At the same time, others are arguing that agricultural researchers can do is to help enhance competitiveness, usually taken to mean export markets. Thus, it becomes difficult of Congress to sort out these priorities and allocate funding. It becomes more difficult to reallocate research dollars to diverse agricultural areas. Scientists are coming in with a unified message: the supercollider, when the medical community is calling for more AIDS research, when biologists are calling for human genome sequencing, and others are calling for a renewed civilian space program, tied to a NASA space station.

In the midst of this confusion, public interest groups have been calling for increased attention to farm worker protection, and the environmental dimension of agricultural production. They are not interested in hearing about higher yields or new pesticides; in fact, the news is about huge surpluses or pesticides ending up in water and food. Public perceptions are shaped by local reality, whether they are scientifically correct or not.

I think it is clear that agriculture needs a unified and convincing message that the money that is publicly funded agricultural research is to help those who fund it. This means indicating a desire to respond to broader public demands and to support the development about land stewardship, the environment, and quality of rural life.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A FOCAL POINT

Perhaps one of the most effective focal points for agricultural researchers might be this concern for developing more sustainable agricultural systems. For this reason, the merit in the idea put forth by Gordon Dougher and others, that agricultural sustainability needs to be defined from at least three perspectives—economically, ecologically and socially.

We have concentrated on research related to economic sustainability in the past. Yet, while modern production systems are increasing output, they are also increasing the negative impact on the environment and social considerations. The message is that agricultural sustainability needs to be viewed from these three perspectives, and by sharing a common goal of developing a sustainable future, agricultural researchers might be this concept of development by the leading agricultural researchers and policymakers.