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To: Congressman Collin Peterson (Matt Forbes)

Date: February 2, 2010

From: Beth Nelson

Re: ARS Funding Request

We are requesting your assistance in securing ARS funding for our plant breeder project.

**Amount of Request: \$529,630.** Our total annual ARS appropriations in the past have been: \$303,000 in FY10; \$303,000 in FY09; \$324,740 in FY08; \$324,740 in FY07; \$324,740 in FY06; \$297,500 in FY05 & FY04; \$290,000 in FY03 & 02; \$250,000 in FY01; 00 & 99; \$147,000 in FY98; \$150,000 in FY97, 96, 95 and 94. By ramping up to \$529,630, we will be able to lend stability to a temporary post doc position which has been created specifically to work on pathology issues, allowing us to more effectively explore disease resistance and wild rice diseases which evidence suggests are having a significant drag on yield.

**Benefits.** 1) The most shatter-resistant variety has been developed through this program. Another new variety was released recently which offered some relief from disease pressure (continues to be a major priority). We expect another release soon which offers even more shatter-resistance. 2) Work continues with USDA's National Seed Storage Lab in a collaborative effort to improve the reliability of seed storage (currently there is no long-term seed storage method available). 3) Great strides have been made in identifying molecular markers. 4) Methods are being improved for field-testing for disease resistance. 5) From a marketing standpoint, wild rice benefits the thousands of U.S. white rice producers by adding value to their product through enhanced marketing in wild/white rice blends.

**Matching Funds.** Although we are a small industry, we do not expect the federal funding to carry our project without any industry and/or University input. This breeding project acts as the "hub" of all of our wild rice research. Between our cash contributions and other outside funding mechanisms, our industry, in conjunction with the University of Minnesota, puts another \$120,000+ towards this research. Additionally, as mentioned above, the Council has made a two year commitment of \$155,000 to add a post doc to this project to address pathology issues associated with wild rice diseases. The University of Minnesota also has a number of scientists who work on our wild rice research project in coordination with the plant breeder. The "dollar" commitment for these additional scientists is above and beyond the \$250,000 referenced above.

**National Impact.** Since wild rice is our only cereal grain native to North America, its germplasm retention is of national concern. Currently there is no seed storage of natural wild rice because there is no established means of storing the seed in a dry state. There are already wild rice species on the endangered species list. Since wild rice is the only cereal grain native to North America, it would be a shame to lose this natural resource.

**Objectives.** 1) Yield increases through shatter resistance and plant productivity. 2) Yield increases through disease management and disease resistance. 3) Germplasm preservation and seed storage. 4) Molecular genetics research.

We would appreciate your inclusion of this request on your ag appropriations wish list. This project is critical to the long-term health of the wild rice industry in Minnesota. If you have any questions, please call me at 1-800-235-8906. *Thanks for your help!*

cc: Travis Talvitie (*Klobuchar*); Bidisha Bhattacharyya (*Franken*)