

USDA'S ROADMAP FOR PLANT BREEDING

Ann Marie Thro¹, Roy Scott², Mathieu Ngouajio¹, Ed Kaleikau¹, David Gwaze³, Randy Johnson³, Kelly Day-Rubenstein⁴, Paul Heisey⁴ and John Englert⁵

Plant breeding is critical for sustainable plant production for security, health, and quality of life. Contemporary attention to plant breeding is increasing for a number of reasons, including the importance of plant breeding for adapting to future circumstances; the development of a range of new enabling tools for plant breeding; and the value of plant breeding across scales and contexts, including both organic and conventional agriculture. In response, in 2013, USDA's Chief Scientist held a public Listening Session on Plant Breeding. Subsequently, USDA has developed a Plant Breeding Roadmap to align its forward vision for plant breeding with USDA's strategic goals. Both documents are now posted on the web page of the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) at <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=OCS>. Stakeholder comments to USDA included the value of USDA's work in genetic resources-- including conservation, characterization, distribution, and pre-breeding; the importance of the recruitment and education of future plant breeders in active breeding programs; and the value of the federal-state partnership and associated grower-groups partnerships. Additional needs expressed for USDA's work in plant breeding included public-sector plant varieties (cultivars) when /as needed for meeting national goals; translational work in the incorporation of biological research results in new breeding methods, tools and approaches, to address ever-more complex goals; and extramural funding programs both appropriate and adequate for long-term health of the robust federal/state model for public plant breeding in the United States. Some of the issues raised by stakeholders are broader than any single entity, including recruitment of young people; optimal understanding and use of intellectual property rights and tech transfer mechanisms; and fostering optimal public/private investment balance to ensure that all critical needs are addressed. This talk will invite questions and discussion regarding the USDA Plant Breeding Roadmap and possible next steps.

¹ National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA, Washington, D.C.

² Agricultural research Service, USDA, Beltsville, MD

³ USDA Forest Service, Washington D.C.

⁴ Economic Research Service, USDA, Washington D.C.

⁵ National Resources Conservation Service, USDA, Washington D.C.