

WEED SCIENCE
SOCIETY OF AMERICA



WSSA

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Lee Van Wychen
Science Policy Director
National & Regional Weed
Science Societies
Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net
202-746-4686

WSSA Issues Strong Appeal to USDA for Restoration of Funding for Weed Science

Virtually all weed-related programs cut from USDA-NIFA budget

LAWRENCE, Kansas – May 12, 2010 – Today the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) announced it has issued a strong appeal to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to protest the elimination of virtually all funding for weed science in the federal budget.

“If the budget moves forward as proposed, critical work that impacts our food and water supplies and our natural ecosystems will remain unfunded,” says WSSA President Dr. John Jachetta.

Joining WSSA in an appeal to USDA to restore the funding were the Aquatic Plant Management Society, North Central Weed Science Society, Northeastern Weed Science Society, Southern Weed Science Society and Western Society of Weed Science.

In a letter to Dr. Roger Beachy, Director, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the organizations point to some of the most urgent, near-term challenges weed science needs to address:

- **Herbicide resistance.** Resistant weeds continue to evolve and will overrun long-established cropping systems unless new integrated weed management programs are developed and adopted. Integrated weed management considers all available practices – cultural, chemical, mechanical, genetic and biological – and uses the best combination for the specific problem.
- **Organic weed control.** Weed control is the organic grower’s number one production cost. To meet the demand for organically produced food, farmers need new and

effective tactics for managing weeds without herbicides. An over-reliance on cultivation alone can increase soil erosion, reduce soil quality and increase energy consumption.

- **Climate change.** As weed species respond to our changing climate, new management tactics are needed to protect food supplies and to sustain both fiber and fuel production.
- **Protection of water supplies.** Unchecked invasive weeds continue to threaten the wetlands and waterways that are vital to our potable water supply, hydroelectric power, flood control, conservation and endangered species restoration.

The letter from the societies also highlights recent reports from the National Academy of Sciences and the USDA itself that underline the critical need for weed science research.*

“Weed scientists are mystified and disappointed by USDA’s decision,” Jachetta said. “If officials consider weed management a solved problem, nothing could be further from the truth. Today, well over half of all pest-related crop losses can be attributed to weeds. Abandoning our commitment to weed science at a time when our weed management challenges are growing is a potent recipe for a crisis of national proportions.”

WSSA appealed to USDA to make three changes:

1. Add a Foundational program within the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) to address weedy plant biology, ecology and management, similar to those focused on phytopathology and entomology.
2. Reconfigure larger AFRI research programs to encompass the full breadth of the agricultural sciences. Currently, program objectives are written so narrowly as to exclude not only weed science, but many other important areas of study.
3. Restore funding for integrated activities under the Section 406 Legislative Authority. Section 406 supports integrated weed management research through initiatives like the Regional IPM Centers, Risk Avoidance and Mitigation Program, Crops at Risk and Organic Transitions Program. Funding for these programs was zeroed out in the President’s FY 2011 budget.

“We hope that reason will prevail and that funding will be restored,” Jachetta said. “Otherwise the weed science discipline may be crippled for generations to come.”

WSSA asks that letters of support for weed science funding be directed to:

- The U.S. House of Representatives: <https://writerep.house.gov>
- The U.S. Senate: www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

- USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture: RFP-OEP@nifa.usda.gov, an email address set up for stakeholder comments

About the Weed Science Society of America

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit www.wssa.net.

**National Academy of Sciences 2010 Report on "Impact of Genetically Engineered Crops on Farm Sustainability in the United States" and USDA's 2010 "Critical Issues: Emerging and New Plant and Animal Pests and Diseases."*