



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

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April 2, 2018

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: FY19 Appropriations—Support for USDA Research, Education, and Economics Mission Areas

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop:

Thank you for your leadership and providing a funding increase for agriculture research in the final fiscal year (FY) 2018 omnibus bill.

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. We support more than 13,300 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA), and over 700 Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS). Our members and certified professionals are dedicated to meeting the demands of a growing world population through the pursuit of agronomic, crop and soil science knowledge and application.

America's incredible productivity stems from Federal investments in agricultural science and technology that help farmers through droughts and floods, pests and pathogens, and changing consumer tastes. These investments afford Americans safe and inexpensive food and bring a 20-fold return to the GDP.

We support the following areas of the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission areas for fiscal year 2019 budget:

\$1.35 billion for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). ARS is USDA's intramural, nation-wide research program that solves national agriculture problems of high priority. 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.

We remain concerned by the USDA hiring freeze that has prevented hiring for nearly 1400 vacant scientist positions in ARS alone and is damaging the ability of ARS to carry out its important mission.

\$1.64 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:

\$525 million in for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). AFRI is the premier competitive grants program for research, extension, and education projects that solve 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, but this program remains chronically underfunded and can only afford to fund 22% of the proposals recommended for funding by peer reviewers.

\$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. This 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.

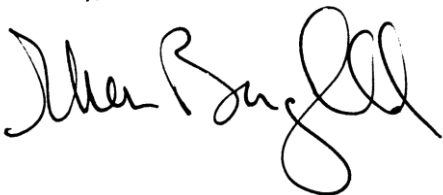
\$358 million for Smith-Lever 3(b) and (c) funding. Smith-Lever funding supports the extension program, a vital link between the scientific findings produced at our land-grant institutions and the agricultural producers, small business owners, consumers, families, and others who directly benefit from 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.

Today, China spends twice as much on agricultural R&D as we do. 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.

Our agricultural scientists are struggling. While federal funding supports two thirds of university research in other biological and life sciences, it only supports one third in agricultural sciences, and no one else is picking up the slack. Innovation and economic prosperity are the direct results of responsible investments in U.S. agricultural science, and scientific advancements are what enable American farmers to continue producing enough food for U.S. citizens and to meet the demand for safe and nutritious food around the world.

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 a large loop at the end.

Ellen Bergfeld, PhD, CEO

Cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies