

CAST is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization composed of 38 scientific societies and many individual, student, company, nonprofit, and associate society members. CAST's Board of Directors is composed of 38 representatives of the scientific societies and an 8-member Executive Committee. CAST was established in 1972 as a result of a 1970 meeting sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council.

The primary work of CAST is the publication of task force reports, issue papers, and commentaries written by scientists from many disciplines. The CAST Board of Directors is responsible for the policies and procedures followed in developing, publishing, and disseminating the documents produced. These publications and their distribution are fundamental activities that accomplish CAST's mission to assemble, interpret, and communicate credible science-based information regionally, nationally, and internationally to legislators, regulators, policymakers, the media, the private sector, and the public. The wide distribution of CAST publications to nonscientists enhances the education and understanding of the general public. Recent publications include an issue paper titled *Probiotics: Their Potential to Impact Human Health*; a special publication and a commentary on *Avian Influenza Vaccination*; and two commentaries on biofuels: *Biofuel Feedstocks: The Risk of Future Invasions* and *Convergence of Agriculture and Energy: II. Producing Cellulosic Biomass for Biofuels*.

CAST publications often focus on issues regarding plants, soils, plant protection, and the environment, prepared by experts in the areas of plant pathology, entomology, weed science, and nematology. In addition, CAST addresses issues of biotechnology, animal science, and food safety and security, with inputs from economists, social scientists, toxicologists, and legal experts. The research, education, and extension priorities ranked most important by members of the CAST Board of Directors follow.

Plant Protection Sciences:

- Support the continuation of grant programs such as the integrated program, i.e., proposals that go from discovery to implementation.
- Support grant programs focused on food and agricultural systems with smaller carbon footprints.
- Support programs to study pest problems that will accompany changing cropping systems as we move to a bioeconomy.
- Support Graduate Fellowships in the integrated grants program to help train the next generation of Applied Agricultural scientists.
- Support increases in competitive grant funding for agricultural research.

Plant, Soil, and Environmental Sciences:

- Fund and initiate (Long-Term Agricultural Research LTAR) farm-scale agroecosystem studies to evaluate long-term (30-yr scale) impacts of management on the numerous interrelated ecosystems upon which our food, fiber, and fuel needs are met. Similar studies are needed for each of the major agro systems (i.e., Great Plains, Midwest, Southeast).