

**Developing a New Systems Science Program
Within the USDA's National Research Initiative:
What should it look like?**

**USDA Listening Session
Quality Inn at Paradise Creek, Pullman, WA
Wednesday, June 23, 2004, 8:15 a.m. – 6:15 p.m.**

AGENDA

8:15 Welcome and “round robin” introductions

8:30 Overview of the day: logistics, group process and “getting to outcomes” – Kim Leval and Chad Kruger, facilitators

8:45 Framing of the day - Diana Jerkins, CSREES co-Leader of Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, and National Program Leader for Managed Ecosystems will give an overview of the proposed new agricultural systems program area of NRI, and what she hopes to get from the day. Diana will also touch on *the development of the new systems program area, the framework and unique characteristics of the NRI program and its financial constraints.* Siva Sureshwara, NPL for Small Business Integrated Research, will outline the major questions that will be addressed in the listening session.

9:15 Open response and discussion session- focusing on the following questions:

Q.1. What are key characteristics of effective systems projects?

Which of the list of Possible Characteristics of Fundable Projects is the most important? Are there others?

Q.2. What are the highest-priority issues that this program could address?

**A. Review and Discussion of Suggested Beginning Issue Areas
Ideas for Subsequent Years' Issue Areas**

Q.3. Given the priority issues and key characteristics of a new Science Systems program within NRI, what are the implications for program structure?

Topics to consider include duration of projects, amount of individual awards, review process, stakeholder input, etc.

Q.4. What would you *not* like to see included in an NRI Systems Science program?

Q.5. Are there other program structures that might serve as models for the new program (SARE, etc)

Pose/discuss any OTHER QUESTIONS

10:15 Break and refreshments

10:30 Small Group 'hypothetical' agricultural systems research brainstorming – Small group breakouts will incorporate mixed perspectives and each tackle a hypothetical local or regional problem (i.e. Water; greenhouse gases; rural vitality; small/medium farm/ranch viability and beginning farm opportunity; value-retaining processing, marketing, labeling, promotion systems and others).

11:30 Boxed lunch and tour - of Dryland Agroecosystem Research at Palouse Conservation Field Station -- with exploratory discussion of the Climate Friendly Farming project as an example of systems research.

1:30 BREAK (Time to allow people to filter back to the group)

1:45 Reporting from small groups on the hypothetical ideas -- influenced by discussions over lunch and tour and a “deeper” discussion of what agricultural systems and meta systems looks like and how a program might be structured to meet the research needs around more complex systems and interactions.

2:45 BREAK

3:00 Group opportunity to critically comment on possible focus areas for RFA and related NRI programs

4:00 BREAK

4:15 Evaluation session and closing comments -- time for the questions that haven't been discussed, feedback, next steps, building collaborations

5:15 Break for local wine and cheese reception – if you are local bring a bottle of local wine to share

6:15 Adjourn

*****The meeting will be in conference rooms at the Quality Inn Paradise Creek. We have reserved a block of rooms for the 22nd at \$54.99 single/\$59.99 double at the Quality Inn. Reserve rooms by June 5th to receive the special rate. Let Kim Leval know if you are planning to attend so we can get a rough count for room space and boxed lunch. Kim by email kimleval@qwest.net and phone (541) 687-1490**