



American Society of Agronomy • Crop Science Society of America • Soil Science Society of America

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April 4, 2017

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: FY18 Appropriations—Support for USDA Research, Education, and Economics Mission Areas

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop:

The American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA), represent over 18,000 scientists in academia, industry, and government, 12,500 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA), and 781 Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS), as the largest coalition of professionals dedicated to the agronomic, crop and soil science disciplines in the United States.

America is an agricultural nation. Food, agriculture and related industries account for almost \$1 trillion in economic output – 5.7 percent of U.S. GDP. These industries employ nearly 10 percent of the U.S. workforce, providing over 17 million jobs. Our farms contribute over \$177 billion to the U.S. economy each year and export over \$133 billion in global trade. America leads the world in agricultural exports, but this has not always been the case.

America's incredible productivity stems from Federal investments in agricultural science and technology that have helped our farmers through droughts and floods, pests and pathogens, and changing consumer tastes. These investments not only afford Americans safe and inexpensive food, they also bring a 20-fold return to the GDP.

To maintain America's level of agricultural production and innovation, we support the following areas of the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission areas for fiscal year 2018 budget:

\$1.3 billion for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). ARS is USDA's intramural, nation-wide research and development program that solves national agriculture problems of high priority and develops new products for farmers and industry. ARS is uniquely suited to conduct research that requires long-term investments with high-impact payoffs while maintaining the capacity and readiness to respond to emerging and pressing problems.

\$1.5 billion for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). NIFA houses USDA's suite of extramural programs, which supplement state research initiatives with competitive grants and support agriculture education capacity at local land-grant institutions.

Within NIFA, we specifically support:

\$420 million in FY18 for Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). AFRI is the premier competitive grants program for research, extension, and education projects that solve the nation's critical challenges in food and agricultural systems. The 2014 Farm Bill reauthorized the program and continues the authorization for appropriations of up to \$700 million for each of Fiscal Years 2014 through 2018 in order to meet the many challenges facing agriculture.

\$291 million for Hatch Act formula funding. Hatch funding supports agricultural research through state agricultural experiment stations at our nation's land-grant colleges and universities. The Hatch Act funding supports local research that directly impacts farmers' bottom lines but is unlikely to result in marketable products, making it unattractive to the private sector and thus in need of public support.

\$358 million for Smith-Lever 3(b) and (c) funding. Smith-Lever funding supports the extension program, a vital link between the scientific findings produced at our land-grant institutions and the agricultural producers, small business owners, consumers, families, and others who directly benefit from this new information. The ability to translate and disseminate research findings as widely and quickly as possible, through trusted, local extension officers, is critical to our ability to address emerging local challenges.

America used to lead the world in public investments in agriculture science and research, but in 2009, agriculture R&D fell to a historically low 0.035 percent share of the U.S. economy, a level far below what is necessary to meet the critical challenges facing U.S. agriculture in the 21st century. That same year, China increased its investment in agriculture R&D by 16 percent and took the global lead. Even though demand for U.S. produced food remains strong in China, that nation now produces more food than any other. Ironically, the Chinese agricultural research and extension system that led to this success was modeled after ours, a testament to its value.

Innovation and discovery are essential ingredients for advancements in American agriculture, advancements that enable our own farmers to continue producing enough food for U.S. citizens and to meet the demand for safe and nutritious food around the world. Such innovation and economic prosperity is the direct result of responsible investments in U.S. agricultural science.

Thank you for your consideration. For additional information or to learn more about the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, please contact Karl Anderson, Director of Government Relations, at kanderson@sciencesocieties.org or 202-408-5382.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ellen Bergfeld". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ellen" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bergfeld".

Ellen Bergfeld, PhD, CEO
American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America

Cc:

Members of the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies