Dear Colleagues:

I write to provide a summer update from the National Research Council's Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources (BANR). Early in 2014 we held discussions with research leaders from industry on topics raised in the PCAST report on Agricultural Preparedness, which completed our exploratory conversations with an assortment of stakeholders, including directors of selected agricultural experiment stations and directors of extension and others. We plan to use the rich set of perspectives we heard as the basis for a major workshop to further explore the PCAST report and other issues related to the strategic positioning of the research, education and outreach enterprise to address the big issues and opportunities in food, agriculture, and natural resources. We are now working on raising the funds to hold the workshop and move this discussion forward. We welcome suggestions on foundations and groups who might be interested in engaging in this initiative, including those willing to assist with financial support.

This newsletter provides updates on activities in-progress, a call for nominations for a new study committee to evaluate landscape conservation cooperatives, and announcements of the membership of two new study committees—one to produce a long-awaited 8th edition of Nutrient Requirements of Dairy Cattle and a second to tackle the high-profile topic of Genetically Engineered Crops. Both are important studies with distinguished committee members.

I suspect that I am not the only one anxious to learn who will be chosen to serve on the inaugural Board of Directors for the new Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) that was created in the 2014 Farm Bill. We anticipate an announcement may be forthcoming from USDA by the end of July, and I am encouraged by the increased support of agricultural research that this new organization will bring to our research community.

I hope you have a safe and pleasant summer.

Sincerely,

Norm Scott

BOARD NEWS

Bi-Annual BANR Meeting

Due to a lack of core dollars for support, BANR did not hold an in-person meeting this Spring. The Board members have continued to be active on an ad hoc basis to assist BANR staff. Planning is underway for a virtual meeting this fall, and an in-person meeting in winter. MORE

Scoping Meeting on Resistance Management and Weed Summit II: September 10 and 11, 2014

BANR will host the second national Summit on Herbicide-Resistance at the National Academy of Sciences building in Washington, DC on September 10, 2014. A scoping meeting to explore
the problem of resistance management more generally will be held the following day. The first national "Weed Summit" was held in 2012. MORE

New Study and Call for Nominations: Evaluation of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)

BANR and a sister Board--the Board on Atmospheric Sciences and Climate--are pleased to announce a new study to examine the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC). This study will evaluate the purpose, goals, and scientific merits of the program within the context of similar programs, and whether the LCC program has resulted in measurable improvements and progress toward its stated goals. Nominees to serve on the study committee are being sought immediately. MORE

NEW STUDY COMMITTEES

Genetically Engineered Crops: Past Experience and Future Prospects

Members of a new study committee were recently appointed by the President of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The committee will conduct a broad examination of genetically-engineered (GE) crops and food, building on and updating past NRC reports on environmental, public health and other issues. The first public meeting will be held on September 15-16, 2014 in Washington, DC. The list of committee members and a sign-up for study announcements can be found HERE.

Nutrient Requirements of Dairy Cattle, 8th edition

The NRC Chairman has appointed the members of the committee to prepare an update to the 2001 report on the Nutrient Requirements of Dairy Cattle. The committee will hold its first public meeting in Washington, DC in late September or early October where researchers, nutritionists, and other stakeholders can present topics that should be addressed in the new report. The meeting date will be announced to newsletter subscribers. The membership of the committee and more information on the study can be found HERE.

STUDY UPDATES

Review of the AFRI Program

The committee examining the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the competitive research grants program administered by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, is making final edits to its report on the program in response to comments received through the Academy's anonymous report review process. Assuming the Academy leadership approves the committee's changes, the report will be ready for release in early September. MORE

A Framework for Assessing the Health, Environmental and Social Effects of the Food System

The "framework" study committee, which is jointly overseen by the Academy's Institute of Medicine along with BANR, held its final meeting last month in Woods Hole, MA. The committee is aiming to get its report into review in September so that the report might be released by the end of 2014. MORE

Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle, 8th edition

As of July 1, 2013, the committee preparing an update to the NRC Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle has completed all of its meetings and is preparing the report to go into review by mid-August. Because the document is lengthy and also includes a computer model of beef cattle nutrition, the review and revision process is likely to take several months. Information on the membership of the committee can be found HERE.