

Meeting a Continuing Need:

A Proposal to Establish

## The National Center for Animal Agriculture and the Environment



USDA-Fund for Rural America Grant

### *Background*

Increased attention is being given to environmental regulation of the United States livestock and poultry industries. This, in addition to the recent attention to food safety and security, has increased recognition of the need for a national, coordinated and science-based approach to these issues. There are a number of agencies, private sector organizations and programs that address portions of these issues at the state, national and international levels.

The National Center for Manure and Animal Waste Management, funded in 2000 with a USDA-CSREES Fund for Rural America grant, has been very effective in stimulating cutting edge research, coordinating research across disciplinary and state boundaries, and communicating these results to policy makers, agency staff, private sector interests, and livestock and poultry production associations. Unfortunately, funding for this national center will soon expire at a time which is critical in the on-going design of environmental regulations and establishment of safeguards for food safety and security. Consequently, it is proposed, given adequate funding, that a **National Center for Animal Agriculture and the Environment** be created.

### *Mission*

Create a national organizational structure that will coordinate multi-disciplinary and science-based research and education programs to develop and implement solutions for the management of manure and byproducts from the commercial livestock production industry that are affordable, secure and environmentally sustainable at the local, national and international level. The National Center for Animal Agriculture and the Environment would have the following objectives:

### *Objectives*

- To coordinate the development of research priorities for existing funding programs.
- To communicate these priorities to public sector researchers, professional societies and funding agencies.
- To guide existing funding programs in setting priorities and determining scientific relevance of proposals.
- To develop the protocols and standards that can be used for technology verification.
- To develop multi-disciplinary or multi-state proposals to address priority issues.
- To provide seed or matching funds that will allow development of needed research initiatives on issues where other funding is lacking or scarce.
- To develop forums and other communication mechanisms where stakeholders can identify knowledge gaps and synthesize existing knowledge.
- To work with land grant universities and other interested stakeholders to ensure that all technological, biological, socioeconomic and environmental aspects of animal agriculture are considered in their mission activities. This would include the U.S. EPA and USDA NRCS to support the Unified National Strategy for Animal Feeding Operations.
- To collaborate with other stakeholders to develop relevant and appropriate means of education and extension efforts.

## A Proposal to Establish (continued)

### **The National Center for Animal Agriculture and the Environment**

- To provide an information clearinghouse of the latest scientific findings, policy analyses, and educational materials to all interested stakeholders.

#### *Organization*

The directors of Agricultural Experiment Stations in all 50 states would be invited to nominate representatives to the National Center for Animal Agriculture and the Environment. In addition to the 14 states already represented in the current national center, states where the livestock or poultry industries are a critical part of the local economies would be encouraged to participate actively. The National Center for Animal Agriculture and the Environment would continue to use a policy advisory committee made up of stakeholders such as commodity groups, producers, regulatory agencies, federal agencies, environmental groups and consumer representatives. Coordination of the center's science activities would occur by organizing activities into focus areas. The specific focus areas would change across time and be determined by scientific developments and input from the stakeholders. A board of directors would be created to coordinate activities with state agricultural experiment station directors. An operations committee composed of members from the focus areas would coordinate many of the management decisions. Coordinating the activities of the focus areas, policy advisory committee, operations committee and the board of directors would be the responsibilities of a center director and assistant.

#### *Products*

- Coordinate the development of unified, multidimensional recommendations to federal agencies with responsibilities in this area.
- Work with national database providers to ensure complete and accurate subject matter coverage, including technology verification.
- Co-sponsor and convene meetings, forums and workshops to engage stakeholders, synthesize results, disseminate findings and identify emerging priorities.
- Develop and maintain an electronic information clearinghouse.
- Develop policy briefs and position papers for the U.S. Congress and other policy and program decision makers.
- Be a source of credible scientific information on controversial issues.

#### *Funding*

Estimated: \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 annually

#### *For more information:*

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[http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/waste\\_mgt/natlcenter/center.htm](http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/waste_mgt/natlcenter/center.htm)