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IFT Oral Comments regarding FFAR Research & Strategies

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Hello,

I'm Anna Rosales, Senior Director of Government Affairs & Nutrition at the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT). IFT is a global organization of over 12,000 individual members that brings together scientific professionals from academia, industry, and government to apply the science of food to help solve the world's great food challenges. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input regarding the FFAR research program and strategies.

IFT commends FFAR on the broad portfolio of research of over 325 projects that has been funded since 2017 and the six challenge areas that were at the heart of this focus. Additionally, we are pleased with the response on research related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to assess how to improve the resiliency of the farm to fork supply chain to ensure the availability of a nutritious and safe food supply. IFT is also pleased to see the focus on nutrition within the Health-Agriculture Nexus and Next Generation Crops challenge areas.

Looking to the future, it is important for FFAR to recognize the scientific and technological challenges associated with the post farm gate portion of the food supply chain are substantial. As such, IFT would recommend FFAR further balance research grant awards to be more in line with the contributions of the post farm-gate supply chain contributions to U.S. society^{1,2}.

Additionally, major issues including food safety and quality across the supply chain, improved nutritional characteristics of food for consumer health, and the impact of climate change and other areas of food supply resiliency, particularly for the most vulnerable within the U.S. population, are areas that FFAR should urgently consider regarding new research investments going forward. Issues such as the FDA Closer to Zero program looking at toxic elements in the food supply, or the recent crisis around infant formulation availability, and the increased occurrence of microbial food safety recalls are just a few indicators of the challenges being faced.

Therefore, IFT recommends that FFAR consider two new FFAR Challenge Areas be added to the strategic program:

First, the arena of Food Safety and Resiliency, inclusive of climate change, but also incorporating various other resiliency concerns from human driven or natural causes, is a challenge area we highly recommend be added. There are numerous example territories of food safety that would benefit from additional research such as natural or human caused contaminants of a microbiological or chemical nature, re-use of processing water, pesticide and veterinary residues and the impact of nanoparticles within the food supply. The arena of antimicrobial resistance has both a safety and resiliency component, as does soil and water quality at both farm and within food manufacturing, distribution and sale.

Secondly, IFT recommends that FFAR consider a challenge area on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainability. Additional research on the human microbiome and the interaction



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of the food consumed within the intestinal system would be a beneficial contribution to the health and well being of the U.S. population and translate globally. Likewise, deeper understanding of the bioavailability of consumed nutrients across food components (e.g., proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals) can potentially unlock health improvements. Further research aimed at understanding the mechanisms around the growing degree of human food allergenicity globally can impact both safety and contribute to improved quality of life for U.S. consumers.

In conclusion, while IFT appreciates all efforts made by FFAR to improve the food system we encourage FFAR to seek balance in the pre and post farm-gate research portfolio and to take into account the two key challenge areas and the various research territories they entail within their ongoing prioritization strategy.

Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,

Anna Rosales
Senior Director Government Affairs & Nutrition
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References

1. The direct and indirect economic contributions of the farm to fork supply chain is responsible for over 25% of the U.S. GDP and employs over 14% of the working U.S. population. The portion of the supply chain downstream from the farm gate is more than half of the economic contribution. Feeding the Economy, 2019; Post farm-gate value contribution is 54% of total food and agriculture economic impact.
2. Downstream from farm gate activities employ the vast majority of food and agriculture workers. U.S. Department of Labor, 2019; 22.8 million people employed in food and agriculture, with 90.8% employed post farm-gate.