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Fiscal Year 2013 testimony prepared for U. S. Senate Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,  
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies**

**March 13, 2012**

Mister Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to present our statement supporting funding for the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and especially for its flagship research facility, the **Henry A. Wallace Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), in Beltsville Maryland**. We strongly recommend full fiscal-year 2013 funding support for research programs at Beltsville.

We begin our recommendations, Mr. Chairman, by drawing attention to Agriculture Secretary's Tom Vilsack's February 13, 2013, remarks on the proposed FY 2013 budget: **"USDA has supported farmers, ranchers and growers so that last year they enjoyed record farm income. ...To help sustain record farm income, we will invest in research and development to improve agricultural productivity. [And continue] support for in-house research and the land grant universities. We'll continue our efforts to combat destructive pests and disease that threaten crops and livestock.**

**Following a Department-wide review of operations, we created a Blueprint for Stronger Service to make USDA work better and more efficiently for the American people. We found savings in areas like technology, travel, supplies and facilities. We've been able to avoid the interruptions in service that come with furloughs and employee layoffs. "**

The **Blue Print for a Stronger Service** holds out substantive agency-wide impacts for the Agricultural Research Service as a whole as well as for Beltsville in particular. The agency is streamlining its business operations, consolidating activities such as human resources and procurement into three "business service centers." In FY11, ARS cut its travel costs by approximately 28 percent from the past year, and the ARS printing fund has been cut by more than half. While continuing to serve the research needs of American agriculture and the nation, ARS is committed to "doing more with less."

We strongly endorse the **remarks of Secretary Vilsack** and the purposes and goals of **the Blue Print for a Stronger Service**. Overall, ARS will close 12 of its research programs at 10 locations in 2012, none of them at Beltsville--a recognition of the outstanding research conducted at Beltsville.

Beltsville -- the nation's premier agricultural research center -- has spearheaded technical advances in American agriculture for over 100 years. Beltsville celebrated 100 years of research leadership and technical advances in 2010. The long list of landmark research achievements over that time is truly remarkable. Still at the threshold of its second century, Beltsville stands unequalled in scientific capability, breadth of agricultural research portfolio, and concentration of scientific expertise. Under the leadership of Director Dr. Joseph Spence and with its powerful scientific capability, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center is distinctively, indispensably prepared for the challenges that lie ahead.

Toward that end, the scientists of Beltsville have **developed a new, bold vision for the future.** Titled **Innovation and Integration: Agricultural Research for a Growing World**, this visionary document stems from the realization that broader, multidisciplinary approaches will be needed to address new, perhaps unforeseeable agricultural challenges of the future. New approaches will be needed to reach beyond the confines of traditional research approaches tied to narrow issues or specific commodities. Traditionally, for instance, plant scientists may have worked in some combination with animal scientists or with human nutritionists. Only rarely, however, have scientists combined efforts across many disciplines to solve problems. Given its broad research portfolio and its many disciplines, Beltsville is perfectly situated for broad, multidisciplinary approaches to flourish. **Thus, in every way, Beltsville remains and will continue to be a national Center of Excellence for the highest agricultural research priorities.**

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 Beltsville. We would respectively suggest that adequate funding for the Agriculture Department's flagship research center is central to maintaining national and world food security.

#### **Priorities in the President's FY-2013 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.

**We were pleased to see that the FY2013 budget includes increases for environmental stewardship; crop breeding and protection; animal breeding and protection; food safety; and human nutrition. Obviously, these are areas of great concern to all Americans, and they are certainly among the highest priorities for agricultural research today. All of these research areas are strengths of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and they will benefit well from the unique facilities and scientific expertise at the Center. We encourage you to seriously consider funding the proposed budget and to ensure that Beltsville receives the funding that it needs to address these critical research needs.**

**Although funds are not requested for major facilities projects in the FY2013 budget, we would like to bring to your attention the urgent need for renovation of Building 307 on the Beltsville campus. The Center has aggressively moved to consolidate space and reduce costs and has been very successful at doing so. However, these plans require the renovation of a building -- Building 307 -- that was vacated some years ago in anticipation of a complete renovation. In the past, Congress approved partial funding for this renovation, and those monies were retained pending appropriation of the full amount required for the renovation. Unfortunately, those funds now have been lost to ARS. Consequently, renovation of this vacant, highly useful building is on indefinite hold. While we realize that**

**funding is extremely tight, we confirm that Beltsville urgently needs a renovated Building 307 for adequate, high quality lab space. Moreover, a renovated Building 307 would not only yield substantial energy savings, but also would allow Beltsville to move forward with other long-delayed relocation and consolidation plans.**

**In summation, we would highlight these spheres of excellence:**

**Animal Breeding and Protection:** Beltsville conducts extensive research on animal production and animal health. The research center is the foundation of genetic improvement in dairy cow production. Beltsville is examining ways to prevent resistance to drugs for animal parasite prevention and control.

**Crop Breeding and Protection:** Beltsville scientists have an extensive record of ongoing research relating to protecting crops from pests and emerging pathogens. Beltsville has distinctive expertise for identifying pathogens, nematodes, and insects that destroy crops or make crops ineligible for export. Beltsville houses the *Germplasm Resource Information Network*, the U.S. coordinating body to identify and catalog plant germplasm.

**Child and Human Nutrition:** The *Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center (BHNRC)* is the nation's largest, most comprehensive federal human nutrition research center; unique activities include the *What We Eat in America* survey, which is the government's nutrition monitoring program, and the *National Nutrient Databank*, which is the gold standard reference of food nutrient content that 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.

**Global Climate Change:** Beltsville became actively engaged in climate change research long before climate change became a topic of intense media interest. 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 detrimental plants (such as weeds.) A central aim is finding ways to mitigate negative effects of climate change on crops. Beltsville houses unequalled facilities for replicating past climates or climates that may exist in the future.

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

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

Sincerely,

James D. Anderson,

President, Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville