

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE****Solicitation of Input From Stakeholders Regarding the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program; Public Meeting and Delegation of Authority**

**AGENCY:** Office of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture (USDA).

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting and delegation of authority.

**SUMMARY:** The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is creating a new research, education, and extension program called the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program. By this notice, CSREES is designated to act on behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture in soliciting public comment from persons who use or conduct research, extension, or education regarding the priorities to be addressed by this new program as required under section 102(a) and (b) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA).

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on Thursday, December 2, 1999, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Because of the diversity of subjects, and to aid participants in scheduling their attendance, the following schedule is anticipated:

9:00–9:30 a.m.—Introduction to Section 406

9:30–10:45 a.m.—Water Quality

10:45–12:00 p.m.—Food Safety

1:00–2:30 p.m.—Pest Management (Pesticide Impact Assessment, FQPA, and Methyl Bromide)

2:30–4:00 p.m.—Other Issues Pertaining to 406 Priorities and Administration

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held in room 107A, Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building, United States Department of Agriculture, 12th and Jefferson Drive, SW, Washington, DC 20250.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Persons wishing to present oral comments at this meeting are requested to pre-register by contacting Ms. Terri Joya at (202) 401-1761, by fax at (202) 401-1782 or by e-mail to tjoya@reeusda.gov. Participants may reserve a 5-minute comment period and should indicate the topic area for which they are registering. More time may be available, depending on the number of people wishing to make a presentation and the time needed for questions, following the presentation. Reservations will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. All other attendees may register at the meeting. Written

comments may also be submitted for the record at the meeting or mailed to Ms. Terri Joya, Competitive Research Grants and Awards Management, USDA/CSREES, STOP 2240, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2240. Please provide three copies of the comments. All comments must be received by Friday, December 17, 1999, to be considered. All comments and the official transcript of the meeting, when it becomes available, will be available for review for six months on the CSREES web page. Participants who require a sign language interpreter or other special accommodations should contact Ms. Joya as directed above.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Background and Purpose**

Section 406 of AREERA (7 U.S.C. 7626) authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a research, education, and extension competitive grant program to provide funding for integrated, multifunctional agricultural research, extension, and education activities. Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this program, the Secretary may award grants to colleges and universities (as defined in section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103)) on a competitive basis for integrated research, education, and extension projects. Grants shall be awarded to address priorities in United States agriculture that involve integrated research, education, and extension activities as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board. The Secretary delegates the authority to carry out this program to CSREES.

CSREES is holding a public meeting to obtain comments to use in developing the proposed rule for the new Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program. The meeting is open to the public. Written comments and suggestions on issues that may be considered in the meeting may be submitted to the CSREES Docket Clerk at the address above.

**Summary of Integrated Activities**

The Program will be funded in fiscal year (FY) 2000 at \$39,541,000 for the following integrated activities: Water Quality (\$13 million), Food Safety (\$15 million), Pesticide Impact Assessment (\$4.541 million), Crops at Risk from Food Quality and Protection Act (FQPA) Implementation (\$1 million), FQPA Risk Mitigation Program for Major Food Crop

Systems (\$4 million), and Methyl Bromide Transition Program (\$2 million).

Listed below is subject area information about integrated activities that USDA may fund in FY 2000:

**Water Quality**—This program is targeted to the identification and resolution of agriculturally-related water quality degradation and seeks the development of partnerships to generate and educate on best watershed practices.

**Food Safety**—This program provides information for research, education, and extension to improve the safety of food products and to create a public that is more informed about food safety issues.

**Pesticide Impact Assessment**—This program provides for the most objective and accurate data collection program on FQPA issues which is provided to USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to allow for more informed regulatory decision making.

**Crops at Risk from FQPA Implementation**—This program is an intermediate-term research and extension program with at-risk cropping system as the focal point. Development of new multiple-tactic Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies designed to assist in the transition period for certain pesticides affected by the implementation of the FQPA is a potential goal of the program.

**FQPA Risk Mitigation Program for Major Food Crop Systems**—This program will emphasize development and implementation of new and innovative pest management systems designed to maintain the productivity and profitability of major acreage crops while meeting or exceeding environmental quality and human health standards as the FQPA is implemented.

**Methyl Bromide Transitions Program**—This program is designed to support the discovery and implementation of practical pest management alternatives for commodities affected by the methyl bromide phase-out. The program will focus on short- to medium-term solutions for commodities at risk using either combinations of presently available technologies or some newly developed practices.

Done at Washington, DC, this 16 day of November 1999.

**Dan Glickman,**

Secretary, Department of Agriculture.

[FR Doc. 99-30400 Filed 11-17-99; 4:04 pm]

BILLING CODE 3410-22-P