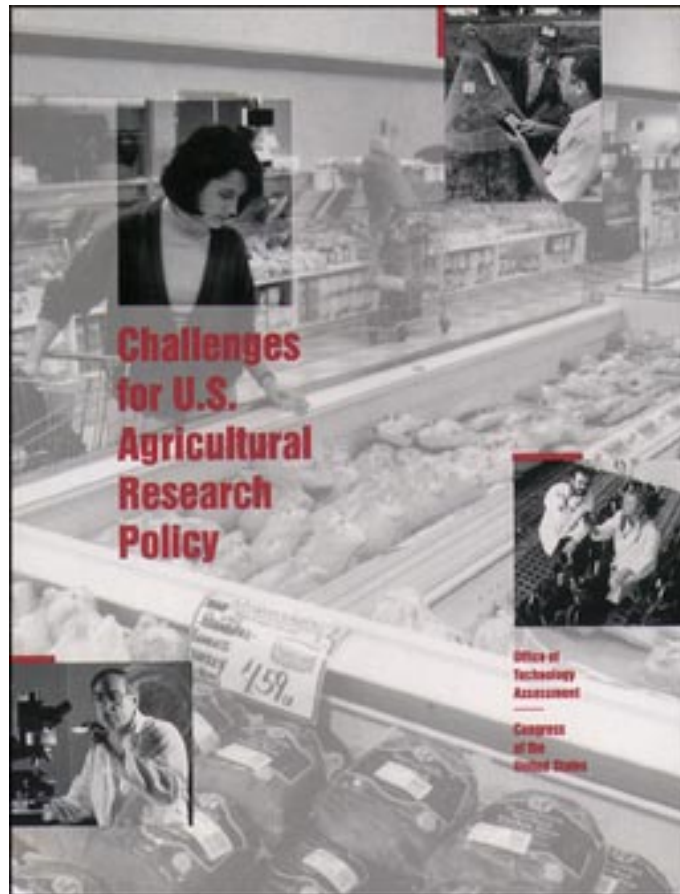


Challenges for U.S. Agricultural Research Policy

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Foreword

Agricultural productivity has increased markedly in recent years—more rapidly, in fact, than productivity in the overall U.S. economy. Many attribute a large part of this growth to public sector agricultural research, which is carried out primarily by land grant universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's research agencies. Despite this success, however, new budget constraints, scientific advances, and public demands for environmental safety are presenting the agricultural research system with the greatest challenges it has faced since its inception, more than a century ago. Questions have been raised about whether the old research institutions are still useful, and about how they should adapt to accommodate the new realities of the 1990s.

In discussions leading up to the 1995 farm bill, agricultural research policy has been put squarely on the negotiating table. Policymakers have been particularly interested in how well the agricultural system has responded to legislative directives in the past farm bill that called for a clarification of the purposes of agricultural research and extension, a national competitive research initiative, a sustainable agricultural research program, and research efforts to create new agricultural crops and new uses for agricultural commodities.

This report responds to a bipartisan request from the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry to determine the progress the research system has made in meeting the objectives set forth in these new areas, and to provide guidance on the management of agricultural research. In doing so, the report focuses on new ways to finance, organize, and manage agricultural research to prepare the system for the challenges of the next century.



ROGER C. HERDMAN
Director

Project Staff

Clyde Behney
Assistant Director

Robert Niblock
Program Director
Environment Program

Michael J. Phillips
Project Director

Theodore L. Hullar
Senior Analyst

Vivian N. Keller
Writer/editor

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Kathleen Beil
Office Administrator

Nellie Hammond
Administrative Secretary

Kimberly Holmlund
Administrative Secretary

Babette Polzer
Contractor

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Bruce Abbe
Chairman of the Board
New Uses Council, Inc.

Julian Alston
Professor
University of California, Davis

Robert Armstrong
Program Analyst
Alternative Agriculture
Research and
Commercialization Center
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Nicole Ballenger
Project Director
Board on Agriculture
National Research Council

George Bird
Professor
Michigan State University

William Carlson
Acting Administrator
Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension
Service
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Jason Christian
Research Analyst
University of California, Davis

L. Davis Clements
Professor
University of Nebraska

R. James Cook
Chief Scientist
National Research Initiative
Competitive Grants Program
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Bruce Crain
Director
Alternative Agriculture
Research and
Commercialization Center
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Mark Dungan
President
New Uses Council, Inc.

Michael Harris
School of Agriculture
University of Melbourne

Floyd Horn
Deputy Under Secretary
Research, Education, and
Economics
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

John Houghton
President
J.M. Houghton Associates

Edward Knipling
Deputy Administrator
Agricultural Research Service
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Michael Mayer
Professor
University of California, Davis

Kathleen Merrigan
Senior Analyst
Wallace Institute for
Alternative Agriculture

John Mullen
New South Wales Agriculture
Orange NSW

Robert Myers
Director
Sustainable Agriculture
Program
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Susan Offutt
Executive Director
Board on Agriculture
National Research Council

Philip Pardey
Research Fellow
International Food Policy
Research Institute

Jenifer Piesse
Professor
University of London

Dean Plowman
Administrator
Agricultural Research Service
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Sally Rockey
Program Director
National Research Initiative
Competitive Grants Program
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Richard Romminger
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Johannes Roseboom
Fellow
International Service for
National Agricultural
Research
The Hague

Hans Rutten
Fellow
National Council for
Agricultural Research
The Hague

Katherine Reichelderfer Smith
Director of Policy Studies
Wallace Institute for
Alternative Agriculture

Vincent Smith
Professor
Montana State University

Karl Stauber
Under Secretary
Research, Education, and
Economics
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Colin Thirtle
Professor
University of Reading

Walter Woods
Acting Deputy Administrator
Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension
Service
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Garth Youngberg
President
Wallace Institute for
Alternative Agriculture