

Office of the Chief Scientist  
US Department of Agriculture  
Jamie L. Whitten Building  
Washington, DC 20250

Attn: Seth Murray, Senior Advisor  
Seth.murray@osec.usda.gov

Dear Mr. Murray:

On behalf of the Berkeley Food Institute at the University of California at Berkeley, I am pleased to submit comments for consideration for the Visioning of U.S. Agriculture Systems for Sustainable Production. Berkeley Food Institute (BFI), a partnership between the UC Berkeley schools of Law, Public Policy, Natural Resources, Public Health, Business, Environmental Design, and Journalism, works to catalyze and support transformative changes in our food system. Key to BFI's mission is making the research of our over 130 affiliated faculty available as a resource to policymakers and the general public. We do not represent the official position of the University of California.

Our vision for agricultural systems over the next 50 years that improve economic and environmental outcomes will:

- prioritize biodiversity as both a successful approach to farming and an ecological solution;
- link urban and rural economies and cultures through symbiotic exchanges of products, waste, information, capital, and human talent;
- consider organic agriculture "the norm," in recognition of the booming market for organic products and its proven returns for farmers, society, and the environment.

At the same time, the public infrastructure supporting sustainable agriculture is in dire need of construction and re-construction. This public infrastructure in need of support in order to meet the challenges of the next 50 years includes, but is not limited to:

- Publicly funded seed breeding. Some of these challenges are listed in the proceedings from the Summit on Seeds and Breeds for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Agriculture, a publication of the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), based in Pittsboro, NC;
- Public processing and distribution facilities to enable new and smaller farmers to access markets, including institutional markets
- Public research facilities available for use by land grant and non-land grant university communities;

-Public higher education funding to enable the next generation of agricultural innovators to achieve their dreams and contribute to American agriculture at the vocational, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels;

Research and development are critical to fulfilling these objectives. In particular, we suggest research on the following key areas:

- the relationship between soil health and water retention, crop yield, pest resistance, carbon sequestration, and other “co-benefits”;
- the financial impacts of the above co-benefits;
- the existing and potential role of native pollinators on farms of all sizes;
- the market impact of voluntary third-party certification schemes reflecting consumer interest in issues like labor conditions, animal welfare, etc.;
- the economic impacts of rising wages across the food supply chain.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to participate in this effort and look forward to seeing the final result.

Respectfully,

Nina F. Ichikawa  
Berkeley Food Institute