February 7, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture
Unites States Senate

Dear Senator Harkin:

As the Farm Bill makes its way through conference procedures, I write to respectfully request you consider the following recommendations critical to agricultural and medical research, on behalf of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), our 21 scientific societies, and their more than 80,000 members.

**Adopt the Senate-passed language creating a National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and ensure competitive grant programs are funded.** FASEB strongly believes that greater investment in basic and applied agricultural research is essential, as the demand for a safer and more nutritious food supply continues to increase. NIFA presents an unparalleled opportunity to enhance our system of supporting high quality, fundamental research, allowing advancement of current knowledge, and bolstering the superiority of American agriculture. However, in order to ensure success of such an endeavor, NIFA must be fully funded, in contrast to the current trend of underfunding that has plagued current agricultural research programs. The Senate proposal (Title VII, Subtitle E, of H.R. 2419 as passed by the Senate) provides an organizational and leadership structure that would foster a culture of scientific eminence and innovation in agriculture that will be of great benefit to our nation.

**Remove language, harmful to medical research, eliminating Class B animal dealers.** Similar language in both the House and Senate versions of the Farm Bill (House Section 11317 and Senate Section 11079) could have broad and unintended consequences for medical research, as well as adding burdensome regulations to pounds that supply animals, destined to be euthanized, for research purposes. In both the Senate and the House, the provision was added without a vote or any opportunity for debate. Class B dealers, who supply non-purpose bred dogs and cats for research and education, are already required to obtain animals legally and treat them humanely under the Animal Welfare Act. Moreover, ongoing research projects in cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, and digestive disorders, to name but a few, would be halted or severely delayed without any improvement in animal welfare if this provision becomes law. The Senate Appropriations committee has already passed a directive instructing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to commission an independent study to examine the use of non-purpose bred dogs and cats supplied by Class B dealers in medical research, which would provide data about the impact of maintaining or phasing out the use of these animals. FASEB supports this study and believes Congress should not enact a plan to eliminate Class B dealers without this information.

FASEB wishes to thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these issues. If you would like additional information or have any questions, please contact Carrie Wolinetz, Ph.D., FASEB Director of Scientific Affairs and Public Relations at cwolinetz@fas eb.org or (301) 634-7650.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Palazzo, Ph.D.
FASEB President