



**Comments of Betsy Booren, Ph.D., Director, Scientific Affairs
To the
President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology**

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Affiliation: American Meat Institute Foundation

Sources of Funding: No conflict

I am Dr. Betsy Booren, the Director of Scientific Affairs for the American Meat Institute Foundation. Originally, created in 1944, the Foundation is a non-profit research, education and information foundation established and funded by the American Meat Institute (AMI). Our Foundation has developed a reputation for proactive leadership in food safety and in others areas as well, like animal welfare, worker safety and nutrition.

Since 1999, the Foundation research program has directly sponsored more than 85 food safety research projects at leading universities and research labs. As a funding organization, the Foundation understands the challenges that face funding groups and the researchers seeking support. The monies available for research are shrinking and never more so in the area of agricultural research. In the last two decades funding for agriculture research has drastically declined with departments removing critical agriculture disciplines. This is disappointing as the need for agricultural research has never been greater.

Our Foundation primarily funds both basic meat and poultry food safety research and applied research and consumer education. Many times, these types of research begins in standard laboratory settings, but the parameters of such research are limited. To prevent foodborne illnesses, one must fully understand how microorganisms live and thrive in their animal host environment, how they may attach to raw agricultural products during processing, and how those microorganisms may infect a human host. By fully understanding this process, it allows for the development of: animal production practices that minimize initial colonization; antimicrobial interventions for use on-farm and during processing; packaging materials that preserve the product safely and for greater periods of time; and education programs. Education programs for ranchers, farmers, meat processors, workers, and even the consumer give the entire food chain the tools they need to produce and ultimately consume the safest food product possible. This type of research rarely garners sexy media headlines. It is timely, expensive and easily cut by universities and legislators.

Data suggest that our research and education efforts have contributed to the food safety progress reflected in government data. Pathogenic bacteria on fresh and ready-to-eat products are down dramatically and so, too, are foodborne illnesses caused by pathogens associated with some meat and poultry products.

We have demonstrated that this approach to research is a wise investment and believe it is a formula to create real change and real progress. The critical need for more agricultural research, particularly food safety research has been reiterated by the Foundation staff to the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Food Safety and

Inspection Service; and now to you; the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

The creation of the President's Food Safety Working Group and his involvement and subsequent signing of the FDA Modernization Act demonstrates this administration's commitment to the safety of our food supply.

But we will be unable to build on our progress and make our food supply even safer without additional funding for agricultural research. It is absolutely critical to have science-based research that will help meet the challenges that lay ahead in the future for the health of Americans.

Thank you for your consideration and we hope you see the merit of our request.