Welcome to the inaugural e-newsletter from the National Research Council’s Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources (BANR), envisioned as a way to reach out to people interested in the policy and science of agriculture, food, and natural resources (AFNR). The quarterly e-newsletter will provide updates on current activities and invite feedback on ideas under development by the Board.

2012 was a busy year for the Board. In this first issue of our newsletter you’ll find reports released earlier this year, and information about two new studies soon to be underway. We invite you to read about what we are planning and to connect with us to share your ideas. Wishing you much success and happiness in the New Year!

New Studies

*Announcing the Membership of the:*

- Committee on Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle
- Committee on An Independent Review of the Agriculture, Food, and Research Initiative (AFRI)

Board Meeting News

A.G. Kawamura leads BANR on tour of the Great Farm Park in Irvine, CA

Reports Released in 2012

- Exploring Health and Environmental Costs of Food
- Sustainable Development of Algal Biofuels in the United States
- Nutrient Requirements of Swine
- Workforce Needs of Veterinarians
- National Summit on Strategies to Manage Herbicide-Resistant Weeds: Proceedings of a Symposium
- Evaluation of the Updated Site-Specific Risk Assessment for the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan, Kansas
- Meeting Critical Laboratory Needs for Animal Agriculture

Projects in Development

Land-Grant Universities, Confronting 21st Century Challenges: A Big Opportunity

A project we are crafting for 2013 is a national workshop of leading thinkers from the public and private sector to consider how the historic research, education, and extension mission of land-grant and other universities can align more effectively with contemporary (AFNR) issues globally and locally. Our goal is for the meeting to be provocative, interactive, and results-oriented.

Workforce Needs in Agriculture

A strong and well-trained workforce in U.S. agriculture is necessary for the nation to meet the
challenges of maintaining long-term adequacy of food, feed, fiber and biofuels. Although the United States has been a leader in global agricultural development, there are concerns that not enough skilled technical workers have been trained to meet the growing demands of the agricultural sciences. Read more.

Highest Profile Report(s) of 2012

The National Bio- and Agro- Defense (NBAF) facility is envisioned by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as a next-generation high-biocontainment laboratory capable of addressing disease threats to American agriculture. In 2011 a National Research Council (NRC) committee raised concerns about the validity of scientific approaches and methods used by DHS to determine the risks associated with building the NBAF in Manhattan, Kansas. Therefore, Congress asked DHS to update its risk assessment and to have the NRC again review the update in 2012. The second review found the update improved but still an insufficient basis on which to judge risks associated with the project. Read more.

While the NRC committee was evaluating DHS risk assessment, the fiscal reality of the nation and a decreased proposed budget from the President became a concern for the Department as it considered the future of the NBAF project. As a result, DHS turned to the NRC for assistance in understanding the threat of animal diseases to U.S. agriculture, describing the laboratory capabilities needed to address those threats, and for examining three Department-proposed options for meeting such needs. Read more.

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