



**NOV 27 2012**

**United States Department of Agriculture**

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear G-8 Agricultural Chief Scientists,

I am writing to follow-up on our meeting held on the margins of the G-20 Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists (MACS) on September 24. First, I would like to express regret for not contacting you sooner and assure you that we have not lost focus on planning the G-8 Open Data Conference for Agriculture. We have been in contact with the United Kingdom, who as you know will have the G-8 Presidency in 2013, and are working closely with them to ensure that planning for the conference continues during the transition of the Presidency.

With regard to next steps, as we discussed at our meeting in Guadalajara, we would like to proceed with planning meetings. In interest of time we will hold a series of teleconferences rather than an in-person meeting. These teleconferences will focus on the following: tentative date and location; establishing conference focus/goals/outcomes; developing an agenda along with key questions that will need to be answered by the conclusion of the conference in order to obtain goals/outcomes; and, the invitation list/target audience.

The first teleconference will be Tuesday, December 4, 6:00-8:00a.m. EST, 11:00a.m.-1:00p.m. GMT. Additional details will be sent out prior to the call.

In order to proceed with planning, we ask that you identify points of contact from each of your countries. We realize and are encouraged by the fact that there may be multiple areas of your governments (e.g. agriculture and development) that are involved with this effort; however, for international coordination and planning purposes we would ask that your external points of contact be limited to the following:

Policy Lead: an executive with policy decision making authority, preferably your lead agricultural chief scientist

Conference Lead: an upper level executive with responsibility as the overall coordinator of your participation in the conference. This individual would coordinate between your policy and technical leads and ensure effective and efficient coordination of your participation in the conference.

Technical Lead: an upper/mid-level executive with deep technical knowledge as related to the overall open data initiative and knowledge of your publicly available agricultural research and development data

Please provide a name and contact information for the policy, conference, and technical leads respectively by **November 30, 2012** to [jaime.adams@usda.gov](mailto:jaime.adams@usda.gov). All of the points of contact are welcome to participate in the teleconference scheduled for December 4.

As we begin to prepare for the planning teleconferences, I would like to propose a key outcome for our work. I believe we should consider delivering a plan of action as the outcome. This plan of action would serve two purposes. First, it would identify the data sets that are critical to addressing the food security challenges we face and that we would work to make available to African countries as well as globally. Second, the plan would identify data systems that already exist and pilot projects that we would recommend to be undertaken to make existing and future data widely available. It is critical to bring these two communities together, the data creators and data storage providers if you will, as in many cases they are operating simultaneously toward the same goal but not in coordination. As we discussed in Guadalajara, in an environment of limited resource availability, enhanced access to data of importance to agricultural science is critical for providing sustainable intensification of agricultural productivity. I wanted to share this idea with you now and look forward to discussing further on our first planning teleconference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Woteki". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Catherine Woteki, Ph.D.

Under Secretary and Chief Scientist  
Research, Education, and Economics

Attachment - Final Summary of Conclusions from meeting held on September 24

## G-8 Open Data Meeting - September 24, 2012

### Summary of Conclusions

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#### Meeting Attendees:

**Dr. Cathie Woteki**, Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics, USDA  
**Dr. Simon Liu**, Director, National Agricultural Library, USDA  
**Ms. Jaime Adams**, Senior Advisor, Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA  
**Mr. Franz Hochstrasser**, Confidential Assistant, Research, Education and Economics, USDA  
**Professor Tim Benton**, UK Champion for Global Food Security, United Kingdom  
**Mr. Nikiforos Sivenas**, Principal Adviser, DG of Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission  
**Dr. Masaru Iwanaga**, Japanese International Research Center for Agriculture Scientists, Japan (as observer)  
**Mr. Bob Turnock**, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
**Dr. Richard (Rick) Butts**, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
**Dr. Chistian Grugel**, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Germany  
**Mr. Stefan Lange**, Thünen Institute – Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries, Germany  
**Mr. Martin Nissen**, German Embassy in Mexico D.F., Germany  
*Unable to attend: Italy, France and Russia*

#### Background:

At the 2012 G-8 Summit leaders committed to the *New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition*, the next phase of our shared commitment to achieving global food security. As part of this commitment G-8 countries agreed to “Share relevant agricultural data available from G-8 countries with African partners and **convene an international conference on Open Data for Agriculture**, to develop options for the establishment of a global platform to make reliable agricultural and related information available to African farmers, researchers and policymakers, taking into account existing agricultural data systems”.

#### Statement of Conclusions:

On September 24, 2012, representatives from the G-8 countries met on the margins of the first G-20 Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists (MACS) in Guadalajara, Mexico to discuss how to move forward on the International Open Data Conference for Agriculture commitment. There was consensus that:

- G-8 Agricultural Chief Scientists should convene an international conference on open data for agriculture in 2013. The G-8 agricultural chief scientists should organize a planning committee to plan the conference and establish the conference agenda, programs, and goals. Due to several scheduled meetings for the remaining time in 2012, coupled with upcoming holidays, there would not be enough time to adequately plan and convene the conference in 2012. The planning committee should convene a meeting in December 2012. The United States agreed to coordinate and convene the planning meeting.
- The G-8 chief scientists should explore options for establishing a pilot to make genetic and genomics data openly available. The pilot should integrate genetics and genomics data with geo-spatial, agro-ecological, weather, and other relevant data to make practical and useful information available to African farmers, researchers, and policymakers. Innovations in the pilot can lead to solutions to address long term partnerships for food security, driven in large part by the availability of massive amounts of genetic, genomic and environmental data. While this creates unparalleled opportunities, it also presents major challenges for the pilot project in areas of data management, integration, analysis, and discovery.
- The pilot should adopt and encourage the development of a common vocabulary and open standards to facilitate data integration, create an open platform to enable collaborative development of software tools for data analysis, visualization, predictive modeling, and discovery.
- This high level summary was prepared Monday, September 24, 2012 and distributed to attendees for review/approval.