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**USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture Needs Stakeholder Input on Food, Agriculture Priorities**

WASHINGTON, [Sept. 15, 2017] – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is soliciting stakeholder input on the emerging needs and opportunities in food and agricultural sciences. Through this initiative, “NIFA Listens: Investing in Science to Transform Lives,” stakeholders are invited to provide input to help ensure the strategic positioning and relevancy of NIFA’s investments in advancing agricultural research, extension, and education.

“NIFA Listens: Investing in Science to Transform Lives” focuses on garnering answers to two questions from stakeholders: “What is your top priority in food and agricultural research, extension, or education that NIFA should address?” and “What are the most promising science opportunities for advancement of food and agricultural sciences?”

“Our aim is to get broad input from stakeholders across the food system, from producers to consumers, and scientists, institutions, and organizations,” said NIFA Director Sonny Ramaswamy. “Individual and group input is welcome through any and all of our outlined submission mechanisms to ensure that our mission-critical investments in the agricultural sciences are indeed user inspired.”

Four regional in-person listening sessions will be held:

* Thursday, Oct. 19, Kansas City, Missouri
* Thursday, Oct. 26, Atlanta, Georgia
* Thursday, Nov. 2, Sacramento, California
* Wednesday, Nov. 8, Hyattsville, Maryland

Each session is scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. and end no later than 5 p.m. The sessions will be webcast live, transcribed, and made available for playback. Session attendees must register via <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistens> by Thursday, Oct. 12. In addition, written comments may be provided electronically through <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistens> or NIFAlistens@nifa.usda.gov until Friday, Dec. 1. All submissions, regardless of the mode, are processed in the same manner.

“The goal is to ensure broad stakeholder engagement to further fuel the conversation on how to advance transformative science,” said Ramaswamy. “We look forward to hearing the inspiring thoughts and ideas this open dialogue will foster.”

Feedback gathered throughout the initiative will be evaluated, along with input from NIFA employees, in the context of NIFA’s current science emphasis areas, to identify gaps in current portfolios and potential investment opportunities.

To stay informed on “NIFA Listens: Investing in Science to Transform Lives,” visit <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistens> and [sign up](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDANIFA/subscriber/new?qsp=USDANIFA_2) for the NIFA Update, a weekly compendium of news and information that may be of interest to land-grant and non-land-grant universities, NIFA stakeholders, and other subscribers.

NIFA’s mission is to invest in and advance agricultural research, education, and extension to solve societal challenges. NIFA’s investments in transformative science directly support the long-term prosperity and global preeminence of U.S. agriculture. To learn more about NIFA’s impact on agricultural sciences, visit [www.nifa.usda.gov/Impacts](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/Impacts), [sign up for updates](http://bit.ly/NIFAsubscribe), and follow us on Twitter [@USDA\_NIFA](https://twitter.com/usda_nifa), [#NIFAImpacts](https://twitter.com/hashtag/NIFAimpacts?src=hash).

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