



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

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March 10, 2016

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Merkley:

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 over 700 Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS), as the largest coalition of professionals dedicated to the agronomic, crop and soil science disciplines in the United States.

The Nation's economic prosperity and security depend on our dedication to developing innovative, science-based solutions to meet our growing agricultural needs. Since 1948, total U.S. agricultural output more than doubled. Over the same period, the U.S. population also more than doubled. The ability of the farm sector to feed far more people today while using less farmland than six decades ago is attributed to increases in agricultural productivity. The major driver of growth in agricultural productivity is innovation. **Average rates of return to public investments in agricultural research range from 20 to 60 percent.**

For fiscal year 2017, we support the following areas of the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Research, Education, and Economics (REE) division, in which innovation is a core mission area:

\$1.256 billion for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), USDA's intramural programs which conduct research and provide access to scientific information to solve national agriculture problems of high priority. ARS intramural research is uniquely suited to conduct research that requires a long term investment leading to high-impact payoff, while maintaining the capacity and readiness to respond to emerging and pressing problems.

\$1.704 billion for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), USDA's suite of extramural programs whose primary role is to provide a link between federal and state research initiatives through partnerships with educational institutions and competitive grant programs.

Within NIFA, we specifically support:

\$700 million for Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). AFRI is the premier competitive grants program for fundamental and applied research, extension, and education to support of our nation's

food and agricultural systems. In the 2014 Farm Bill, Congress authorized \$700 million for AFRI. Meeting this commitment will help attract the next generation of scientists and advance innovations benefiting all Americans.

In the last four years, the USDA-NIFA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) review process identified \$3.85 billion in grants worthy of funding. However, with a limited annual budget, the program could only award \$950 million—**less than a quarter of the science that the program's expert panels deemed worthy**—leaving thousands of innovative projects unfunded.

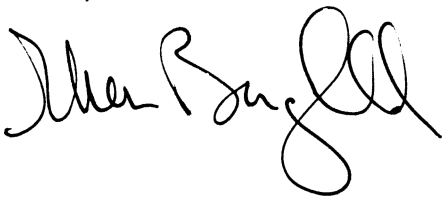
\$256 million for Hatch Act formula funding, which supports agricultural research conducted at state agricultural experiment stations located within our nation's great land-grant colleges and universities.

\$304 million for Smith-Lever 3(b) and (c) funding that supports the extension program. The ability to translate and disseminate research findings as widely and quickly as possible is critical to our ability to address emerging agricultural issues.

These investments are essential to meeting 21st century challenges in public health, food production, national security and global competitiveness. A strong commitment to federally funded scientific research will boost the Nation's capacity for innovation, agricultural productivity and economic prosperity.

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, CEO
American Society of Agronomy
Crop Science Society of America
Soil Science Society of America

Cc:

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