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A Report on Priorities for the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, as Identified by Stakeholders at a November 11, 1998, Symposium

Richard K. Perrin

Co-chair, NN21 Food Systems in 2020 Action Team

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During 1998 the NN21 Food Systems in 2020 Action Team at the University of Nebraska sponsored two symposiums to stimulate thinking and discussion about the nature of the food system that will evolve by the year 2020, and the potential role of the University of Nebraska in shaping that system and educating people to participate effectively in it.

The first symposium, "The Food System for 2020: Nebraska's Opportunities", was held on January 14, with approximately 185 in attendance. The program (attached as Appendix 1) was intended to bring to bear some of the best thinking in the country about how the agricultural and food systems might change. The second symposium, "Insuring Opportunity in Food Systems: The Role of the Land Grant University", was held on November 11. Its purpose was to provide an opportunity to identify priority opportunities for UNL to better serve needs for education and research in the food system of 2020. The program is summarized below.

Insuring Opportunity in Food Systems: The Role of the Land Grant University

Nov 11, 1998, Cornhusker Hotel, Lincoln, NE

8:30 Keynote Speaker: Karl Stauber, President, Northwest Area Foundation, Minneapolis "Agriculture and Communities -- Are They Still Related?"

9:15 Keynote Speaker: Natalie D. Hahn, Deputy Director, United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) "Fruit of the Spirit"

10:30 Structural Changes and Opportunities in Crop Agriculture, with Panelists:

Tom Larson, crop-livestock producer, St. Edwards, Nebraska

Jim Girardin, grain and seed producer and Arrow Seeds, Broken Bow, Nebraska

Rebecca Kruger, Innovative Grain Technologies, Lincoln, Nebraska

Dermot Coyne, George Holmes Professor of Horticulture, UNL

1:00 Structural Changes and Opportunities in Animal Agriculture, with Panelists:

Dan Hodges, pork producer, Julian, Nebraska
Alan Janzen, beef producer, Circle 5 Feedyard and Ranch, Henderson, Nebraska
Muriel Barrett, free-range chicken producer/processor, Sutherland, Nebraska
Terry Klopfenstein, Kermit Wagner Professor of Animal Science, UNL

2:30-4:00 Breakout discussions: The Role of the Land Grant University

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Approximately 125 persons attended this second symposium, of whom about 30% were UNL faculty and administrators, 25% were agricultural producers, 20% were stakeholders who did not identify their employment, 10% were representatives of organizations and interest groups, 8% were in agribusiness, and 5% were employed by other government agencies. Of these attendees, twenty six stakeholders remained at the end of the symposium to write down the priority program areas they had identified. These priorities have been grouped into similar categories that are summarized in Table 1. Table 2 lists the specific comments that stakeholders offered, grouped by priority area.

The most frequently identified priorities were to develop research and education programs that would **foster new products and production systems that would meet the needs of the market, and add value to products, especially those of small to moderate sized operations**. In addition many stakeholders suggested priority methods UNL might use in choosing among programs in the future, such as putting **more emphasis on**

social and human development relative to production and profitability, and **maintaining closer contact with constituents**.

The Food Systems in 2020 Action Team hopes that these insights and preferences will be useful to faculty and administrators at UNL and to stakeholders who work with them in continuing to shape the nature of the University's research, teaching and extension education programs.

Table 1. Summary of priorities identified by 27 stakeholders at the NN21 symposium, Nov. 11, 1998.

Priority	Number of times cited
Priorities related to both educational and research programs	
1. Foster new products/systems	2
1a. Products and education for niche markets - global, domestic, direct	7
1b. Foster diverse and integrated management systems	1
1c. Develop systems/programs for small/moderate sized farms and processors	7
1d. Foster on-farm value-added products	5
1f. Develop low-input/low-capital systems	4
2. More emphasis on social and human development, less on profitability	13
3. Maintain closer contact with people for research and extension planning	11
4. Analyze and educate regarding contracting and options alternatives	1
Priorities related to resident and extension education programs	

5. Teach more entrepreneurial/managerial skills	7
6. Teach marketing skills, including direct marketing	2
7. More international education	2
8. More education for young farmers	2
9. More education for aging farmers	1
10. More distance learning	2
11. Re-orient extension educators as facilitators, not prescribers	1
12. Educate on safety of biotechnology	1
13. Develop programs oriented toward selection of preferred futures	1
14. Establish more internships	1
Priorities related to research programs	
15. Foster more biodiversity	1
16. Study food safety regulations	1
17. Research the benefits of regulating monopolies	1

Table 2. Stakeholders' priority statements, by priority area as identified in Table 1

Priorities related to both educational and research programs
1. Foster new products/systems • more diverse and integrated management systems • encourage systems thinking 1a. Products and education for niche markets - global, domestic, direct o market access for small farmers - direct markets o research opportunities for specialty crops for niche markets o research to get more value added from present grains, processing them where produced o research on chemical protectants - pharmaceuticals, neutraceuticals 1b. Foster diverse and integrated management systems o provide variety of alternatives/systems for different size operations 1c. Develop systems/programs for small/moderate farms and processors o sell alternate livestock production systems, based on smaller size operations o research should be size neutral o enhance the competitiveness of moderate-size farming o develop research which impacts medium-sized meat processor 1d. Foster on-farm value-added products o support production for higher value markets - lean natural beef, etc. o more research in the area of value added processes 1f. Develop low-input/low-capital systems o more research on low capital, management intensive operations

- research on size-neutral lower investment management intensive systems

2. More emphasis on social and human development, less on profitability

- consider quality of life and social aspects of ag research and extension
- Stronger responsibility focusing on the actual "people", not just economic gain
- human development in rural areas, leadership development in all areas
- leadership and people issues are of more concern than production issues
- build networks and local support groups
- education and research that defines quality of life and moves toward improving it
- more research work on rural social issues, not just funding ag production research

3. Maintain closer contact with people for research and extension

- a process for researching farmers' needs
- consolidation and centralization isn't effective for extension - it removes access
- need communication link for stakeholders, to help develop correct research questions
- maintain a presence in each county
- listen to farmers and ranchers - build research programs around their needs

4. Research and educate regarding contracting and options alternatives

Priorities related to resident and extension education programs

5. Teach more entrepreneurial/managerial skills

- emphasis on farmers as entrepreneurs
- extension should train entrepreneurs and provide assistance in alternative marketing
- support for entrepreneurship, including beginning family farms and start-up businesses
- train entrepreneurs
- concentrate on small entrepreneurial economics rather

than production techniques

6. Teach marketing skills, including direct marketing

- more concentration on direct marketing
- provide education in marketing skills

7. More international education

- more international education of students
- provide more international focus- expanding knowledge and opening new market opportunities

8. More education for young farmers

- educate youth and young producers from community
- work with young farmers in the community

9. More education for aging farmers

10. More distance learning

- distance learning at the student's own pace
- run education on a channel of TV that is more accessible

11. Re-orient extension educators as facilitators, not prescribers

12. Educate on safety of biotechnology

13. Develop programs oriented toward selection of preferred futures

14. Establish more internships

Priorities related to research programs

15. Foster more biodiversity

16. Study food safety regulations

17. Research the benefits of regulating monopolies

Appendix 1. January, 1998, Symposium Program

The Food System for 2020: Nebraska's Opportunities

January 14, 1998

Cornhusker Hotel, Lincoln, NE

Nebraska Network-21 (NN21) is an initiative by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to refine and re-shape its role in meeting the learning, research and service needs of Nebraska in the 21st century. The needs of the food system, from the laboratory to the farm to the consumer, are a major focus of this effort. This symposium is a component of that effort, intended to provide perspectives on factors that will shape the food system of the future, and expert opinions about significant features of that system. Ultimately, the purpose of this symposium, and the follow-up conference scheduled for the fall of 1998, is to examine the needs of that system and to consider how UNL might be more effective in responding to them. We invite the participation of all who have an interest in these issues.

Program:

9:00 - **Dr. Alex McCalla**, Director of Rural Development for the World Bank, Washington, D.C. "Prospects for Food Security in the 21st Century. "

9:45 - **Dr. Pierre Crosson**, Senior Fellow at Resources for the Future, Washington, D.C. "The Natural Resource System and Food Production - Prospects for the Year 2020"

10:45 - **Robert (Bob) E. Smith**, Immediate Past President, Institute of Food Technologists "The Food Industry in 2020 "

11:30 - **Dr. Mike Duffy**, Associate Director for the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture - Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa "Agriculture Research: Where We Have Been and Where We are Going"

12:15 - Lunch - luncheon speaker:

> **Mr. Chuck Hassebrook**, University of Nebraska Regent and Program Director of the Center of Rural Affairs - Walthill, Nebraska "Research Strategies for Revitalizing Farm Communities: We Can Choose Our Future."

1:45 - Discussions and Response - Cecelia Grevson, chairperson

3:00 - adjourn