

## **Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR) Board Meeting comments**

**by Dr. Ed Anderson on behalf of the Iowa Soybean Association and the North Central Soybean Research Program**

Dr. Rockey, Mr. Glickman, Board Members and Guests:

For fifty years, the Iowa Soybean Association and other qualified state soybean boards have supported basic and applied research through the investment of the soybean checkoff. This work is vital to improving soybean genetics and agronomics for the purpose of continuously improving the productivity, profitability and sustainability of U.S. soybean production.

The United Soybean Board, regional groups including the North Central Soybean Research Program (NCSRP), and many state qualified soybean boards have invested over \$1B to demonstrate their commitment to advancing the soybean industry. Examples include funding achievements in technology development, breeding, pathology, entomology, agronomics, cropping systems, precision and digital agricultural, and conservation and environmental stewardship efforts.

Since its inception, the soybean checkoff also has established and leveraged public and private partnerships to enhance farmers' return on investment. A 2014 study on "the return to soybean checkoff investments" found that, since 1980, soybean acres have increased by 3% and soybean production has increased by 4.3%, and the authors of the study calculated a \$6.50 return on each checkoff dollar investment since 1980.

Recently, our soybean associations, in partnership with the USB and several universities, have undertaken more formalized research coordination efforts through the co-establishment of five soybean research centers. These centers are building dialogue and common goals and priorities with soybean farmers, university researchers and companies that provide soybean seed, crop protection, equipment and data products, technologies, and services.

In addition, many of us are working together to communicate and coordinate public/private collaborations for multi-state on-farm partnerships for applied research, as well as public/private partnerships for more basic studies to aggressively enhance soybean yield potentials and address novel management strategies for soybean cyst nematode. These are a few examples of farmers collectively making significant reinvestments of their profits to improve the entire soybean industry. Increasingly, companies acknowledge this investment and are willing to dialogue with farmers and universities to identify synergistic research partnerships.

I am here today because many of us associated with the soybean checkoff see the value in building more public/private partnerships, and we are encouraged by FFAR's mission to mitigate the several year's trend of decreased agency funding for soybean research through improved funding of these public/private opportunities. Furthermore, the collaborative efforts of the soybean checkoff, universities and several companies seem to align quite well with anticipated priorities of FFAR, including plant health, food safety, nutrition, renewable energy, natural resources and environment, and agriculture systems and technology.

It is our collective hope that the FFAR will view our activities not as another organization or group asking for federal research dollars, but as a farmer-led effort and leading commodity organization with a demonstrated track record for success and a clear vision and plan for how the FFAR can match checkoff and industry investments in driving the entire industry forward. Soybean is an important US crop, representing the number 2 position for production and the number 1 rank for export to a hungry world. Soybean research should be funded commensurately.