

# **American Society of Animal Science Policy Statement**

## ***Ensuring Food Security through Research, Extension and Education***

### **Background**

The high food prices and food shortages that occurred in several countries during 2008 provide a sharp reminder of the fragility of the food security of the United States and the world. Our food production system has been remarkably successful in meeting food needs in the past, but the challenge continues. Food demand continues to grow rapidly, making it imperative that we substantially increase public funding for improvements in food production.

The current situation is:

- The world's human population continues to grow, and large numbers of people in developing countries are emerging from deep poverty and demanding improved diets; these factors will challenge the world's food production capacity during coming decades.
- To feed the people of the world sustainably, food producers must continue to increase the efficiency with which they use the earth's limited resources. That includes continued increases in efficiency of livestock production.
- Food reserves have dwindled during recent years; for example, the soybeans remaining at the end of the 2008-2009 crop year are projected to be only about 2 weeks' supply<sup>1</sup>.
- Large amounts of crops are now being diverted from the food chain to produce biofuels.
- Due to the historically productive research, extension and education infrastructure, the U.S. enjoys the safest and most abundant supply of food in the world, contributing to public health.
- Legitimate societal interest in animal well-being, food safety, food composition and environmental quality expands the scope of research needed.
- State funding for agricultural research has dropped substantially during recent decades, and research funding from USDA has not made up the loss<sup>2</sup>; the costs of research addressing issues of societal concern compete for already strained budgets for research on production efficiency, which is critical to sustainable production. At the same time, much research funding has been diverted from food production to biofuels production.
- Funding for research in livestock production is now especially important because of the increased consumption of animal products by people in developing countries, but such funding continues to lag behind the needs.

### **Policy**

***The American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) supports increased funding for research, extension and education related to food production in order to strengthen the food security of the United States and the world.***

### **Specific Policy Objectives**

- ASAS supports increased funding within the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture for the basic and applied research on food production necessary to sustainably meet the food needs of the world's population.
- ASAS supports increased funding for research on production of foods of animal origin, including research on production efficiency, animal well-being, food safety, food composition and environmental quality.

<sup>1</sup>World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates. ISSN: 1554-9089. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. June 10, 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Schimmelpfennig, David, and Paul Heisey. *U.S. Public Agricultural Research: Changes in Funding Sources and Shifts in Emphasis, 1980-2005*. EIB-45, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. March 2009.

Adopted July 11, 2009