



May 16, 2018

Dear Potato Research Community:

Since 2016, state and national potato grower associations in the United States have been working together to increase potato research funding with the ultimate goal of strengthening the U.S. potato industry. Most of this coordinated work has been conducted through the Potato Research Advisory Committee (PRAC) and has taken the form of overwhelming industry support for selected research projects.

On April 26, representatives from the potato research community, including the Potato Association of America, growers and association leaders gathered in Denver, Colorado to participate in a Potato Research Roundtable. The purpose of the roundtable meeting was to evaluate the relationship of the potato research community with PRAC and to explore areas of improvement of process for the mutual benefit of the grower and researcher communities.

The perspectives of the 26 participants were as unique as the individuals who shared them. Even still, there were areas of agreement. For example, the value of strategic industry support for relevant potato research projects grounded in strong science was universally understood.

The mechanism for establishing where and how to direct industry support for maximum benefit is not in its final form and may not be for some time, but there were initial steps that were identified that are being taken to put us all on the right path toward realizing that goal.

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The first step is to establish national potato research priorities and, more importantly, share those priorities as widely as possible within the potato research community. In February, we surveyed members of PRAC to identify the top three research topics that require our attention and resources at the present time. Rather than picking a single priority as we have in recent years, we tabulated the priority issues and discovered that they fell into five broad categories: 1. Disease, 2. Crop Management, 3. Soil Health, 4. Sustainability, and 5. Technology Development. Specific items within the categories can be found on the accompanying "2018 Potato Research Priorities" document. We will endeavor to use all the communication tools at our disposal to circulate this message



and list of research priorities to the potato research community, partnering with the Potato Association of America, state potato organizations, and others. If you are reading this message, we ask that you also take the time to circulate or share it with those who can help get the message out.

Second, we believe it is important to unleash the creativity, and yes, even promote the competitive spirit within the potato research community as we seek to address some of the most pressing potato research issues whether they are soil-borne necrotic viruses or water quality and availability. This inclusive approach requires additional time for research concepts to be evaluated for strength of science and industry relevance. With that in mind and in collaboration with our researcher partners at the roundtable, the first deadline for requests from researchers seeking industry support for his/her potato research project has been set for July 15, 2018. Abiding by this deadline will position the industry to provide strategic support for research proposals with application deadlines in the fall of 2018. Going forward, it is likely that a quarterly deadline system will be implemented for industry support requests for potato research proposals. To be clear: Choosing not to request industry support does not preclude a researcher from competing for funding. It is at the total discretion of the researcher to seek coordinated industry support that PRAC can provide. And to make the process fair and comprehensive, an earlier deadline was established.

The third step identified was to create a standardized industry support request form. The form also accompanies this message. In recognition of the equally important need for strong science and industry relevance, there are two elements to the request form. The first page requests information of interest to industry representatives. The information sought on the second page will allow for an appropriate scientific evaluation. We will be relying on individuals within the research community and unburdened by conflicts of interest to evaluate the research proposals on the merits of science, while PRAC will continue to evaluate the proposals according to industry relevance.

The collaborative approach that we took in Denver last month is a truly new and exciting direction with significant potential for the future strength of the industry. We believe these initial improvements to the process of identifying and addressing relevant research needs within the potato industry are long overdue and appreciate your help in spreading the word.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan J. Krabill', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ryan J. Krabill  
Director of Research  
Potatoes USA