

July 3, 2003

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator _____:

I would like to take this opportunity to contact you regarding advancing and sustaining investment in our nation's fundamental and applied agricultural research. As a (*name discipline*) scientist from (*name state*) I applaud the efforts of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee for FY 2003 which resulted in the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (NRI) being funded at \$166 million, an increase of nearly 40% over FY 2002! As the Subcommittee prepares to discuss funding for FY 2004, I would like to provide you with some funding recommendations for the FY 2004 appropriations cycle. By priority area my recommendations include:

Recommendation 1 – I urge you to support the President's FY 2003 proposal of \$240 million for the NRI. A study conducted by USDA's Economic Research Service highlights the annual rate of return to publicly funded agricultural research at 35%. As you can see, increased funding of agriculture research would be beneficial to our U.S. economy. Our research programs should be viewed as an investment in the future, not an expense.

Recommendation 2 – Any new monies appropriated for the NRI, as in FY 2003, allow the Secretary the discretion to apply up to 20% towards carrying out integrated research, extension and education competitive grants program under the same conditions and terms as those provided for in the FY 2003 spending bill. Multidisciplinary research efforts continue to have a promising future within all research communities, and agriculture does not differ from this trend. The NRI is a highly respected competitive grants program that funds the basic research necessary to improve crop and livestock production, and the processes that deliver quality food products from farm to table while protecting and enhancing the nation's environment and natural resources.

Without ongoing research, our nation will be unable to meet the many current and new challenges facing our food production system from farm to table. Past investment in the NRI has allowed scientists engaged in research on agricultural systems to successfully achieve many breakthroughs. Successes from (*name your state and institution*) include:

As you participate in deliberation on funding levels for agricultural research, we urge you to support the President's FY 2003 proposal of \$240 million for the NRI.

Sincerely,

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