

NIFA in the News – Week of June 13, 2011

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In the News

New Mexico State University Collaborates on \$9.75 Million Grant to Study Bovine Respiratory Disease (AgWeb 6/10). New Mexico State University is partnering with Texas A&M and other universities across the country on a \$9.75 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to research bovine respiratory disease and how to reduce its prevalence in beef and dairy cattle. [Link](#)

State still seeks winning strategy against childhood obesity (The Seattle Times 6/11). The USDA has given \$276,000 to Washington State University to help 12 local schools create gardens. The county has \$205,000 in grant money to help food-stamp recipients shop at farmers markets. It will help pay for benefit-card-reader machines for 45 farmers and eight markets. It's easy to see how it will help farmers because the machines will take debit and credit, too. But food-stamp users said in focus groups it's not really worth their while to shop at farmers markets when they have so little to spend, and when grocery stores offer more convenience. [Link](#)

Penn State Receives Grant to Study Food Insecurity (CQ Services-PA 6/13). As part of a national initiative to reduce food insecurity, faculty in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences will direct a new \$5 million project to study whether greater reliance on regionally produced foods could improve food access and affordability for disadvantaged communities, while also benefiting farmers and others in the food supply chain. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the project -- "Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast with Regional Food Systems" -- brings together researchers, educators, entrepreneurs and community leaders from a 12-state region to shed light on how the food system can better serve all Americans. [Link](#)

House subcommittee's NIFA funding proposal (Delta Farm Press 6/14). Research, education and funding for land-grant programs are among the many facets of the agriculture appropriations debate in Congress. A breakdown of the House Agriculture

Appropriations Subcommittee proposal regarding the funding of the National Institute for Food and Agriculture is available at: <http://www.land-grant.org/reports/2011/05-23.htm>. [Link](#)

New Report Reveals Lack of Regulatory Structure Behind Research and Development of Genetically Engineered Animals at USDA (North Central PA 6/14). A scathing new report released late last week by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) notes glaring deficiencies in the agency's regulation of research into the development of genetically engineered (GE) animals and insects, said national consumer advocacy group Food & Water Watch today. It also described the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's failure to develop a process for dealing with research "incidents," such as the release of 386 potentially transgenic pigs into the food supply. [Link](#)

FARAD sees slight drop in FY 2011 funding (AVMA 6/15). President Obama in April signed fiscal year 2011 appropriations legislation allocating \$998,000 for the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank. FARAD is a decades-old Department of Agriculture-sponsored project with a primary mission of providing information on how to avoid problems with drug and pesticide residues and environmental contaminants in food animals. The Association has requested that the agriculture secretary relocate FARAD from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture to an agency more appropriate to manage it. NIFA claims that FARAD, which has an extension component, falls outside its mission and, therefore, should not be a part of its portfolio. [Link](#)

OIG sees 'relatively minor' glitch in USDA biotech security (Agri-Pulse 6/15). Three USDA research agencies agreed with the Office of Inspector General that they need better security planning and record-keeping at laboratories that work on transgenic animals and insects. But the OIG says in a new audit report that the problems that it identified "were relatively minor and did not lead to the inadvertent release of any problematic animals or insects." Biotech research to improve productivity of livestock and poultry, and to modify insects to reduce pest damage is either conducted or funded by the Agricultural Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. The OIG said the lack of formal regulatory framework left researchers and the public unclear about USDA safety and security policies, as well as National Institutes of Health research guidelines. [Request Story](#)

Big bucks for 15 plant scientists (Nature 6/16). The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) has appointed 15 new investigators to its club of well-funded whizzes—all of them plant scientists. What is a medical research organization doing funding plant science? Well, first off, they have joined forces with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, which has funded a broader range of scientific fields. The two will pony up a combined \$75 million for the 15 investigators over 5 years. Secondly, bigwigs at both institutions have apparently shared the general worry about lack of funding for basic plant science. "Compared to China, India and Europe, the

field is dramatically underfunded, but it is extremely important,” says Vicki Chandler, Chief Program Officer for Science at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The recent creation of a new agency at the Department of Agriculture—NIFA, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture—was meant to fill some of that gap, but its founding head has recently left its direction in doubt (see our story) and critics say its budget is too puny. [Link](#)

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