



FRIENDS OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH – BELTSVILLE, INC. (FAR-B)

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Dedicated to Promoting the Research and Education Mission of the Henry A. Wallace
Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Maryland

Written Public Testimony for (Fiscal Year 2012)
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Statement by the Friends of Agricultural Research--Beltsville
March 23, 2011

Mister Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to present our statement supporting funding for the of Agriculture Department's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and especially for the ARS flagship research facility, the Henry A. Wallace **Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), in Maryland.** Our organization—the **Friends of Agricultural Research -- Beltsville**—promotes the Center's current and long-term agricultural research, outreach, and educational missions.

We begin, Mr. Chairman, by citing from Agriculture Secretary's Tom Vilsack's March 10, 2011, remarks before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. To quote from Secretary's Vilsack's remarks: **“Scientific research is essential for achieving [our] goals. To promote American innovation, new discoveries, and new industries, we continue to target and focus additional research dollars in key areas, like biofuel feedstocks, livestock and crop production and protection, ecosystem market foundations, and biotechnology.”** Also: **“We will invest in research to spur innovation, promote exports, support renewable energy and conservation, and enhance critical infrastructure in rural communities.”**

Our organization could not agree more strongly with Secretary Vilsack. Writing on world food in the March 14, 2011, *Washington Post*, highly regarded columnist Robert J. Samuelson warned, “the global food squeeze is largely an uncovered story.” According to Samuelson, global food demand is colliding with strained food supplies. Middle East countries, he notes, are importing 50 percent of more of their wheat, and looking back from February world wheat prices have doubled in eight months. Calling the situation the “Great Food Crunch”, Samuelson cites growing affluence leading to higher consumption of meat and dairy products, and exploding population growth as major contributing factors. Looking ahead, he notes that from 2010 to 2050 world population is projected to grow by 38 percent, from 6.9 billion to 9.5 billion.

Can world food production keep pace with growing demand? There are those who would argue that it cannot. Yet the more hopeful of us take reassurance in technological advances originating from BARC. Please consider: as recently as 1950 U.S. average corn yields were 38 bushels per acre. Average wheat yields were 17 bushels per acre. By 2010, average U.S. corn yields had

jumped to 153 bushels per acre, while average wheat yields grew to an impressive 46 bushels per acre. Technological discoveries from Beltsville contributed tremendously to that progress. For decades, Beltsville has stood at the forefront of technical advances in agriculture. In 2010, the Center celebrated 100 years of research accomplishments. The Center's landmark technological achievements over that time are truly remarkable. We would be pleased to provide documentation should the Subcommittee so wish.

Today, Beltsville is unequalled in scientific capability, breadth of agricultural research program, and concentration of scientific expertise. Under the leadership of Director Joseph Spence and with its powerful scientific capability, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center remains unique and indispensable to meeting the challenges that lie ahead.

We are aware of the financial constraints facing our country. We are aware, too, of urgent demands for funding among compelling national priorities. Securing ample, safe, and nutritious food -- food security -- has always been the most compelling of human priorities. That is true today, and it will be no less so in the years ahead. Commentators such as Robert Samuelson speculate that as much as oil, scarce food could shape global politics for decades to come.

In summation, Mr. Chairman, we strongly support adequate funding for the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. We would respectively suggest that adequately funding the Agriculture Department's flagship research center is central to maintaining national and world food security.

Priorities in the President's FY-2012 Budget Request—

Now, Mr. Chairman, we turn to key research areas highlighted in the President's proposed budget. We strongly recommend this proposed funding. Our recommendation is consistent with the remarks of Secretary Vilsack.

Animal Breeding and Protection

\$1,000,000

- Beltsville has extensive research activity related to animal production and animal health.
- Research conducted at BARC is the foundation for the dairy industry in its research on the genetic prediction of dairy cows that can more efficiently meet the nation's dairy needs. Slight differences in milk production by a cow can mean the difference between profitability and loss by dairy farmers.
- Research at BARC is aimed at preventing development of resistance to drugs used for treating cattle for parasites.

Crop Breeding and Protection

\$1,000,000

- Beltsville scientists have an extensive record of ongoing research relating to protecting crops from pests and emerging pathogens.
- Beltsville has unique expertise to identify pathogens such as nematodes and insects that can destroy crops or make crops ineligible for export to other countries.
- Beltsville also houses the *Germplasm Resource Information Network*, the U.S. coordinating body to identify and catalog plant germplasm. It is essential to maintain these important functional operations to identify plant germplasm that is diseases resistant, drought tolerant, and most valuable to the consumer.

Child and Human Nutrition

\$4,500,000

- Beltsville houses the nation's largest, most comprehensive Federally funded human nutrition research center, the *Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center (BHNRC)*.
- Unique activities include the *What We Eat in America* survey, which is the government's nutrition monitoring program and the *National Nutrient Databank*, the gold standard reference of food nutrient content. It is used throughout the world. These two activities are the basis for food labels, nutrition education programs, food assistance programs including *SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*, school feeding programs, and government nutrition education programs.
- The research facilities at *BHNRC* feature unique feeding facilities and are used in collaboration with other Federal agencies, including the *National Institutes of Health*, industry and university partners.
- Obesity is a serious problem in the United States and it must be dealt with. Effective nutrition programs aimed at preventing the onset of obesity are needed to prevent the high costs of medical care associated with the epidemic of obesity in this country.

Global Climate Change

\$ 800,000

- Beltsville had been actively engaged in climate change research long before climate change became a topic of discussion in the media.
- Beltsville scientists are at the forefront of climate change research -- understanding how climate change affects crop production and the effects of climate change on growth and spread of invasive and undesirable plants (such as weeds.) A central aim is finding ways to mitigate effects of climate change on crops.

- Beltsville houses truly unique facilities for replication of climates of the past and those that might exist in the future. Scientists here are able to model the effects of climate change and to develop strategies to mitigate the effects of any changes in climate.

Plant, Animal, and Microbial Collections \$1,250,000

- BARC houses many truly unique national biological collections that are indispensable to the well-being of American agriculture. In addition to the actual collections, BARC scientists are internationally recognized for their expertise and ability to quickly and properly identify threats to agriculture.
- This expertise is crucial to preventing loss of crops and animals, ensuring that threats to American agriculture are identified before they can enter the country, ensuring homeland security, and ensuring that American exports are free of pests and pathogens that could prohibit exports to other countries.
- Collections and expertise include insect pests, fungal pathogens, bacterial threats, and nematodes.
- BARC houses the *National Animal Parasite* collection and has the expertise to identify parasites that are of importance to agricultural animals.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes our statement. Thank you for consideration and support for the educational, research, and outreach missions of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.

Sincerely,

K. Darwin Murrell, Ph.D.
President (Acting)