



Healthy Plants • Healthy World

February 6, 2009

Dr. Colien Hefferan
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture; Room 4236
Waterfront Centre; 800 9th Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20024.

Dear Dr. Hefferan,

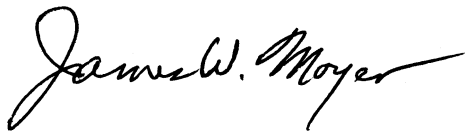
I am writing on behalf of the American Phytopathological Society (APS), its membership, and our clientele in response to your call for input on the formation of the new National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The APS membership consists of fundamental and applied scientists, many of whom are engaged in research as well as in extension and educational activities, and are therefore representative of a broad spectrum of agricultural scientists. APS has a history of strong ties to its stakeholders which include farmers, Agri-industry, and environmental interests. We are, by definition, a multidisciplinary group that studies plants, their diseases and the microbes and other organisms that cause diseases as well as those that have beneficial effects on plants. Our members are not limited to plant and microbial biologists, however, but have also led research on mycotoxins and are becoming more engaged in research on other aspects of food safety that directly impact animal and human health. Therefore, we anticipate interacting with the many branches of NIFA as we have with CSREES.

We support the six subject matter categories which cover our areas of responsibility such as plant health, food safety, renewable energy sources and agricultural systems – each of which include opportunities for our high priorities of genomics, plant-microbe associations and interactions, biosecurity, food safety, and other aspects of plant health.

We strongly urge caution when implementing the directives which specifically apportion funding into basic, applied, and integrative categories. While we appreciate the intent, we urge that separate categories or RFAs NOT be created to meet these as individual directives and the creation of compartmentalization or silos. Rather, the directives should be met by establishing strategically-determined goals within the subject matter areas so as to avoid creating artificial silos for basic, applied, and integrative programs. We favor a linkage, especially between basic and applied research so as to improve the efficiency of development of new discoveries, and the delivery of those new discoveries into practice through extension and education to relevant stakeholders as supported in current integrated competitive programs. Finally, we urge that funding be given to education programs, including graduate programs such as the previous IFAFS program. There is considerable concern among both educators and employers over the development of the next generation of employees for government, industry, and universities with responsibility for our nation's agriculture production systems and food supply. Because this is an issue facing all stakeholders and transcends disciplinary boundaries, we urge funding not only for training programs, but for selected programs that address pedagogical issues in post-graduate training.

In summary, we strongly support continued emphasis on funding fundamental research that addresses important agricultural issues. Further implementation of research and integrated programs should be strategically implemented to focus on significant national priorities, to assure the translation of findings from basic research to practice, and to ensure an informed public. We are encouraged by the directives regarding capacity building and the extended (10 yr) funding authority which will enable support for much needed infrastructure for research.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James W. Moyer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James W Moyer
APS President

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