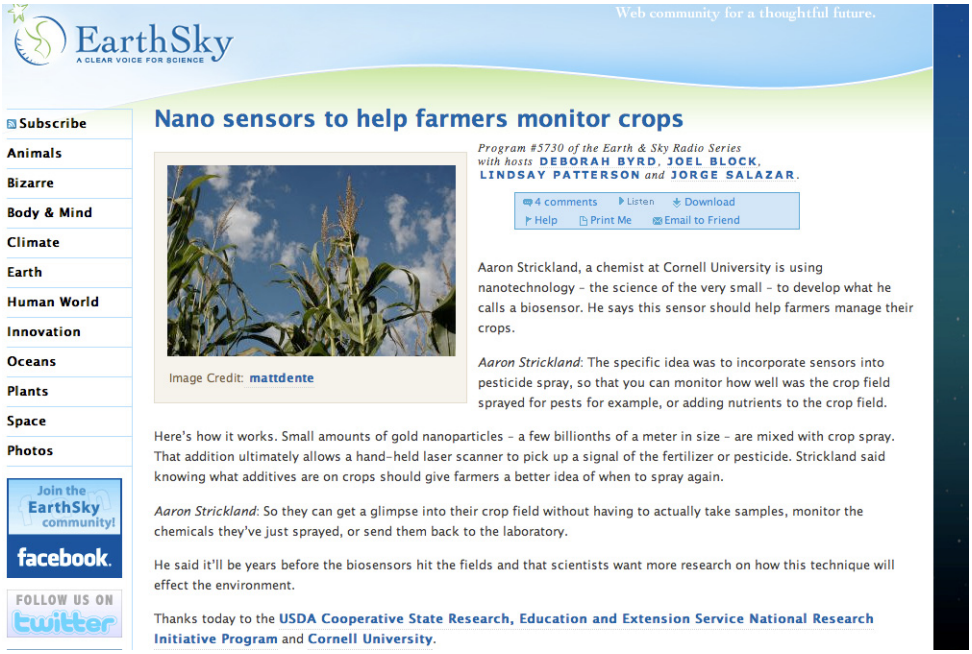
Enhancing Public Understanding of Nanotechnology and Its Applications to Agriculture and Food

The perception and acceptance of nanotechnology by the general public are assessed along with the impact of this information on the public concerning this emerging technology. The work does not to simply assess but to create a foundation to help inform the general public about the promises and challenges of nanotechnology as it applies to agriculture and food systems. By assessing the impact of these informational programs on the general public, the researchers led by Dr. Carl Batt of Cornell University determine not just their perception but the ways in which that perception (and acceptance) can be impacted. **One very tangible outcome is a set of best practices through which the general public can be informed on progress made in the field of nanotechnology.** To provide an information base Dr. Batt produced a series of audio and video episodes in collaboration with Earth & Sky. The episodes cover both potential benefits and risks of the technology. They have been developed after some front-end assessment to determine what the general public knows and their concerns about nanotechnology in agriculture and food systems. The radio episodes have been broadcast as part of the regular Earth & Sky series which reaches approximately nine-million listeners each day. The video versions are used in *Too Small to See* and *Too Small to See-2*, a pair of traveling museum exhibitions developed by the PI that are currently on tour in the United States. In addition these videos are used in other public venues including nontraditional ones. **Over the two year period of this grant (and beyond) approximately 55 million 'views' should be recorded on the subject.** Online responses and interviews with visitors are used to determine their perceptions of nanotechnology as it applies to agriculture and food systems. The interviews and the evaluation of the project are carried out by an external evaluator to determine the impact of these informational pieces on their perception and acceptance of nanotechnology. The influence of these informational programs will be determined by controlled follow-up interviews.

The six podcasts were completed and broadcast in the Spring 2009 featuring Norm Scott, Aaron Stickland, George Whitesides, Jennifer Kuzma, Jochen Weiss and Rosalyn Berne. Both 90 second radio broadcast episodes and longer podcasts were created.



Contributing Agency: USDA/CSREES