USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative in Idaho

The University of Idaho (UI) partnered in recent years with other Western universities on seven major USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) research proposals of varying sizes and terms. These projects will have lasting effects on the economy, communities and environment in Idaho, the Northwest and beyond.

Background

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s extramural competitive grants program. AFRI supports research, education and extension in several areas.

Recent AFRI Projects and Accomplishments

- **Regional Approaches to Climate Change (REACCH) for Pacific Northwest Agriculture** was funded in fall 2010, receiving $20 million over five years, concluding in early 2017. UI was the lead institution, partnering with Oregon State University and Washington State University (WSU). The efforts of its nearly 100 researchers helped to equip farmers with strategies to adapt to climate change to ensure the long-term viability of cereal-based farming in the Inland Northwest.

- **Northwest Advanced Renewables Alliance** was funded in spring 2010 for $40 million over five years. WSU is the lead institution, and UI is partnering on education for K-12 and technology transfer to industry. The Northwest Advanced Renewables Alliance examines use of materials from construction waste to forest residues to create a sustainable aviation biofuel industry.

- **Site-Specific Climate-Friendly Farming** was funded in spring 2011 and ends in March 2017. Led by WSU with UI as a partner, it focuses on reducing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions by managing nitrogen at the site-specific level. It helps growers scientifically manage cropping practices and nitrogen applications for maximum profit.

- **Advanced Hardwood Biofuels Northwest** was funded in 2011 for $40 million over five years and is led by the University of Washington with UI as a partner. It aims to provide liquid fuels research, outreach to K-12 and industry technology transfer.

- **Improving Barley and Wheat Germplasm** was funded in spring 2011 for five years. UI is partnering with the University of California, Davis, to identify beneficial gene forms that strengthen wheat and barley against diseases and pests, improve nitrogen-use efficiency, and resist drought. The goal of this research is to develop new wheat and barley varieties better adapted to changing environments.

- **Accelerated Development of Commercial Hydrotreated Renewable Jet Fuel** was funded in August 2012 for five years. UI is partnering with the University of Arizona to optimize feedstock characteristics and supply through research focused on breeding productive oilseed crops and developing best management practices. Concurrent business development efforts will connect
feedstock producers and rural economic development interests with biorefinery developers and business and financial institutions.

- **Bioenergy Alliance Network of the Rockies** was funded in September 2013 for four years. The BANR university-industry collaboration, led by Colorado State University, is a multi-institutional, interdisciplinary effort that spans the vast Rocky Mountain landscape. Research focuses on converting some of the dead lodgepole pine wood into biofuel to help offset the use of fossil fuels and create economic growth.

**Upcoming Goals**

The goal for coming years is to continue to emphasize:

- The importance of programs to expand the range of potato development, production and nutrition research at UI in support of the state’s most important crop and an important food source for the world.
- The efficient, sustainable use of natural resources that protect water quality and prevent the unwanted release of nutrients.
- Biofuels research that lessens the reliance on fossil fuels and introduces new industries to the Northwest.
- Novel, comprehensive research on Idaho’s economically important, livestock-focused agricultural and food processing industries that limits their impacts on the environment while enhancing their economic and environmental sustainability.

**Projected Impact of Continued and Increased Funding**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is one of the most important federal mechanisms to support long-term research that improves the health and economic status of Americans, particularly in rural states like Idaho. AFRI is critical to conducting high impact research with wide-ranging benefits.

**Accounts: Agriculture Appropriations, Department of Agriculture, NIFA/AFRI**

FY17 Funding: House $375 million; Senate $375 million

For more information, please contact:

Janet E. Nelson, Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
vpresearch@uidaho.edu  208-885-6689  www.uidaho.edu/research/federal-relations