

December 10, 2009

Senator Ben Nelson
US Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

Dean Senator Nelson:

I am writing to reaffirm my support for the Biology Systems Research Facility to be constructed by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Nebraska Innovation Campus. Now more than ever agricultural research is critical to Nebraska and the Nation. The challenges facing us in food, fuel, and water are immense.

Thank you for your continuing leadership on agricultural and natural resource issues and more specifically for obtaining planning and initial construction funds for this needed research facility. I now ask for your continuing support in securing the remaining construction funds. Through your efforts the stage is now set to obtain the necessary appropriations needed to complete the facility.

This facility will facilitate work in two areas that are vital to the profitability and sustainability of crop production in Nebraska and surrounding high-plains states. One focus area is in the development of new crop species and varieties for the region. The second focus area is in crop management to maintain soil quality, conserve water, and provide ecosystem services from highly managed farm lands. All of this work will be done in close collaboration with UNL scientists in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) and utilizing UNL/IANR laboratory and field facilities.

The crop development work centers on grain crops and soybeans with a major emphasis on switchgrass as a cellulosic biofuel crop. A major emphasis in crop management work relates to residue management to provide biomass for fuel while maintaining soil quality. The interaction between ARS and IANR scientists will help put our recently hired young scientists into roles which will help to ensure their interest in staying in the state of Nebraska in widely beneficial roles into the future.

My understanding in talking with University of Nebraska officials is that ARS is pleased with the site selected for the ARS facility on UNL's Innovation Campus; and, now that the Board of Regents has approved the Master and Business Plans, ARS and University officials will move forward to complete the planning phase.

Agriculture is important to Nebraska. Therefore, research and education in support of that agriculture and related areas is important. Both are vital in keeping our farmers and ranchers competitive and leaders in today's global economy.

Thank you again for your leadership and continued support of Nebraska agriculture. These are exciting and challenging times and with many opportunities in front of us if we keep Nebraska and the Nation competitive in this ever-widening global world we live in.

Sincerely,



Bob Kremer
Chair: Nebraska 25 X 25 Steering Committee