

INTRODUCTION

During 1999 and 2000, the Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) National Program Staff worked hard at defining ARS's *National Programs*. These *National Programs* define the research agenda for the agency and relate these research activities to the nation's needs. These are further divided into components and within these components, into more well defined research thrusts. Each of our research programs can be related to these research thrusts and thus to the overall *National Program* and to the needs of the general public. Our research staff has been actively involved in the development of these *National Programs* to assure that our research program and our client's needs are well represented. In the future, our research program will be judged based on how well we fulfill the objectives of the associated *National Program*. Our research program is diverse and is included in several ARS *National Programs*, namely:

- 108 - Food Safety
- 201 - Water Quality and Management
- 204 - Global Change
- 207 - Integrated Farming Systems
- 301 - Plant, Microbial, and Insect Genetic Resources, Genomics, and Genetic Improvement

At the end of 1999, Susan Moran left the laboratory to become Research Leader for the Southwest Watershed Research Laboratory, Tucson, Arizona. We will miss Susan's contribution to the laboratory, but expect to continue cooperation with her in the future. Susan, we wish you well in your new position. During 2000, Robert LaMorte resigned from the lab to pursue other opportunities. We wish him well in his new adventure.

For FY2000, we received additional funds for research on food safety. These new funds will be used to study the use of municipal and animal waste for irrigation, and the associated potential degradation in groundwater quality. Microbiologist Norma Duran was hired to conduct this research. She came on board in October 2000. Welcome Norma!

Water conservation is an immense challenge. It is so broad and so critical to society both here and abroad that the opportunities for positively impacting both science and practice are almost limitless. With our present funding and staff, we are able to tackle only a few aspects of this problem. However, the laboratory should be proud of its long history of producing meaningful and useful research results. Our job is to identify those areas of research that are most critical to the long-term sustainability and enhancement of modern society. While water is a renewable natural resource, it is also a limited one, and one upon which the entire planet depends for its survival.

In the last century, once abundant water resources have become over-allocated by an ever growing population. We can only imagine the critical water problems we will face if this trend continues for another century. But whatever that scenario, science will play a key role in helping society find the appropriate balance between the environment and human needs. That is our challenge.

Bert Clemmens
Director