



Wilson displays a copy of A Science Roadmap for Agriculture: Seven Challenges to Meeting our Nation's Agricultural Goals.

By Eva Ann Dorris

The chapters in the history of American agriculture reveal a phenomenal success story. However, the most exciting chapters are yet to be written. Some of the nation's top research scientists believe there's even more potential for agriculture in what's ahead.

The scientists, an appointed task force of the Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESCOP), recently published a handbook entitled "A Science Roadmap for Agriculture: Seven Challenges to Meeting our Nation's Agricultural Goals."

The handbook is a result of brainstorming sessions among 24 scientists from throughout the nation who collectively have hundreds of years of experience in agricultural research. One member of the elite group responsible for the roadmap is Robert P. Wilson, MAFES professor of biochemistry and molecular biology.

The scientists believe the rapidly evolving world of science and agriculture calls for a new approach to defining needs and setting priorities for agricultural research and education. The roadmap outlines seven challenges identified by the task force as areas that must gain the attention of the scientific research community.

Wilson's involvement in the group was a natural complement to responsibilities he recently completed for the National Research Council's Board on Agriculture and Natural

SCIENCE ROADMAP

Charts Agriculture's Future

Resources and to his more than 30-year career as an agricultural educator and researcher.

"Agriculture has been a success story, but where do we go from here?" Wilson asked. "We've improved the production and management side of agriculture. We've improved genetics. And now we have to use the new biotechnology to produce more or perhaps produce specialty or niche crops.

"I don't think anyone would question that the products we are producing are the best in the world, but we have to figure out how to be sure farmers are rewarded for doing that."

Wilson said the roadmap identifies the type of future research and manpower that will be needed 10 to 15 years from now.

The seven challenges identified by the scientists include developing new and more competitive crop products and new uses for diverse crops; developing new products and new uses for animals; reducing the risks of local and global climatic change on food, fiber, and fuel production; providing the information and knowledge needed to further improve environmental stewardship; improving economic returns to the producer; strengthening families and communities; and ensuring food safety and health throughout the food production chain.

The task force projects the national agricultural research system will need significant new resources — almost \$6 billion in new funding — if the roadmap is to provide its intended direction. The funding could be provided from a variety of sources, but Wilson said the majority will come from the government through increased federal investment in the land-grant university system.

The publication, prepared by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and ESCOP, is being distributed to assist decision makers and advocates as they plan for future program areas for the research and education system. Copies of the report are available upon request from NERA@umail.umd.edu.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

August 14, 2002

Cotton Field Day,
Delta R&E Center, Stoneville

August 15, 2002

Rice and Soybean Field Day,
Delta R&E Center, Stoneville

September 28, 2002

North Miss. Garden Expo,
North Miss. R&E Center, Verona

October 18-19, 2002

Fall Flower & Garden Festival,
Truck Crops Branch,
Crystal Springs

November 21, 2002

MSU-MAFES
Annual Production Sale, MSU