

## **ESCOP Social Sciences Subcommittee Report to ESCOP Science & Technology Committee**

March 27, 2008

Submitted by: Patricia Dyk, Chair ESCOP SSSC

Annual meeting – March 6-7, 2008, NASULGC, Washington, D.C. (See attached Agenda)

### Stakeholder input to CSREES

Concern appears to be identifying issues and trends influencing planning.

Solicited SSSC expertise to develop a better system to analyze the mountains of stakeholder input that they receive and order it in a meaningful way. The perception is they receive more good ideas than they can support. They have worked hard to focus some of their NRI and other competitive programs to be on a more finite set of high priority issues.

SSSC Ad-Hoc subcommittee will address:

What does CSREES really want from stakeholder input?

Stakeholder input analyzed – or just make sure we hit the next new thing

How can we be anticipatory and pre-emptive to anticipate problems and think them through?

### Proactive Science

Social science expertise is at the intersection of ethical, social, economic and technical issues. We have to approach with a new paradigm that is social science led verses an after-thought since the way the sciences fit into society has changed. There is a crisis in public perception of food and agriculture – bifurcation between large scale commodity production and those that are closer to the consumer in the food chain. Public concern focuses on not just what *can* we do (science) but what *should* we do (public perceptions.) Critics don't want to hear science, they are concerned about distributive consequences, who will win/lose and how will it affect me. This is a deep cultural issue that goes deeper than surveying for attitudes. There is a deep streak of agrarian romanticism that needs to be addressed.

Recommend changes in the way we approach ...

*Education* of folks in technical fields by training in social sciences

*Extension* – no longer just another publication, but recognizing different publics

*Research* – better incorporate the kinds of questions SSs ask into technical work

### Integrating the Social Sciences into broader agricultural disciplines and research agenda

What does “be there at the beginning” mean?

More than just including economic impact

Develop a list of what social science can do that can be added into RFPs of any sort

Support Social Science Academy in CSREES – social science approaches, language

### NRI input

SSSC impacted RFA's from logic models developed at 2007 meeting

Funding cycle – SSs still very concerned that both Rural Development and Markets & Trade are every other year. The tendency to micromanage and constantly tweak the program is a huge mistake and extremely problematic in that it assumes all research can be broken into predefined categories.

### Committee issues

Look forward to participation/advice of administrative advisor

Recognition and status for members to receive funding/DOE to participate

Particularly a challenge for human sciences and 1890's representatives

Website – updating information and accessibility (googling current site)

Next meeting tentatively scheduled for Feb 3 (1pm) – Feb 4 (5 pm), 2009