

Change and Opportunity

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During the past year we have talked extensively about research. Research, like all aspects of the economy, has languished during the recession. As a university faculty member, I am hardly qualified to address corporate research and development funding, so I will discuss academic and government research funding instead. R&D is the cornerstone of economic development. In the United States, cereal research is largely conducted at land-grant universities. These institutions are funded in part by the U.S.

Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). USDA provides funding for faculty, staff, and graduate salaries, and research supplies for projects that are reviewed periodically by peer scientists. State governments provide additional support to land-grant universities as base operating funds. The global recession has led to drastic cuts to state university funding. Unlike many other segments of the economy, agriculture received little attention for economic stimulus funding. What implications do these developments have for the cereal industry? Cutbacks at universities may lead to fewer opportunities for students, resulting in a smaller pool of qualified candidates for industry, government, and academia. As more companies cut back on research departments, some university faculty conduct more contract research on behalf of industry sponsors. This type of arrangement has served most parties well. Federal funding for research have been fairly level over the past few years, with USDA funding fewer projects with higher budgets in an attempt to match awards made by other federal agencies, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH). Additionally, interdisciplinary projects with multiple investigators at multiple institutions receive priority in funding.

AACC Intl. is taking advantage of our annual meeting location close to the U.S. capitol. We invited USDA national program leaders to our conference to discuss changes and opportunities in USDA com-

petitive funding. Debby Sheely, deputy administrator for CSREES, opened the USDA Research Funding Opportunities September 15 session. In addition to presentations regarding the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants for small companies to conduct research and the International Science and Education (ISE) competitive grants program were discussed. The SBIR provides businesses with fewer than 500 employees with phase I grants up to \$75,000 for research up to a six-month period. Phase II grants are awarded after successful completion of a phase I project and funding may be as high as \$350,000 for a two-year period. According to CSREES, "ISE projects are expected to enhance the international content of curricula; ensure that faculty work beyond the U.S. and bring lessons learned back home; promote international research partnerships; enhance the use and application of foreign technologies in the U.S.; and strengthen the role that colleges and universities play in maintaining U.S. competitiveness."

I strongly believe that AACC Intl. must support and promote cereal science research. One way that we can help members apply for funding is to facilitate research collaborations. New corporate and academic partnerships will help researchers identify potential collaborators among member institutions. Faculty members can strengthen their chances for funding by including letters of support from industry. Small business owners often must find university or government laboratories to assist with analyses. For ISE projects, U.S. faculty members have to identify professors in other nations to arrange exchanges with. AACC Intl. can serve as a liaison for researchers seeking collaborators. Many grant programs require an extension component. The association can organize websites, workshops, and symposia to provide a means for outreach to the cereal community. Another service we can provide is a posting of grant and fellowship opportunities. Such an endeavor cannot succeed without our members' participation. Will you help us support cereal research worldwide? Please contact me or any member of the AACC Intl. Board of Directors if you have information on grant programs or if you have ideas on how we can help researchers advance our field.