Memo

April 3, 2020

To: William Hoffman, NIFA Project CAFÉ

From: Kenneth E. Olson Ph. D., PAS, FASS Science Policy Coordinator

Re: NIFA Service Delivery Input.

The FASS Science Policy Committee has discussed the USDA NIFA request for input on ways to improve service. On behalf of FASS and the American Dairy Science Association we share two concerns that were identified. They are really of an immediate nature rather than fitting the specific questions asked, but we want to share them with you. The following is a summarization of those concerns.

1. We would first note that we were generally pleased with the contact and responsiveness of USDA NIFA in the past. The reorganization undertaken by the administration in moving the NIFA offices out of the DC area is causing significant problems due to loss of staff and institutional knowledge. Problems are occurring relative to timelines for submitting proposals, the review of proposals that are submitted, receiving information on the status of proposals and initiating project that are approved. This makes it extremely difficult to manage projects and conduct the research that is planned and needed. It was not a problem in the past, but it is now.

2. Currently "stay at home" directives are necessary, but are bringing research to a halt. Animals need to be fed and cared for even when research cannot be done. Lab staff needs to be supported so that they will be available and hopefully can resume work on the research once the crisis is over. Are, or can, research projects be included in any of the funding bills that have recently passed congress? Much like any other small business the research projects have ongoing costs to maintain their infrastructure and staff so that research can resume after the crisis passes. We recognize that no cost extensions may be offered for projects, but that does not normally cover the added expenses incurred during the current shut down and puts completion of the projects at risk. These concerns are not limited to the animal or production side, but exist on the food side of as well. It is critical that staff, samples and equipment be maintained and available so that critical research can be resumed as quickly and seamlessly as possible.

Thank you. We hope that NIFA will soon again be able to provide the excellent service to the research community and the nation that they did in years past.