

**ESCOP & ECOP Chair DC Visits
February 19-20, 2019**

Tuesday, February 19, 2019

Doug Steele (APLU VP Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources)

- Concern with lack of budget transparency at APLU
- Attended Scott Hutchins (Deputy Undersecretary REE) Listening Session (February 15, 2019) with about 15 groups.
- CMC and kglobal—wants to understand issues and make decisions before end of 2019 so won't be in same uncertainty as in 2018 and prior years. What deliverables are expected from Cornerstone and kglobal? What does ESCOP, ECOP, and AHS want/expect from CMC? Where is AHS in the CMC effort? BAC or PBD makes most decisions, yet AHS, ESCOP and ECOP finance the CMC.
- Peter McPherson would like to increase grants and contracts through APLU. Could APLU get an AFRI grant?
- Assessment—think about how to repurpose
- Strategic realignment of NIFA funding lines will likely be semi-finalized at April meeting with a yes/no decision. If yes, form a new committee to implement.

Science Society Representatives

- Kevin Cain (AAVMC); Christopher Walsh (UMD Horticulture and Horticulture Society); Karen Gala (AAEA; American Association of Applied Economics)
- General discussion about how AES and CES work at LGU and nationally.

Senate Ag Staff

- Katie Naessens (Stabenow); Janae Brady (Roberts); Katherine Thomas (Roberts)
- What will Extension look like in 100 years? What else is needed to provide flexibility to Extension?
- Research Title is sometimes siloed—how to breakdown? Conservation Title and Nutrition Title also have room for research and other LGU opportunities. In 2018 FB also tried to encourage research to work with international partners and build relationships. Support for ag research is usually bipartisan and there are lots of opportunities to work together, but usually limited resources.
- ESCOP and ECOP also working with NRCS, Rural Development, and NASS (survey capacity within states could benefit research and Extension).
- What gets votes when need to pass legislation? All members support ag research, but when need dollars, the interest/support decreases. Need to keep telling the story that research solves problems and more research (and funding) is needed.
- CARET advocacy for research and Extension: What is their message to staffers? Everyone needs to say the same message (unified message). Ask for increase in total portfolio of ag research (\$4B for NIFA)—instead of each group advocating for their own \$2M program. CARET reps should tell their story of what LGU does with this funding that

they are advocating for. Customizing the state message (focus on state impacts of NIFA funding) to elected officials is powerful instead of the one-page documents on the importance of Hatch funding, AFRI funding, Smith-Lever funding, etc.

- Do the NIFA or REE Listening Sessions have value to Staffers? Staffers recognize that it is hard to get the LGU system to respond in a meaningful way. LGU must be involved in the Listening Sessions because NIFA makes policies and sets priorities based on input. NIFA should be more transparent in how decisions are made and how priorities are set.
- Implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill: How to build international partnerships? Ag ARDA (Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority; \$50M over five years; page 315 of 2018 Farm Bill): What will this look like? How will this program be different from current NIFA programs? Farm Stress Assistance Network described in authorizing legislation—may have opportunities for Extension.

House Ag Staff

- Kellie Adesina (Chair, Peterson); Keith Jones (Chair, Peterson); Jeremy Witte (Ranking Member Conaway; former Cornerstone employee); Ricki Schroeder (Conaway)
- Concern with strategic realignment. NIFA does not always follow Report language implementation. How will small NIFA programs be affected? Concern with NIH model of one funding line—won't likely get same outcome for ag research. NIFA CPPM program combined 4 previous funding lines into 1 funding line and seems to have worked well, but there was lots of controversy to get this done.
- Implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill: LGU system needs to stay in touch with USDA and keep up with NIFA implementation plans. Time and effort reporting. Matching funds requirement—language was in Senate bill and no comments were received, so staff thought that matching funds was not a big deal for the LGU.
- Make sure both sides of the aisle (majority and minority) get the same information at the same time with the same tone. Advocacy 101—many sectors missed opportunities with the 2018 Farm Bill. LGU needs to know how to tell their story. Everyone needs to tell the same story. If Congress does not hear from stakeholders, assumes all is ok. Someone in LGU system needs to pay attention to Farm Bill language before the final law is passed. Staffers willing to make changes if LGU does not like language in draft versions, but need to make changes before Farm Bill becomes law.
- SnapEd and EFNEP programs gave different messages to Republican and Democratic members—why? Majority did not speak for all states—small states are very different.
- Farm Bill describes allocations for scarce resources. Highly controversial or difficult issues are usually set aside so that staffers can focus on low hanging fruit and get something done. In the future, all stakeholders will need to work together to pass the Farm Bill—it is going to be more difficult to pass future Farm Bills.
- Staff tried to do a little for infrastructure in the 2018 Farm Bill by creating a framework for investment from the APLU language.

Tim Fink (SoAR)

- Ag Forward (Union of Concerned Scientists; National Soybean Association; Organic Research Foundation; IPM (Tom Green); TriSocieties; National Sustainable Ag Coalition (Ferd Heffner) had 3 goals in the 2018 Farm Bill:
 - 2X increase in funding for agricultural research in 10 years
 - Permanent dollars for OREI and BFRD
 - Discretionary dollars for REE Undersecretary
- To get \$1B for competitive programs for ag research in the next 10 years, need to increase the allocation first.
- Tim started at SoAR three years ago and there was a history of bad blood with APLU— maybe due to SoAR’s focus on AFRI. In the last 3 years, worked with “community” (all of LGU) for 2X increase in funding for REE. SoAR assumed that REE included research and Extension, but APLU concerned that SoAR did not include Extension. Sees opportunities to work with APLU. Hard to understand decision-making process at APLU—lack of transparency.
- Lots of variation in LGU priorities/needs. What is ESCOP, ECOP, CARET?
- Strategic realignment of NIFA funding lines: This is a community-dividing topic! If AFRI is successful, don’t want lots of carve-outs. Would AFRI be the new mini NIFA? Appropriators have two views: 1) too many funding lines makes advocacy difficult and 2) all funding lines exist because of specific supporters. Not enough trust that one funding line will work and that all interests will still get funding. Does a rising tide raise all boats (e.g., parity)? Will all boats rise the same? Or, will six large ships rise and all others stay flat?
- Fed by Science focuses on the whole of NIFA (research and Extension) while SoAR focuses on AFRI. About 20 LGU are members of Fed by Science. Use the Breakthroughs 2030 report to increase NIFA funding. Look for another document to be released at the end of March.
- Relocation of NIFA and ERS: SoAR does not have a public opinion regarding the potential relocation of NIFA and ERS. The SoAR board could not come to consensus on this issue. Roger Beachy vehemently opposed to relocation of NIFA and ERS.
- SoAR is working with NC-FAR and APLU (Wendy Fink) to host another ag exhibit on the Hill.
- FY2020 appropriations: SoAR will ask for \$445M. FY2019 AFRI appropriation = \$415M. The \$25M increase was the largest increase ever to AFRI. Strategy for FY2020 is to put forward an ambitious request, but not one that is laughable.
- In general, Republicans and Democrats do not care much about the President’s budget. They would rather focus on their own priorities.

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

FFAR (Sally Rockey; Lakisha Odom; Julie Reynes)

- FFAR: together we will go far
- FFAR has been working with Christine Geith on eXtension and how to engage Extension with FFAR
- Also working with Farmers and Ranchers Alliance (FRA) to figure out how to get farmers to use Extension (Lakisha). Will help identify research gaps and set priorities.
- FFAR has strong relationships with commodity groups (especially pork and poultry) and producer groups. FFAR could help LGU with relationships with commodity groups at the national level. FFAR could organize a meeting to bring in LGU and national commodity groups to discuss how to work together better.
- FFAR recently reformatted their Challenge areas (see website for details)
- The Health and Agriculture Nexus recently held a convening event and FFAR is about ready to launch a program in this area. FFAR is aware of the APLU Healthy Food Systems/Healthy People initiative, but this program is not directly connected to the FFAR program. The FFAR program will start with how to diversify crops to meet human nutritional needs. Need to understand which crops have increased nutritional properties and then figure out where to grow these crops and how to get farmers to adopt and grow these crops. Is there a connection to the Protein Highway effort that is a collaborative effort between LGU and private sector? FFAR is also interested in an initiative on proteins (seed companies are interested in this) and alternative meat products (including plant-based products).
- Lakisha is working with the Organic Trade Association. Initially, these efforts focused on soil health and now moving into weed science and plant genomics (not gene editing or GMO). Want organic producers to use science-based information. Plan to organize a small convening event that would ideally include academia, producers, and industry. LGU can help identify academic scientists (probably plant breeders) to participate.
- Next steps:
 - Work together on helping FFAR connect with eXtension.
 - FFAR will organize a national meeting for LGU and national commodity boards to discuss how to work together better.
 - Jeff will provide information on the Protein Highway to Sally.
 - Healthy Food Systems/Healthy People
 - LGU will send names of academic scientists to FFAR for a convening session with organic producers and the organic industry.
 - LGU will stay connected with the FFAR and Farmers & Ranchers Alliance project.

Robin Schoen (National Academies; Director, Board on Ag & Natural Resources)

- The National Academies are going through a transformation. There are many working groups and lots of quality control going on. In general, upper administrators recognize the need to change and they are trying to decrease bureaucracy.. The National Academies have an Office of Development to raise funds for the 3 honorific academies.
- BANR is planning a scoping meeting (Manhattan, KS) to describe what a larger National Academies study would do with regard to the future of Extension. Need to draft the framing questions for the larger study. How does the public(s) shape Extension? What are the mechanisms for evolution within Extension? What should be the mission and future of Extension? Who will use the recommendations from the study? Do not want a study to simply bless the current Extension organization.

Scott Angle (Director, NIFA)

- Relocation of NIFA: a list of 30 potential sites should be released next week. This list will be reduced to 3-5 for potential site visits. Process should be finalized in June. NIFA can stay in Waterfront through December 2019 or maybe into 2020.
- Scott expects USDA to have a Farm Bill Implementation listening session this Spring. ESCOP should send Grand Challenge briefs to NIFA soon because planning for 2020 RFAs will begin in March, 2019.
- How does LGU feel about increases in capacity and AFRI funding in FY2019 appropriations? Scott indicated it is easier to advocate for increases in competitive programs to administration and OMB. Encourages LGU and beneficiaries of research to tell their story at various Listening Sessions (USDA, REE, NIFA). *Focus on stories that describe how research has led to increases in farm profitability.* Secretary Purdue also likes to hear success stories from students.
- 2018 Farm Bill includes language for a Youth position, but it is not clear if this position will be in NIFA or in the newly created Office of Public and Private Partnerships in the Secretary's office (Mike Beatty, Director). The 2018 Farm Bill also contained language for an 1890's scholarship program that was supposed to go to NIFA. Mike Beatty also wants to administer this program in his office.
- Farm Bill Implementation: Josh Stull and Erin Daly are Co-chairs of this effort for NIFA. Various National Program Leaders will also be involved. NIFA must spend \$25M on citrus greening projects by September 30, 2019 and \$125M over the five-year Farm Bill. Not enough innovative science in this area to solve this important problem.
- Potential loss of Department of Defense MOU for 4-H programs. These are small grants with high transaction costs. NIFA does not plan to accept these dollars.
- Expect to see movement on the process for Annual Reports of Accomplishments and Plans of Work for the next cycle very soon.
- NIFA needs a new Director of Communications and Director of PARS. Scott expects about 50 position descriptions to be released on March 1, but it may be difficult to fill these positions before the new NIFA location is known.