

Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research Awards \$5 Million to Launch Public-Private Effort to Address Water Scarcity with Irrigation Innovation

University Researchers and Industry Leaders will Pool Resources to Advance Irrigation Technology Development and Transfer

DENVER, April 27, 2018– The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR), a nonprofit organization established through bipartisan congressional support in the 2014 Farm Bill, today awarded a \$5 million grant to launch the Irrigation Innovation Consortium, a collaborative research effort to accelerate the development and adoption of water and energy efficient irrigation technologies and practices through public-private partnerships. The \$5 million FFAR grant was matched by initial participants for a total initial investment of \$10 million to support research and collaboration costs over five years.

The Consortium is composed of the following initial founding members:

- California State University, Fresno
- Colorado State University
- Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska (DWFI)
- Irrigation Association (IA)
- Jain Irrigation
- Kansas State Research and Extension, Kansas State University
- Lindsay Corporation
- Northern Water
- Rubicon Water
- Texas A&M AgriLife Research

Public sector researchers and industry partners will co-develop, test, prototype and improve innovations, equipment, technology and decision and information systems designed to equip “farms of the future,” with cutting edge technologies and optimization strategies to enhance irrigation efficiency. Initial research priorities include water and energy efficiency, remote sensing and big data applications for improving water management, irrigation technology acceleration and technology transfer.

“The new Irrigation Innovation Consortium unites top university research talent with industry to promote practical advancements in irrigation technology and water management practices,” said Sally Rockey, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research. “We are optimistic that outcomes from this collaborative effort will help producers grow more food with smart water management and strengthen the resilience of our food supply.”

Initial participants are working to create a platform for other universities, federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service, and the private sector to work together on the critical water challenges facing agriculture, municipalities and industry. The goal is to create an internationally recognized, self-sustaining center of excellence that promotes and enhances water and energy efficiency in irrigation, ultimately creating greater resiliency in food and irrigated landscape systems.

“The IA thanks FFAR and the university partners for their leadership in the creation of the new Irrigation Innovation Consortium,” said IA’s CEO Deborah M. Hamlin, CAE, FASAE. “We are confident that the research stemming from this collaborative effort will drive new advancements in efficient irrigation and keep the irrigation industry at the forefront of innovation.”

Specific research priorities will be determined by an executive committee, with representation from FFAR and academic and industry consortium participants. Irrigation industry involvement will help accelerate research and development for rapid application in the field.

“We are excited to be a leading partner on this important endeavor,” said Peter G. McCornick, executive director of DWFI. “Each partner brings their strengths to benefit the research to improve agricultural production through effective water use. Our institute’s experience in water management practices and remote sensing technology, as well as connections to 100 faculty fellows within the University of Nebraska system will play a vital role in the project.”

Knowledge gained will be shared publicly through publications, workshops and seminars, and appropriate data-sharing mechanisms.

Plans for the consortium began at a FFAR-hosted convening event held at the Daugherty Water for Food Institute’s Global Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska in April 2017. Approximately 25 representatives of private companies participated in the discussion, which helped shape the initial research focus of the consortium.

Organizations interested in joining the Irrigation Innovation Consortium are invited to contact Stephen Smith, Ph.D., executive director of the Irrigation Innovation Consortium and FFAR advisory council member: swwsmith@buenavidafarm.com.

The Irrigation Innovation Consortium is being formally launched today at the Water in the West Symposium hosted by Colorado State University.

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About the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research

The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization established by bipartisan Congressional support in the 2014 Farm Bill, builds unique partnerships to support innovative and actionable science addressing today's food and agriculture challenges. FFAR leverages public and private resources to increase the scientific and technological research, innovation, and partnerships critical to enhancing sustainable production of nutritious food for a growing global population. The FFAR Board of Directors is chaired by Mississippi State University President Mark Keenum, Ph.D., and includes *ex officio* representation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Science Foundation.

Learn more: www.foundationfar.org | <http://bit.ly/FFARenews> **Connect:** [@FoundationFAR](https://twitter.com/FoundationFAR) | [@RockTalking](https://twitter.com/RockTalking).

About the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska

The Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska (DWFI) was founded in 2010 to address the global challenge of achieving food security with less stress on water resources through improved water management in agricultural and food systems. We are committed to ensuring a water and food secure world while maintaining the use of water for other vital human and environmental needs.

The DWFI is one of four interdisciplinary, University-wide institutes at the University of Nebraska, leveraging talent and research-based expertise from across the four campus system to focus on complex state, national and global challenges.

Learn more at waterforfood.nebraska.edu/.