

## **Strategic Plan**

### **National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy**

The National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization based in Washington, D.C. It was founded in 1984 with a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for the purpose of conducting policy analysis and education on national issues related to food, agriculture, and rural America.

#### **Mission**

**The National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy fosters and conducts objective, non-advocacy research, analysis, and education to inform public policy on food, agriculture, natural resources, environmental quality, and rural economics.**

The National Center provides a unique public service by virtue of its location in Washington, D. C. and its access to national policy leaders, its networks with policy researchers, analysts and institutions throughout the country, and its demonstrated capacity to deliver timely analysis, targeted information and public education. The National Center does not duplicate or attempt to compete with existing research and educational institutions. Rather, it partners with a network of universities, federal agencies and other institutions to access the most appropriate data, analysis and expertise for the policy issues at hand, and molds the resulting information into products and services to inform policy stakeholders. Stakeholders are provided a balanced perspective on the likely outcomes of alternative policy approaches, including how gains and losses are distributed.

The National Center operates with a small core staff of highly respected professionals who are experienced in the policy process, and who have personal knowledge of the capacities of institutions and experts throughout the country to address a wide range of policy analysis and education needs. These professionals service the policy process by knowing how to package information and analysis to meet the unique needs of policy stakeholders and to inform the public.

The National Center conducts policy briefings, organizes policy conferences and workshops, and publishes easily accessible analyses of policy issues and is recognized by stakeholders as the link to the knowledge resources they need. It is noted for providing and fostering objective and comprehensive understanding of issues as opposed to advocacy information.

#### **Vision**

Agricultural, food, natural resource, environmental and rural policy issues today touch the lives of more people than ever before. Traditionally, the major issues in agricultural and rural policy have revolved around commodity production and have been of primary interest to farmers and their suppliers. Today, concerns with food safety and security, globalization and industry concentration in the food system, preservation of natural resources and environment, competitiveness in global markets, introduction of genetically modified plants and animals, rural poverty and inadequate health care in rural areas touch the interests of a wide array of consumers, taxpayers, business owners and other citizens. This widening constituency of food, agricultural, natural resource and rural policies is reflected in the growing number of interest groups “at the table” when related legislation is debated. In an ever-shrinking world where new technologies, faster communications, globalization, and new management systems foster dynamic, ever-changing food and natural resource systems, fresh thinking and new, comprehensive designs are needed to bring public policies in line with these new realities.

There is now an unprecedented window of opportunity to serve the public interest and the needs of policymakers and stakeholders by helping them to craft and explore new policy approaches and to understand the consequences of alternative courses of action, including all costs and benefits and how those are shared by various segments of business and society. The NCFAP is uniquely positioned to help meet these needs.

Thus the vision of the National Center is to lead in bringing fresh thinking and new ideas to the complex environment within which policies will be shaped to serve the present and future best interests of critical stakeholders.

### **Priority Thrust Areas (PTAs)**

The work of the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy encompasses six Priority Thrust Areas (PTAs) that are of major policy concern to the American public and to policymakers. Policy actions in these PTAs over the next decade will shape rural America and the food industry for generations to come.

The PTAs are intended to provide direction and focus for identifying projects, seeking expertise, securing funding, and tracking progress. They are not intended as restraints or boundaries should policy issues overlap two or more thrust areas. It is not assumed that NCFAP will have major projects in all thrust areas at all times. No order of priority is suggested by the order of listing. Priorities will be set out in the NCFAP Annual Work Plans.

1. PTA #1: Food and Health. Growing concerns are emerging about food safety, food consumption, diet and health, nutrition, and food security. Sample issues include: food traceability; food labeling; country-of-origin labeling; diet and nutrition and education; obesity and other health effects of food consumption; food safety and quality regulations; food trade standards and regulations; food and terrorism; and the economic structure and control of the food chain. Consumers are also increasingly concerned **with** animal welfare and the relation of food production and distribution systems and the environment.
2. PTA #2: Rural People, Communities, and Land. This area deals with policies that shape quality of life and economic opportunities for people in rural areas and remote places, including rural and small communities, issues related to the interaction of rural and urban communities, and the importance of “place” in differentiating communities as a basis for growth. Sample issues include: how to provide efficient, yet effective, health, medical, housing and social services to rural people; assessing the effectiveness of alternative human capital investments for providing economic opportunities to rural people; and efficient transportation, communication, community culture and other infrastructure for rural communities. Other issues revolve around conflicts and opportunities generated by the encroachment of urban growth onto rural space.
3. PTA #3: Environmental Quality and Natural Resources. Policies to protect **the natural** environment, preserve and enhance the natural resource base for meeting future needs and create economic opportunities for multiple beneficial uses of natural resources are becoming ever more critical. Sample issues include: how to manage water use and rights to meet projected needs of rural and urban people; development of commercial agriculture policies that

provide incentives for good stewardship of natural resources and protection of the environment; and zoning and land-use policies in urban fringe areas.

4. PTA #4: Commercial Agriculture and Trade. Traditional commodity, trade, and agricultural policies remain an area of policy interest. However, the scope and nature of these policies is changing with the increasingly well-understood linkages among food, health and environment. Sample issues include: understanding the implications of alternative income transfer policies; how to assure a competitive agriculture and food industry; how to develop U.S. policies that are fair to all global and domestic trade partners; and how to balance interests in free trade with concerns about preserving a domestic food production base and ideas of community-based food systems.
5. PTA #5: Food System Structure and Performance. Concentration, corporate control, globalization, and integration of the food system, and implications for all stakeholders, from farmers to consumers will be investigated. As well, the evolution from a commodity- to a product-agriculture and its implications for existing systems and policies will be studied. Sample issues include: corporate involvement in the policy-making process; concentration in food processing; community based food systems, market segmentation and differentiation of products, efficiencies and concerns with the integration of the food system; implications of food system changes for rural development; and implications of globalization and tighter coordination in the food system for food security, safety, and costs.
6. PTA #6: Science and Technology Policy. Policies and issues related to investments in food and agricultural science, education and technology and the implications of developments in science and technology will be the focus. Sample issues include: how to balance competitive and formula funding to get the most effective returns on investments in public agricultural/food research; how to manage and regulate biotechnology to achieve greatest social benefits while protecting health, safety, and the environment; implications of growing dependence on privately funded research; issues pertaining to intellectual property rights; and implications of technological change for changes in the structure of the food system and in rural opportunities.

### **Implementation Strategy**

The following actions constitute the National Center's ongoing strategy for carrying out its mission and realizing its vision.

1. Foster and produce the products and services that provide leadership in informing policy.
  - a. Applied research. Foster and produce new knowledge, data, and understanding of economic and other relationships pertaining to issues relevant to the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy's mission and to the needs of policy stakeholders.
  - b. Analysis and synthesis of existing knowledge. The National Center will continue to be a focal institution for interpreting and synthesizing past research findings, accepted theory and existing data, and knowledge to inform policy on issues germane to the needs of the times.
  - c. Education. The resources and knowledge from the preceding "a" and "b" are used to inform a wide range of policy stakeholders via a variety of media and approaches.

- d. Intermediation services. The National Center serves as a broker to link users of research, analysis, data, and education with the producers of these products and services. This service adds value by integrating and synthesizing reports and other materials produced by researchers and analysts and extending the results to interested policy stakeholders.
2. Assure continued capacity to produce and deliver high-quality products and services.
- a. Retain effective and visionary leadership. Provide financial and intellectual support that will motivate and retain a strong CEO, Board chair, Board members and senior staff to guide the National Center's programs, product and service delivery, and fund-raising.
  - b. Lead from a strong funding base. Assurance of adequate funding is essential to retaining leadership and to the successful operation of the National Center. The key to successful fund-raising is to continue to offer products and services that address public interests and those of funders while maintaining the integrity of the National Center mission. The funding strategy employs both "supply" and "demand" approaches - generating products, services, and expertise that can be marketed broadly and in more targeted ways, and responding to requests of stakeholders on a contract or reimbursable basis. In addition, the National Center seeks capacity-building and general support from public, private, and NGO institutions. The Board and CEO will work together to build an endowment, the annual earnings of which will be used as needed for overhead costs and program support.
  - c. Strengthen access to expertise. The National Center will continue to employ innovative approaches to attracting talented people to affiliate with the National Center by offering a Washington-based program that has global visibility and access to a wide range of policy stakeholders, thereby connecting producers of policy products and services to users (decision-makers and those who influence decision-makers).
3. Market the products, services, and expertise effectively.
- a. Exploit the Washington access to decision-makers and opinion-makers. Invite key parties to briefings on topical issues. Produce op-ed articles for key newspapers. Release reports that contain in-depth, yet understandable, analyses of key issues to key stakeholders. Maintain objectivity and a public interest perspective.
  - b. Develop and maintain a University Fellows program in which senior faculty of Land Grant and other universities will associate with the National Center. These fellows will provide research and writings for the National Center, provide counsel and insight, and expand awareness of the National Center and its work.
  - c. Develop marketing materials and talking points for use in interactions with potential users and funders of the National Center's products and services.