

Item 6.0 Seeds and Breeds Dialogue Update

Presenters: Steve Slack, Jeff Jacobsen

Background: Over the past several years, USDA and external stakeholders, including the Seeds and Breeds Coalition, have had conversations about public sector breeding programs. Concerns have been expressed with the shift away from public plant and animal breeding programs at a time when the need for locally-adapted options has markedly increased due to numerous production challenges. For example, it has been articulated that there is a need for more resilient cultivars to adapt to biotic and abiotic stresses, changing consumer demands and the narrowing of germplasm diversity. These further relate to food security concerns and food system vulnerability.

USDA (NIFA, ARS, Forest Service) has concurrently been creating a Roadmap for the federal agency. There is some recognition that significant resources have been invested into infrastructure (seed and germplasm repositories, laboratories, equipment, greenhouses and field stations) supported by federal funds (Hatch, Hatch Multistate) which are significantly leveraged by state Agricultural Experiment Station funds. In addition, state and national commodity organizations provide financial and programmatic support. Other organizations are also part of the conversation such as ASTA and NAPB (creating a new strategic plan). Recently, the NAREEE Board has been engaged in this priority dialogue. Dr. Ramaswamy has reached out to a select group of Directors, Executive Directors and selected USDA officials to broaden the conversation, enhance communications and create short- and long-term action outcomes.

The leaders of the Seeds and Breeds Coalition desire to initiate a focused conversation to discuss the current and future capacity of public breeding programs and explore the opportunities associated with these challenges with LGUs and, in particular, Experiment Station Directors.

Action Requested: Discussion/Creation of a small leadership group.