

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS OF SOUTHERN ANIMAL SCIENCES CHAIRS

SAC-2 Chairs' Group

February 1, 2012

In addition to our responsibility to review the progress of Southern Region Multi-State projects, the SAC-2 group also serves in an advisory role to the Experiment Station Directors in the region. The last decade has presented a number of challenges to Land Grant institutions in the Southern Region that have the Animal Sciences chairs concerned about our ability to maintain teaching and research programs or to adequately serve our clientele in certain commodity groups. Year after year of budget cuts, retirements, inability to fill vacancies, loss of faculty positions, closing of facilities, and reallocation of resources have stretched our resources as never before. In addition, the reorganization and setting of new priorities within the USDA competitive grants program (AFRI) seems to have shifted funding away from production animal research, creating added concerns for young faculty trying to establish their research careers, as well as maintain those programs already established. For example, 6-10% of AFRI competitive grants were funded for animal production and health research. However, a minimum of 44% of U.S. farm gate income is from direct sale of animal products; a definite disparity.

With dwindling resources in most states, the need to partner with other Land Grant universities, other universities within our states, industry, or state agencies and organizations is becoming more important to sustain our missions. With the maintenance of, or increase in student enrollment in Animal Sciences coupled with decreases in faculty numbers or expertise, challenges exist in teaching the necessary courses for the major.

We would like to express our concerns as outlined above and enlist support in addressing the following:

1. The need to expand the AFRI funding for production animal research that is more in line with the impact of animal industries on the economy in the region and nationally.
2. Assist departments and faculty in addressing and/or removing barriers to collaboration in teaching or sharing courses among states.
3. The need to initiate, continue or enhance Extension collaborations among states.
4. The need to share research facilities and/or resources.
5. Provide appropriate training of professionals to address societal issues such as:
 - Global hunger
 - Ensuring a competitive, secure food supply
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Food safety
 - Nutrient management

We appreciate your consideration of these serious issues and welcome dialogue among states in the Southern Region.