



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

May 18, 2007

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

I am pleased to share with you legislative language that would implement the research provisions of the Administration's proposal for the 2007 farm bill. We have been asked by Members and staff to provide a draft for their consideration.

I believe that our comprehensive proposals can be the building blocks for a farm bill that is more equitable, predictable, and better able to withstand challenge. The research proposals fall into two categories—new research initiatives and organizational reform.

Several new research initiatives would be proposed and funded. One billion dollars over 10 years would be invested in a Specialty Crop Research Initiative to provide science-based tools for the specialty crop industry, to conduct fundamental work in plant breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop characteristics, and to develop new production techniques.

In the area of alternative energy, an Agricultural Bio-Energy and Bio-Based Products Research Initiative is proposed to advance fundamental scientific knowledge about production of renewable fuels and bio-based products. This initiative would be funded at \$500 million over 10 years. Conservation and environmental outcomes, as well as new seed varieties especially suited for organic agriculture, would be addressed through new organic research funded with an additional \$10 million.

There are two proposals in the area of organizational reform. First, two USDA research agencies—the Agricultural Research Service, and the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service—would be reorganized into a single agency named the Research, Education, and Extension Service. By combining these two agencies, research-related functions performed by USDA scientists and through grants would be better coordinated to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of program implementation and resource allocation.

Second, the Department of Agriculture would receive new authority to conduct research and diagnostic activities for infectious animal diseases on limited mainland locations in the United States. Currently, such research is conducted only at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center situated in New York State off the northeastern coast of Long Island.

I have consulted with the Office of Management and Budget, and they advise that enactment of this legislation would be in accord with the President's program.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislative language that correlates with our 2007 farm bill research proposals. I would be happy to discuss further these proposals with you, or any Member of Congress, and to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "M".

Mike Johanns
Secretary

Enclosures