



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice

July 28, 2020

Dr. Scott Hutchins
Deputy Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Re: Docket No. USDA–2020–0003, Solicitation of Input from Stakeholders on Agricultural Innovations

To Whom it May Concern:

The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) commends the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for development of the Agriculture Innovation Agenda, and ASN appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Agenda. ASN is a scientific, professional society with more than 7,500 members who conduct nutrition research to help all individuals live healthier lives. ASN supports the dissemination and application of nutrition science to improve public health worldwide. ASN members are employees within the entire USDA Research, Education, and Economics (REE) spectrum, including at the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS), Office of the Chief Scientist, and Human Nutrition Research Centers. Our members are actively involved with the USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program, both as recipients of such grants and by serving on grant review panels. ASN appreciates USDA's ongoing support for nutrition research and for USDA's responsiveness to stakeholder input.

1. What agricultural commodity, group of commodities, or customer base does your response pertain to or would benefit?

The U.S. must maintain and enhance the potential for innovations and future scientific breakthroughs in many areas of agriculture, including the scientific fields that directly benefit agriculture, such as nutrition. Nutrition research and science helps to enhance all agricultural commodities served by the USDA. However, nutrition is not featured prominently in the Agenda. ASN would be pleased to work with USDA to position American Agriculture as a leader in the effort to meet the food, fiber, fuel, feed, **nutrition**, and climate demands of the future. ASN encourages USDA to provide for a diverse portfolio of nutrition research that will lead to future agricultural innovations focused on the most pressing public health and nutrition concerns to lead to improved nutrition and therefore, better quality of life.

2. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities to increase productivity and/or decrease environmental footprint that should be addressed in the next 10- to 30-year timeframe?

While the 2018 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report “[Science Breakthroughs to Advance Food and Agricultural Research by 2030](#)” did not specifically call out nutrition research challenges, each of the challenges addressed directly link to nutrition research. We seek to innovate and improve the nation’s food and agricultural systems through nutrition research and enhancing the nutritional quality of our food supply. Feeding the growing population is a known challenge, but we don’t just need more food with a smaller environmental footprint; we need high-quality nutritious food to maintain the health of the growing population, decrease the incidence of nutrition-related conditions and diseases, and decrease health-related costs. Nutrition research support is necessary to continue to determine the linkages between diet and health and to enhance nutrition-related disease prevention. It is imperative that we consider how to sustainably increase and improve food production efficiency and outputs to feed the growing world population, while reducing food loss and waste at the agricultural and production levels. ASN commends the USDA Agriculture Innovation Agenda for seeking to reduce food loss and waste by 50% in the US by the year 2030 and to reduce nutrient losses by 30% nationally by 2050.

As we work to increase agricultural production while increasing the nutritional quality of foods produced and reducing food waste, we need look no further than within USDA. Important nutrition research is carried out every day by the USDA ARS, as well as the USDA Human Nutrition Research Centers. For example, [research](#) at the Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Center was the first to analyze simultaneous efforts to improve diet quality and reduce food waste¹. This ongoing work at USDA is highly important to lead to transformative breakthroughs that will enable U.S. agriculture to meet the needs of the global population in 2050.

Another current and future challenge, as well as opportunity, is to maintain and grow the agricultural research enterprise. ASN applauds USDA’s support for the next generation of nutrition scientists to ensure that training and careers are sustained for years to come. Career training, as well as additional training opportunities, such as for first-time AFRI applicants are essential as we formulate our goals for agricultural quality improvement and capacity from now to 2050.

ASN also applauds the important work of USDA REE to promote consumer nutrition education through extension programs. Increasing consumers’ knowledge is an essential component to achieving improved public health by helping consumers make more informed, healthy choices and reducing food waste.

¹ Conrad Z, Niles MT, Neher DA, Roy ED, Tichenor NE, Jahns L. Relationship between food waste, diet quality, and environmental sustainability. PLoS One. 2018; <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0195405>.

ASN thanks the USDA for your efforts related to the Agriculture Innovation Agenda, and offers the assistance of our Society as you implement the Agenda. ASN looks forward to opportunities to work with the Agency to further enhance USDA's nutrition research contributions and highlight nutrition more prominently within the Agenda.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lindsay H. Allen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lindsay H. Allen, Ph.D.
2020-2021 President