CSREES Portfolio Review Expert Panel Report Summary

Portfolio 3.2.2 Animal Protection
CY 1999 – 2003

SUMMARY

External Review Completed: March 2005

Portfolio Description

The animal protection portfolio is a broad emphasis area with major impact on the quantity and quality of food animal products and animal welfare. The CSREES national leadership integrates research, education and extension expertise to address emerging diseases, pests, health, and welfare problems with new approaches that are economically sound, socially acceptable, and environmentally advantageous. The portfolio's programs strengthen the nation's capacity to address critical existing and emerging animal health issues, and welfare concerns related to management, training, and societal perceptions. It is aligned with eight Knowledge areas (KA) related to the efficiency of animal productions systems:

- KA 301 Reproduction
- KA 302 Nutrition
- KA 303 and KA 304 Genetics
- KA 305 Physiological Processes
- KA 306 Environmental Stress
- KA 307 Animal Systems and Management
- KA 308 improved Products

The CSREES Animal Protection Portfolio also includes:

- KA 311 Animal Diseases
- KA 312 External Parasites and Pests of Animals
- KA 313 Internal Parasites in Animals
- KA 314 Toxic Chemicals, Poisonous Plants and Naturally Occurring Toxins and other Hazards
- Affecting Animals
- KA 315 Animal Welfare, Well Being and Protection

Finally, the Portfolio includes a review of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), an emerging area that has not been formally incorporated into a KA.

Summary of Comments and Recommendations

In 2005 a panel comprised of independent experts from the field was convened to assess and score the current state of the Animal Protection Portfolio. A discussion of specific comments and recommendations related to each of the dimensions of the three Office of Management and Budget (OMB) research and development (R&D) criteria used (relevance, quality, and performance) is provided below.

Relevance

The portfolio was generally good in coverage and was relevant and timely. Coverage was also thought to be of a high standard with good multidisciplinary and international efforts which reinforced the concept that animal agriculture is a national and international issue. However, the panel felt that integration is an area requiring significant attention. Integration between the three parts of USDA (research, education and extension) is weak and lacks the proper documentation of completed efforts.

Quality

The panel felt output was good, appropriate methodology was utilized, and that there was good alignment between work which preceded the review period and work accomplished during the review period. The panel acknowledges the good efforts that have been made to reach out to stakeholders.

Performance

The panel found the portfolio to be very comprehensive. There was good coverage of national and international needs, projects were finished in a reasonable amount of time, and overall, the panel was pleased with the portfolio's accountability. Finally, the panel pointed out that, although the portfolio has accomplished much with limited resources, at some point additional resources will be needed if the success of this portfolio is to be sustainable.

General Comments

- The portfolio addressed national needs by funding relevant projects and the quality of output was excellent.
- There is clear evidence of a strong commitment to the development and maintenance of partnerships.
- Funds appeared to be directed to the areas of importance and all funded areas seemed to be significantly important.
- Adequately funded, multi-institutional programs were thought to be a very good investment.
- There was significant leveraging of funds from multiple partners. This illustrated a high level of resourcefulness.
- Significant productivity has been accomplished with relatively limited funding.

Comments on Future Directions Presented by CSREES

CSREES should work with Partners to emphasize and fund efforts to train new animal-focused scientists (graduate and post-doctorate) in the areas of animal welfare, animal health, and humane harvesting techniques. Training programs should be created for farm and processing facility workers who speak a number of foreign languages. These workers have major roles to play in protecting the health of animals and consumers so it would be advantageous to develop training programs that fit their language needs. There also is a need to increase and intensify efforts to truly integrate research, extension and education.

Data Issues

A Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) needs to be implemented that encourages the timely input of high quality information into the new database system. The new database system needs to provide the framework to track extension and classroom education efforts. Increased reporting ability will allow for better recognition and appreciation of cost-benefit analysis of investments in

these areas. Furthermore, it should track impacts after the project has concluded. Examples of these impacts include patents awarded and technology transfer that occurred.

Evaluation Issues

The logic model is a great tool to help the thinking through the process of project planning, implementation and evaluation. The panel encourages its rapid evolution so that it becomes more easily usable, understood, and can be extended out to land grants to become a working paradigm everyone follows.

The document can be improved through reviewing the present portfolio scoring sheet and looking for ways to increase clarity for panel reviewers. This should be done immediately and steps need to be put into place to better coordinate the organization of the next self-review document so that it aligns more fully with the scoring sheet. For example, it was unclear whether or not 'appropriate technology' was being used during 1999-2003 because it was not possible to determine what methodology researchers used in their investigations.

Portfolio Score

Portfolio 3.2.2 received a total score of 95 from the panel. This score places the portfolio in the highest category 'effective in supporting CSREES objectives.'