

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Project Title: Technology Roadmap Support
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Cooperators: None

Other funding sources: None

Total Project Funding: \$30,000

Budget History:

Item	Year 1: 2009
Salaries	\$30,000
Benefits	
Wages	
Benefits	
Equipment	
Supplies	
Travel	
Miscellaneous	
Total	\$30,000

Justification for Contract:

Working within the general structure of the four major research initiatives identified by the National Technology Roadmap for the Tree Fruit Industry, act to continue to build on the progress made to date in developing funding mechanisms and obtaining actual funding for specific research proposals benefiting the tree fruit industry in the State of Washington. The national fiscal situation in the next three year period will be more challenging than ever; so, it is important not only to defend existing programs but also to strategically target new initiatives. Equally important is defending the integrity of the USDA-CSREES Specialty Crops Research Initiative and carefully monitor the establishment of the proposed Agricultural and Food Research Institute as the organizational replacement for CSREES.

General Objectives:

1. To protect funding for ongoing research programs and to seek funding for new proposals identified as significant and beneficial to the Washington tree fruit industry;
2. To continue cooperative efforts with other specialty crop stakeholder groups and work to educate and inform the new Administration about the unique position of the Washington tree fruit industry and its economic importance to the Pacific Northwest and to the nation;
3. To insure that research activities and requests for research proposals made by the Administration are constructed in such a way as to address the needs of Washington state industry and to give the flexibility to the Commission to participate in the process;
4. To keep the Commission informed of developments in both the Congress and the Administration that impact on ongoing or future research funding; and,
5. To pursue specific activities related to high priority research initiatives
 - a. USDA-ARS apple rootstock breeding program, Geneva, New York
 - b. Expansion of pear genomics, genetics, and breeding efforts to support the pear industry in the Northwest, with emphasis on possible expansions within the region
 - c. Expansion of automation and precision agricultural efforts in the Pacific Northwest
 - d. Expansion of research and extension efforts in sustainable tree fruit production and handling.

Significant Findings:

1. In 2009, the Congress moved quickly to provide significant “stimulus” funding to address the economic problems of the country. It appears that the domestic economy has begun to recover; however, economic problems are continuing. In addition, congressional action on the “stimulus” package and other legislation designed to help the economy recover, has significantly increased the size of the Federal That action, taken together with other actions by Congress to address the domestic economic situation, has resulted in a significant increase in the size of the Federal deficit and led to growing concerns over the size of the national debt.
2. In response to these growing concerns over the increase in the Federal deficit and the corresponding increase in the national debt, the Administration has indicated that the FY 2011 budget that will be submitted to Congress early next year will tend toward a “freeze” on discretionary spending levels. It is not clear at this point what this means for USDA research funding and how this will be translated to the “mandatory spending” or baseline funding for specialty crops research activities.
3. While the Administration has endorsed the competitive grants approach to research funding, it has also sought to change the focus of attention, moving toward efforts to address issues like environmental issues, alternative energy research and research addressing problems of hunger, nutrition, and obesity in society. This effort is likely to further emphasize cross discipline research and is likely also to change the emphasis for the research requests. We will need, for example, to emphasize worker safety standards, a better educated workforce,

- and also environmental benefits that accrue from our interest in automation and technology research efforts.
4. The recently-enacted Agriculture Appropriations legislation for fiscal 2010 extends funding for existing research programs, including the clean plant network. That measure also continues language addressing the problems that have surfaced regarding the “matching grant” provisions of the Specialty Crops Research Competitive Grants program.
 5. Working with Northwest Horticultural Council, U. S. Apple Association, and other agricultural groups, we were able to obtain full funding for the chemical use survey program contacted by NASS. That funding was also included in the Agriculture Appropriations Act.
 6. There continues to be strong support in the Congress and in the Administration for the Specialty Crops Research programs. The recently-issued press release from USDA detailing those grant awards indicates clearly that the State of Washington and the Pacific Northwest industry have done quite well and that this process has expanded our horizons and enabled us to reach out and partner with a wide range of interest groups.
 7. There are efforts underway to further strengthen the Specialty Crops Research effort itself and there are also efforts to reinvigorate research interests within the specialty crops research team. Those efforts being led by the Northwest Horticultural Council will, I believe, enhance our ability to move forward and continue to build on the progress made to date.
 8. The Administration’s announced “Science Policy Initiative” and its emphasis on sound science, presented in a transparent manner also provides us with another tool in going forward to lay out research priorities in a clear, logical manner.
 9. We continue to build on and expand our ties to the Congress and to the Administration. We have established open lines of communication at senior levels of the Congress, and we continue to be perceived as objective and careful and committed to sound science as the way to move toward our goals.
 10. There have been developments in other areas, especially in the environmental arena, that might provide opportunities for directed or mission-oriented research and could provide an additional source of funding for that type of research. Working with Northwest Horticultural Council and U. S. Apple, we have been able to reach out to and establish what is likely to be a beneficial relationship with a wide range of groups.
 11. The Agricultural and Food Institute has been established and a selection has been made to head this institute.
 12. The current Under Secretary for Research at USDA, Dr. Shah, has been selected to head AID. Dr. Shah’s background is in world hunger issues. He was formerly with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. His replacement at USDA has not as yet been selected. That choice is likely to influence to some degree the course of research efforts at the Department.

Results and Discussion:

While much remains to be done and there are potential issues that we will have to deal with over time, we have had a good year. We have maintained our positions and we have expanded our opportunities, especially as a result of the awards that were recently announced for the Specialty Crops Competitive Grants program.

Our position supporting competitive research programs is generally supported in the Congress and in the Administration, and we have protected and enhanced our reputation as fair, objective participant in the process.

We have met the defined objectives and where we have not finally successful in all areas (particularly enhancing pear genome, genetics, and breeding research), we have made significant progress. We will have to continue to be persistent without being offensive and we will have to continue to show how this research initiative relates to and complements other areas.

I believe that we have in fact kept the door open and we have validated our seat at the table in discussing and implementing agricultural policy in the United States. It is my view that we have actually expanded our options and significantly broadened our base of support.

There are, however, problems that we are going to have to address. We do need to pursue avenues to strengthen the relationships that we have within the specialty crops industry and continue to emphasize to our colleagues of standing together as a group committed to emphasizing the value of research.

We are going to have to insure that the public and the Administration and Congress have adequate tools to evaluate the benefits of our research projects. This is a difficult area and is quite complex and one that has to be approached carefully, but as we prepare for efforts to address the Federal budget deficit and the growing national debt, we are going to need to be able to demonstrate what the government is getting for the money it is spending in research.

I am convinced that we have strong support from our state delegation and from the delegations of the other states that make up the Pacific Northwest. To maintain that support, however, will require that we be understanding and that we work cooperatively to move the issue forward. There are remarkable opportunities that are before us. To take advantage of those opportunities, however, we will have to continue to show patience and understanding of the political and economic realities that are facing our country.

It has been a distinct privilege to work with the Commission and with the associated groups in this effort, and I look forward to having an opportunity to help carry this forward in the coming years.

Executive Summary

The Commission will expend a total of \$30,000 over calendar year 2009 to support efforts working within the general structure of the four major research initiatives identified by the National Technology Roadmap for the Tree Fruit Industry to build on the progress made to date in developing funding mechanisms and obtaining actual funding for specific research proposals benefiting the tree fruit industry in the State of Washington. This expenditure also supported efforts to defend the integrity of USDA-CSREES Specialty Crops Research Initiative as well as efforts to monitor the establishment of the Agricultural and Food Research Institute as the organizational replacement for CSREES.

Continuing to follow the established general strategy emphasizing openness and transparency and a strong commitment to sound science and working through and with tree fruit industry groups, especially the Northwest Horticultural Council, and other specialty crop organizations, much has been accomplished. Most of the objectives listed in the approved project proposal were in fact achieved. For those specific research projects that were not funded, progress was made in moving to achieve the necessary support to ultimately achieve the goals set forth.

Commission funding has helped us continue to enhance our reputation as a reliable, careful, and responsible partner with the Congress and the Administration in shaping agriculture policy and in designing research efforts that fulfill congressional intent by reaching out in a multidisciplinary approach that benefits producers in a wide range of regions in this country.

We have in fact justified our seat at the table. We have kept the door open and we have maintained the progress that we have made to date. We as a region have demonstrated our competence and our abilities in the recently-announced Specialty Crops Competitive Grants awards.

We have maintained and expanded our channels of communication with our own congressional delegation and with the delegations from the Pacific Northwest. We have also met with and opened channels of communication with key staff on important committees in both the House and Senate.

While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done and we do face significant hurdles. We need to insure that we strengthen our partnership with the specialty crops group so that we can continue to speak with one voice in support of competitive research efforts that recognizes that we share common problems and that we all should seek to design research that benefit a broad range of agricultural commodities and regions.

We also need to explore options that will prepare us to define and explain the economic and environmental and social benefits that will accrue as a result of the research that we are seeking. If we do this, we will be prepared to work with the Congress in evaluating and deciding how to best address budget problems as a result of the increased budget deficit and growing national debt.

Simply put, we need to be prepared to face these challenges in defending the progress that we have made and taking advantage of the exciting opportunities that are available to us to go forward.

It is my sincere hope and strong desire to continue to work with the Commission in moving these issues forward.