October 25, 2018

Auburn University, 107 Comer Hall, Auburn University, AL, 36840 USA

National Taiwan Ocean University, 2 Pei-Ning Road, Keelung 20224, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

Shanghai Academy of Agricultural Sciences, 1000 Jinqi road, Shanghai, China 201403

Shanghai Ocean University, No.999, Huchenghuan Rd, Nanhui New City, Shanghai, China 201306

University of Maryland, 1116 Symons Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

Re:  Global Food System Research Consortium Joint Letter of Intent

Dear Colleagues,

Recognizing the need for greater international collaboration in agricultural research, education and service, faculty from our institutions have met regularly to present ongoing research findings and to form new collaborations in areas of mutual interest, including in the areas of food safety, trade and food security.

These activities have been fruitful, and in light of our collective desire to expand and formalize these collaborations, we are setting forth our understanding and intent regarding a proposed framework for continued cooperation. At the same time, we are seeking acknowledgement of mutual intent to begin structuring our cooperation as a formal academic consortium.

While we are requesting your signature below to acknowledge your shared intent to proceed as discussed, this letter is not intended to serve as a contract and will not bind any party, including the University of Georgia, to take any action or commit funds for any purpose whatsoever. Until such time as a formal agreement is executed, all actions contemplated below are to be undertaken on a volunteer basis, subject to each institution’s individual approval process and funding availability, and are acknowledged to be undertaken without reliance on any representations made in this letter.
Continuation of Conference

Over the next six years, each of the undersigned institutions intends to host one mini-conference, of at least two days’ duration, for which it will provide conference facilities and cover the cost of food and lodging for up to five (5) faculty from each of the other participating institutions. The cost of airfare and ground transport for faculty will remain the responsibility of each participating institution.

The continued purpose of each annual mini-conference shall be the encouragement of continued research collaboration among the undersigned institutions. The topic and date of each year’s mini-conference will be chosen by the host institution following consultations with the other institutions, which consultation shall take place as a formal agenda item at the previous year’s steering committee meeting during the annual conference. Following each conference, abstracts and presentations will be circulated to all of the undersigned institutions.

Subject to additional discussion, it is the current intent of the undersigned institutions to host future conferences during October of each year in the following order:

- 2018 – Shanghai Academy of Agricultural Sciences
- 2019 – Auburn University
- 2020 – National Taiwan Ocean University
- 2021 - University of Georgia
- 2022 - Shanghai Ocean University
- 2023 - University of Maryland

Global Food Systems Research Consortium (GFSRC)

Beginning with the 2018 conference, and concluding with the 2019 conference, the undersigned institutions intend to discuss and formalize the terms of an academic consortium with the following purposes, among others: (a) continuation of the annual conference; (b) development of additional collaborations among the members in the areas of food systems research, education and training leading to joint publications, joint grant proposals, additional conference and workshop presentations, and the exchange of scholars and students.

The consortium will be given a working title of the “Global Food Systems Research Consortium”, and is intended to be memorialized through a formal agreement developed by the institutions. The consortium agreement will cover activities and expected outcomes, financial support, governance, disposition of intellectual property and accession of new members.

The constitution of the consortium, and the terms of the agreement formalizing it, shall be agreed by unanimous consent of the institutions, and no institution shall incur any obligation to any other until such time as the consortium agreement is fully executed.

Interim Steering Committee and Accession of New Members

During the period prior to the execution of the consortium agreement, the undersigned institutions will manage the annual mini-conference and organize consortium discussions through a steering committee. Each institution intends to appoint at least one representative to the committee, which will be chaired by the conference hosting institution and co-chaired by the University of Georgia on an interim basis. Upon execution of a formal consortium agreement, it is anticipated that the steering committee structure will continue, with the participating institutions rotating as chair and co-chair.
It is intended that new institutional members will be allowed to participate in the informal collaboration contemplated in this letter, and will be permitted to accede to the academic consortium when formalized, by unanimous consent of the members of the steering committee. Communication with respect to the collaboration contemplated herein should be directed to members of the steering committee.

The initial steering committee membership, and email contacts for the members, is as follows:

Auburn University (AU): Henry Fadamiro, Associate Dean for Research, fadamhy@auburn.edu, +1 334-844-8727
National Taiwan Ocean University (NTOU), Zwe-Ling Kong, Chair of Department of Food Science, kongzl@mail.ntou.edu.tw, +886-2-24622192 ext 5123
Shanghai Academy of Agricultural Sciences (SAAS), Song Wei-guo, Deputy Director, Institute of Agro-food Standards and Testing Technologies, sunvegous@hotmail.com, 086(21)62202796
Shanghai Ocean University (SHOU), Jing Xie, Dean, College of Food Science and Technology, jxie@shou.edu.cn, 021-61900364.

University of Georgia (UGA), Amrit Bari, Assistant Dean and Director of Global Programs, abart@uga.edu, +1 706 714 0800
University of Maryland (UMD), Cheng-i Wei, Director of International Programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, wei@umd.edu, +1 301-405-1530

Provided the foregoing is consistent with your current collaborative intent, please countersign this letter below. Signatures will be compiled and a fully signed copy will be circulated to all participating institutions. We are excited about the start of this new phase in our cooperation and look forward to the opportunity to work with each of you.

Very truly yours

Sam Pardue, Dean & Director
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
University of Georgia

Paul Patterson, Dean, College of Agriculture, Auburn University

10/25/2018
Ching-Fong CHANG, President, National Taiwan Ocean University

Youming CAI, President, Shanghai Agricultural Academy of Science

Yu-Dong CHENG, President, Shanghai Ocean University

Craig Beyrouthy, Dean, Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Maryland