

FY2011 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative

Stable and enhanced funding needed to produce more bioenergy, fight the national obesity epidemic, assure a well-educated agricultural workforce, and strengthen global food security.

The 2008 Farm Bill established the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), which assumed all of the authorities of its predecessor program, the National Research Initiative. AFRI is the premier agricultural competitive grants program in the United States and is administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Appropriations for AFRI fund high priority research, education, and extension competitive grants in food and agricultural sciences.

Unfortunately, AFRI was cut in the House version of H.R. 1, the FY2011 Full Year Continuing Resolution, by \$34.681 million compared to the FY 2010 enacted level. **The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (A·P·L·U) strongly opposes this proposed reduction.**

AFRI benefits the nation in numerous ways, providing:

- America's farmers and foresters with the genomic data and biotechnology tools to expand food and fiber production, processing, and international trade.
- U.S. healthcare professionals with insight into the relationships between diet and health.
- Extension specialists and their clients with expanded knowledge about soil and water quality.
- University educators with the funding to train new generations of food, agriculture, and natural resource scientists.

While AFRI has received modest increases in recent years, USDA reports that of the meritorious proposals it received and peer-reviewed, just 20% could be funded in FY2009 and only 22% in FY2008. Some key priorities needing immediate attention through stable and enhanced AFRI funding include:

BIOENERGY. The United States has adopted policies promoting the production of renewable fuels (such as ethanol and biodiesel) and other bioproducts to improve national energy security. As the use of bioproducts increases, there is a pressing need for additional funding to assess the effects on water use, soil fertility, and related environmental conditions. Additional economic analyses are also needed to better understand how food, feed, and fuel prices are interrelated.



NUTRITION AND HEALTH. As the U.S. struggles with the twin epidemics of obesity and diabetes, expanded research is critically needed to help understand the community and behavioral attributes of human nutrition. Such research will lead directly to more scientifically informed nutrition education and guidance programs delivered through the Cooperative Extension System. And, additional research is needed to improve the nutritional value and availability of crops, fruits and vegetables, and other foodstuffs.

AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE. There is an urgent need to educate and support more young men and women — especially from diverse backgrounds and ethnic communities — to conduct agricultural research and outreach, to serve the nation as farmers, foresters, ranchers, and bioenergy producers, and to lead public and private sector organizations in the 21st Century.

GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY. Greater research, extension, and education funding is urgently needed to fight plant and animal diseases that threaten public health and agricultural output and to address pressing issues in food production to improve national and global food security while helping America promote sustainable agriculture and agricultural exports.

A·P·L·U urges members of the Senate and House to support the highest possible FY2011 AFRI appropriation. Since both chambers have instituted an earmark moratorium, we urge the reallocation of these project funds to AFRI and our other NIFA priorities.

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Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Coalition

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The undersigned organizations representing research institutions, scientists, and other agriculture stakeholders urge members of the Senate and House to restore funding to the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program to at least \$262 million for FY2011.

Agricultural research, education, and extension efforts supported by AFRI, the premier competitive grants program at USDA, drive American innovation and global competitiveness and would be significantly compromised by the funding reduction proposed in H.R. 1 (a decrease of \$34.6 million from FY2010 enacted levels, reducing funding to \$227 million). Such a cut would hinder advances in agricultural and food science as well as the deployment of new technologies, both of which support energy security, improved health, and economic recovery—the most critical priorities for our nation today.

The United States cannot afford to lose momentum; we need the novel approaches that AFRI delivers to provide options for sustainable bioenergy production, improved human nutrition and a reduction in obesity, as well as more rapid recovery of our nation's rural economies. The funds invested through AFRI have far reaching impact, bolstering work performed by USDA's Agricultural Research Service, land-grant universities, private colleges and universities, and the private sector.

Furthermore, a report by the Economic Research Service (ERS) found "strong and consistent evidence" that investment in agricultural research has yielded "high returns per dollar spent," citing a mean rate of return of 53 percent. This return means that for every dollar invested by the federal government on agricultural research, an average return of \$0.53 per year is accrued as the technology is utilized. As a result, the American public continues to see the benefits from these investments for several decades.

At \$23 billion in FY2009, the U.S. trade surplus in agriculture is higher than that of all other U.S. product groupings and almost triple the next largest category (transportation). Declining support for agricultural research and education supported by AFRI jeopardizes these markets, which are fundamental to the health of our economy; without continued advances to drive these markets, we risk losing out to global competition.

We therefore urge you to support AFRI in the FY2011 spending bill at a level of \$262 million or more. (AFRI is authorized at \$700 million in the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act.) AFRI funding of least \$262 million is absolutely critical to maintain the nation's competitive agricultural and food research enterprise, which, in turn, ensures our national economic vitality.

American Dairy Science Association	Federation of Animal Science Societies
American Phytopathological Society	Institute of Food Technologists
American Society for Horticultural Science	Iowa State University
American Society for Microbiology	Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
American Society for Nutrition	National Association of Plant Breeders
American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers	National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
American Society of Agronomy	National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
American Society of Animal Science	North Central Weed Science Society
American Society of Plant Biologists	Northeastern Weed Science Society
American Veterinary Medical Association	Poultry Science Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society	Society of Nematologists
Association of American Universities	Soil Science Society of America
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities	Southern Weed Science Society
Biotechnology Industry Organization	The Rodale Institute
Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics	Union of Concerned Scientists
Crop Science Society of America	Weed Science Society of America
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology	Western Society of Weed Science