professional scientific societies and agricultural industry leaders to generate the support needed to train future generations of agricultural scientists for careers at our universities, industries and government agencies. Please see WSSA.Net for a full description of this effort and the resources requested. Congress created NIFA to tackle US priorities; certainly one of these priorities must be the training and development of young scientist eager to make an impact on agriculture.

Also this year, we created a special WSSA S-71 Herbicide Resistance Education Committee to address emerging issues on the topic. Lead by David Shaw (Mississippi State University), this committee is developing a comprehensive education strategy on herbicide resistance. The primary goal is to have WSSA seen as the go-to organization for science-based information on herbicide resistant weeds. One critical deliverable resulting from this committee's activities will be the development of an "Herbicide-Resistant Weeds Management Report", funded by USDA-APHIS and EPA. In part, the justification for this report notes that "there exists a need for a systematic understanding of the most contemporary publically available information on the extent to which weed resistance management programs are being utilized in various managed ecosystems and an understanding of how successful they are at achieving their goals." This report is scheduled to be completed in mid-2011; sooner if possible. David Shaw has a lot more to say about this in his report on the topic.

In close communication with EPA through Jill Schroeder, New Mexico State University, our WSSA-EPA Subject Matter Expert, we have been steadily moving forward to coordinate our resistance management education efforts with the Agency. We have a lot of support for progress here and I expect that we can meet this need and avoid command and control regulatory approaches. As Weed Scientists, we understand that a program of resistance management education will only help if it is based on a comprehensive understanding of resistance, both as an economic as well as a biological phenomenon, and only if it includes active participation by all parties that contribute significantly to herbicide use decisions. We have growing support for this effort from the National Research Council, National Cotton Council, National Corn Growers Association, American Soybean Association, National Association of Conservation Districts, CropLife America and the North America Herbicide Resistance Action Committee. A wide range of new materials are planned for the WSSA website including new training modules targeting the Certified Crop Advisor program, grower organization and Extension Specialist. This conversation has also had international impact and was the topic of a North America Free Trade Act (NAFTA) Pesticide Technical Working Group discussion where I worked to emphasize resistance management education in herbicide training programs rather than reflexive command and control regulatory approaches. David has formed a sub-committee to begin developing the training modules and will have a lot more to say about this.

One of WSSA's strategic missions it to provide science-based information to the public and government policymakers while promoting research, education, and outreach activities. Through our Science Policy Director Lee VanWychen and the EPA Subject Matter Expert, Jill Schroeder, we remain deeply committed to engaging EPA and

increasing their access to our science on a number of issues. The Subject Matter Expert position has become a template for other scientific societies and we welcome the recent establishment of similar positions from the Entomological Society of America- Plant Insect Ecosystems Section (Dr. Thomas (Gene) Reagan, Louisiana State University) and the American Phytopathological Society (Dr. Frank Wong, UC Riverside); the more we work together with other scientific societies, the greater potential we have for accomplishments. Earlier this year, the three societies provided joint comments on the 2010 EPA Spray Drift Pesticide Registration Notice; this type of collaborative effort is a first for our Society.

The regulation of spray drift remains problematical; the risk assessment tools that EPA employs are based on aging data and the application technology in current use has improved significantly. This fall, WSSA will host Bob Wolf (University of Nebraska) at EPA to give the Agency a more clear view of the progress that has been made in creating more accurate methods to apply herbicides with less drift. We expect the Agency to be very interested in our progress as they develop the guidelines for Drift Reduction Technology validation protocols. WSSA supports science-based risk assessment that considers the benefits of pest control and the clear validation of the advancements in application technology.

WSSA has been very involved with the developing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program for pesticide use in the riparian corridor. Congress enacted the Clean Water Act (CWA) more than 30 years ago, adding and later updating the NPDES permitting program several times since then. In the decades that EPA has administered the CWA, the Agency has never issued an NPDES permit for the application of a pesticide to target a pest that is present near or in water. Instead, EPA has been regulating these types of applications through the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). Overall, this new decision marks a partial pre-emption of FIFRA by the CWA, layering numerous new requirements on applicators of legally-registered products that have wide value in society. This new rule also exposes applicators to extensive legal jeopardy through citizen lawsuits and Agency actions. Without careful design and execution, the implementation of this pesticide NPDES General Permit could have significant unintended consequences. To help EPA understand the impact of this program, Kurt Getsinger (US Army Corps of Engineers, Aquatic Plant Management Society) and Jill Schroeder have worked with EPA Office of Water to help them appreciate the need for weed management in the riparian corridor; part of this effort has been the organization of an August tour for the Agency to more deeply understand New Mexico's salt cedar management issues (including endangered species impacts) on the riparian areas of the southern and middle Rio Grande. Additional tour goals include the discussion of water quality issues and vegetation management as water is supplied from the Rio Grande through irrigation canals to the agricultural producers and homeowners of Las Cruces. WSSA submitted comments in partnership with all the Regional Societies on the proposed NPDES Pesticide General Permit; this document was submitted by Lee VanWychen to provide EPA with our expert insight into its various aspects and posted on our website.

To address declining interest, increase impact and protect the government land management agencies, we have separated National Invasive Species Week from congressional advocacy. NISAW is being planned for February 28 to March 4, 2011 as a National Invasive Species Council (NISC) coordinated invasive species education and awareness events. WSSA efforts are now largely focused on a 2011 National Invasive Species Advocacy Week that employs the efforts of the *Healthy Habitats Coalition* (HHC) along with the North America Weed Management Association (NAWMA) to lobby Congress and the Administration to act on the recently passed Western Governors Association resolution, specifically to:

1. Urge the Administration and its land and water management agencies to enhance the expenditure of federally allocated funding for on-the-ground efforts from 5% to 25% of the total expenditures by limiting administrative charges;
2. Urge the Administration and Congress to increase invasive species pass through funding to the states;
3. Urge Federal land management agencies to fund states at a 25 cent/acre level based on federally administered acres per state;
4. Urge the Federal Highway Administration to create a line item in its budget authorization for each state that creates a base of \$5 million per 15,000 center lane miles of highway;
5. Enlist commitments from federal agencies to unify a consistent NEPA policy process to insure invasive species management implementation is not impeded.

The NISAW Steering Committee includes Tracee Bentley (Peak Resources, CO), John Cantlon (DuPont), George Beck (Colorado State University), Lee VanWychen (WSSA), Fred Raish (North American Weed Management Association), Eric Lane (Colorado Dept of AG), and myself. Two HHC visits to Washington DC have already occurred to obtain support from USDA Under Secretary Harris Sherman, Senator Michael Bennett, Senator Mark Udall, Senator Ben Nelson, Senator Mike Enzi, Senator Mike Johanns, Senator Harry Reid, Representative Betsy Markey, Representative John Salazar, Representative McMorris-Rodgers, the National Association of Counties, National Association of Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, American Farm Bureau Federation, the Federal Highways Administration, Farmland Trust, and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

I hope that you have noticed the addition of Spanish abstracts to our Weed Technology Journal that started last February, 2010, thanks to Jim Anderson and the Publications Board. This action recognizes the rapid advances in Latin American agriculture and is intended to create a more open Society with greater emphasis on making our science available to all whom would find utility. Since Weed Technology brings forward original research in applied aspects of weed management and can have immediate applicability, it was chosen as the first of the three WSSA journals to publish Abstracts in Spanish. Based on the success and response to including Spanish Abstracts in Weed Technology, WSSA will consider widening the inclusion of Spanish Abstracts in our other journals, Weed Science and Invasive Plant Science and Management.

Weed Science has only been successful in meeting the Nation's food and fiber needs and protecting our natural areas through your many advances in science, crop protection and land management. We know that as Weed Scientist, we have a special responsibility to contribute to both the national and international effort through our basic and applied research into weed physiology, stewardship and the management of natural and managed ecosystems. Because our community of committed scientists provides a unique strength, WSSA has clearly become a visible and recognized force in the public and national discussion. This is a very exciting time to be your President and I am very proud to be a Weed Scientist.

In your service,
John Jachetta, Ph.D,
WSSA President
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Dear Drs. Jachetta, MacDonald, Barrett, Boerboom, Lym, Sandler, Shaw, Holt, and DiTomaso:

Thank you for your letter dated April 27, 2010 regarding the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) program, which is administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Thank you, also, for your support of our efforts to grow funding for agricultural science through the AFRI program.

We value your interest in AFRI and appreciate your thoughtful comments. The suggestions in your letter, as well as those provided by other stakeholders, will be carefully considered as we begin developing the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 AFRI requests for applications (RFAs). Stakeholder comments received to date are posted on the www.regulations.gov website and can be accessed under Docket #NIFA-2010-0001.

We regret the perception that NIFA has reduced its support of weed science in the AFRI program. As you know, the program has been restructured to be more responsive to important national issues, such as climate change, sustainable bioenergy production, childhood obesity prevention, food safety, and food security. To accelerate progress in these challenge areas, we are asking that interdisciplinary teams work together to achieve measurable outcomes. This is a departure from the single investigator model of the past, but is an approach supported by the National Research Council, and is essential for addressing broad societal issues.

The FY 2010 Challenge Area RFAs seek to leverage the agency's historic investment in research, education, and extension to solve problems. When writing the RFAs we made an effort to include all disciplines that could contribute to successful teams, but may have inadvertently omitted relevant disciplines due to the complexity that is associated with restructuring the RFAs. To address possible oversights on our part, we have encouraged individuals working in disciplines that can and should play a role in addressing one of the challenge areas to contact the relevant NIFA program officer for clarification of our intent. We certainly recognize that control of weeds is an essential part of agriculture and is expected to impact programs in many of our challenge grant programs, including in biomass, climate adaptation and mitigation, and food security. Indeed, we expect that the most competitive proposals will include consideration of pests and pathogens, including weeds. In the future, NIFA will expand and refine RFA language to make funding opportunities clearer for all relevant disciplines.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture is an agency
of the Department of Agriculture's Research, Education,
and Economics mission.

Dr. John Jachetta
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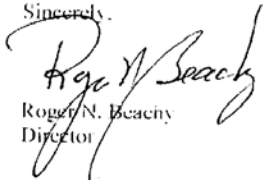
About 25% of AFRI funding is being used in FY 2010 to support discipline-based research through its Foundational Programs. These programs support work that helps to build the foundation of knowledge needed to solve both current and future problems. Our intent is to increase support of Foundational Programs to 30% of funding in future years, allowing for a greater investment in discipline-based work over time. As the budget for AFRI grows the amount of funding available for these programs will increase proportionally. We will bear in mind your request for targeted weed science funding in the FY 2011 Foundational Programs; the recent reports on herbicide tolerant weeds further speaks to the need for more research in the topic area.

The primary focus of the President's FY 2011 budget request for NIFA is expansion of funding for AFRI. One of the sources of funds for this expansion is cancellation of the integrated grants programs under the 406 authority, which total about \$45 million in the 2010 budget. These funds are redirected to AFRI in the President's budget proposal. The 406 authority was established in the 1998 Agricultural Research, Education, and Extension Reform Act (AREERA, section 406). Funding for the programs was first appropriated in FY 2000, primarily drawing from then existing funding lines for water quality, IPM, food safety and several other nationally focused special grants and Smith-Lever 3 (d) programs. While AFRI and its predecessor program, the National Research Initiative (NRI), have more than doubled, the appropriations for the 406 programs have remained relatively flat over the 10 year life of the program. Water quality, food safety, organic agriculture and other foci of current section 406 programs are supported through several NIFA-funded activities including formula grant programs, nationally focused special grants and Smith-Lever 3(d) programs, and competitive grants systems funded through mandatory dollars. Aspects of these programs relate strongly to the AFRI priorities as well, including climate change and food safety as examples, thus investigators may find opportunities through the expanded AFRI programs in 2011. Also note that beginning in FY 2010, AFRI has increased substantially the proportion of integrated awards that, like the 406 programs, support combined research, education and/or extension projects.

Expanding AFRI is critical to focusing NIFA on science-based solutions to critical national issues through grants of scale, focus and impact. The President's 2011 NIFA budget proposal is a critical step to elevating science for agriculture and is part of a strategy for agricultural research, education and extension to give a simpler message about the need for increased resources to solve problems for the nation.

Again, thank you for your comments on the AFRI program. We will give your suggestions full consideration as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Roger N. Beachy
Director