

CCSF Lunch Summary – 20 August, 2008

Assessing climate change vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies for agriculture and water resources in New York

Attending:

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Among Cornell's strengths are the breadth of its faculty and the realization that many of today's energy, environmental and economic sustainability problems are complex with their solutions interwoven among many seemingly diverse disciplines. This is particularly true with issues focused on anticipating climate change impacts and formulating effective adaptation strategies. The focus of the lunchtime seminar was on what will hopefully be a seed project. Modest funds from the NY State Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA) were received by Susan Riha (EAS), David Wolfe (HORT), Rebecca Schneider (DNR), and Art DeGaetano (EAS), to assess climate change impacts and adaptations in the areas of water resources and agriculture. Discussion revolved around three general topics 1) engaging faculty from diverse disciplines, 2) state versus national versus international scope and 3) funding potential.

Although all agreed that the engagement of faculty from a range of diverse disciplines was crucial successfully responding to such research and outreach opportunities, it was unclear as to how this might be accomplished effectively. The idea was that teams for such projects needed to be in place to some degree *a priori* and not assembled at the last minute to assure that the necessary disciplines were represented in the proposal. In terms of climate issues, this was particularly true of social scientists particularly those representing the fields of economics and risk communications. ### from AEM agreed suggesting that to be effectively engaged, economists need to be included in the process very early on and not just consulted at the end of a project. Collectively the group agreed that the biggest hurdle to such interdisciplinary research was cost, as including multiple PIs from multiple departments with different research agendas quickly inflates a project budget.

In the short-term the group agreed to participate in workshops sponsored as part of the NYSERDA project. The NYSERDA team will keep the group apprised of these meetings. Likewise there was some discussion about the potential of convening a workshop focused on effective interdisciplinary research coordination. There are few groups out there that do this well in terms of climate, hopefully such a venue will lead us to learn from these groups successes.

For most participants limiting efforts to NY was perceived as being too narrow, rather discussion focused using NY as a test bed and developing methods that could be transported to other regions, adapted nationally or used internationally. The transfer of ideas and tools to underdeveloped countries was also a topic of discussion. In the end, establishing an international presence in the areas of climate impacts and adaptations was embraced by the attendees. This seemed like the best approach from an intellectual standpoint, in terms of attracting funds and also in promoting Cornell as the global land grant university.

A final “action item” identified by the group was to investigate the potential of foundation funding for research in climate adaptations. Likewise, it would be useful if the Center might provide a site or email notification of RFP from diverse fields that have climate change as a central link. These can be emailed to the group and hopefully foster early collaborations among the interested participants.