

*Good morning, my name is Caron Gala Bijl and I am Coordinator of the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Coalition or AFRI Coalition. The Coalition is a group of scientific societies and organizations with interests spanning the biophysical to socio-economic sciences, ranging from biotech to organics and from nutrition to rural development. The Coalition is dedicated to*

- increasing the awareness of science in the USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative competitive grants program and*
- full authorization of this program at \$700 million.*

*In '09 AFRI was funded at \$202 million; it is a small program when compared to other federal competitive research accounts. Yet, AFRI research, education, and extension is the missing link for enabling food security around the world, adapting our agricultural systems to climate change, and allowing for sustainable production of biofuel feedstock. AFRI has potential to solve problems and for growth. For example, in the FY 10 appropriation, AFRI received a 30% increase, evidence of its potential.*

*Thus, as you are charged to outline how to best enable science and technology in foreign policy, our Coalition proposes that the U.S. use AFRI to advance the adoption of technologies and practices that meet the needs of small-scale farmers around the world.*

*No doubt it is a grand challenge to meet the world's growing food and nutritional demands, while also maintaining or increasing the quality of critical ecosystem services. The AFRI Coalition argues that these goals can be achieved through the application of the full spectrum of agricultural sciences. Classical/public plant and animal breeding, livestock management, soil science, food and nutritional sciences, plant and animal biotechnology, as well as agricultural economics and rural sociology all have a role to play. Together these sciences, informed by local knowledge will develop effective approaches for international research and extension services.*

*Regarding "A New Biology for the 21st Century"—the AFRI Coalition believes that priorities for improving and developing the plant sciences to address food and energy security, include the full spectrum of plant development tools from genomics to plant breeding as well as other field-based methodologies. Training the "next century of biologists" in the full spectrum of the plant development sciences is a critical step to maintain our plant information systems, retain classically bred plant races, and advance new technologies in plant genetics.*

*Related to ecosystem service sciences and associated measurable metrics, we encourage PCAST to again look to USDA. The AFRI Coalition finds that leveraging the scientific knowledge at USDA to compliment the expertise available in other agencies will best enable the U.S. government to develop the metrics needed.*

*Finally, the AFRI Coalition encourages PCAST to urgently adopt a framework of multi-agency cooperation that includes the USDA. It is only with interdisciplinary and well-integrated research, education, and extension that we will succeed in finding the necessary solutions.*

*Thank you for the opportunity to speak.*