

**Comments of Dr. Margaret Mellon to the Advisory Committee on
Biotechnology and 21st Century Agriculture (AC21)
on December 14, 2015**

I will take this brief opportunity to say how nice it is to see all the people here because I sat on earlier incarnations of this committee and I'm happy to see it continuing to do its very hard work and none of these issues are easy. My comment today follows up on the comment from the individual sitting almost at the end of the table who said that before you set out in the direction that you now appear to be going which is looking away from the federal level and trying to encourage something happening at the local and regional level, you want to make sure that the approach will address a major part of the problem. Will the activities really reduce the amount of contaminated seed that is out there available for sale?

I can see how important it is to work at the local level but there are just lots of opportunities for conversations that may go nowhere for any number of reasons. So I want to acknowledge the boldness of the idea but from a scientific point of view, if in fact the real problem is contaminated seed then you do have to ask yourself whether this particular approach is the best place to put a large commitment of federal resources. And I think scientifically that is a question worth trying to answer. Additional resources to prevent seed contamination

might be better deployed.

And my other question is simply, whether the AC21 is envisioning or has access to a pot of money that could be used to help provide incentives to folks at the local level who may need some encouragement to come together with their neighbors. I think that's a big part of this pie. If you're talking about incentives where will those incentives come from? Thank you very much for the opportunity to make comments.