

FFAR Comments - October 28, 2015

Thomas M. O'Connell, on behalf of Dairy Management, Inc.

On behalf of the dairy industry, I would like to thank the FFAR Board and staff on inviting comments regarding the funding of research. Dairy Management Inc.TM is funded by America's nearly 49,000 dairy farmers as well as dairy importers. It was created to help increase sales and demand for dairy products. The Dairy Research and Promotion Program collects funds from farmers and importers that DMI manages along with the state and regional promotion groups. That money, with USDA oversight, is used to fund programs aimed at promoting dairy consumption and protecting the good image of dairy farmers, dairy products and the dairy industry.

Increasing research through public and private partnerships, help support necessary product, nutrition, and sustainability research that will not only keep the US agriculture industry a competitive leader worldwide but address overall food security in the short and long term futures. In order to realize continued success, DMI would suggest that the vision for FFAR include strategies that allow on-going research funding to sustain momentum which the initial announcement and formulation of the FFAR has created.

Regarding the process and procedures, DMI would like to offer the following suggestions as to input for the overall process for this new research mechanism.

- Through the matching funds requirement of a RFP, allow the proposals to seek payment in kind contributions (staff, overhead, facilities/labs) in addition to actual dollars.
- To assure the investment by the Foundation and its funding partners is effectively utilized, line of sight to the application of research findings within agricultural and private industries should be of high priority.
- When and where possible encourage, a process by which multiple land grant universities may be used for coordination and execution of research efforts.
- Ample time should be given after the announcement of an RFP for research groups to formulate ideas, create partnerships and the teams that will be required to produce research with game changing insights and technologies for agriculture and its related industries.
- Understanding the issues with Intellectual Properties, developing a fair and equitable system for those who develop new technologies or innovations through basic and applied research as well as recognize the investments and equity status of those that fund the research.
- Consideration given to those research projects which include early stage technologies that may incorporate feasibility analysis and modeling, coupled with bench top testing at a smaller scale.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to share recommendations on behalf of the dairy industry.