

REPORT FROM WASHINGTON

House and Senate Appropriations Committee review USDA budget – Ag Research

The [House](#) and [Senate](#) Appropriations Subcommittees on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies held hearings over the last two weeks to hear testimony from Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue regarding the FY 2018 President's Budget Request. As reported to the BAA last month, the President's budget proposes to cut \$4.8 billion from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in FY 2018, which includes a roughly 8 percent reduction in the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Agricultural research received several mentions at the committee hearings. In the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, both Chairman Robert Aderholt (R-AL) and Ranking Member Sanford Bishop (D-GA) said the proposed reduction to USDA research activities is concerning. Secretary Perdue responded to the committee that his administration will take what the appropriators believe is in the best interest of the nation, and stretch it as far and as beneficial as possible. Representative Kevin Yoder (R-KS) credited agricultural research with the bountiful supply of food and agricultural products. Secretary Perdue responded saying his administration will do everything possible to find ways USDA, private industry, and the nations' land-grant universities can improve collaboration.

In the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, Full Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) expressed support for agricultural research conducted at land-grant and public universities and asked if the level provided in the President's budget would be adequate. Secretary Perdue admitted that research is an area the administration missed the mark, and promised to work toward improving it because, "research really is the basis of our agricultural productivity today." Subcommittee Ranking Member Jeff Merkley (D-OR) also expressed concern over the elimination of more than 20 agricultural research programs in the budget proposal.

Secretary Perdue mentioned in both hearings that he believes if manufacturing had the basic research, applied research, and the delivery systems like the extension service, we would not have seen the demise of the U.S. manufacturing industry, "that is how strongly I believe in research in our land-grants and research in our ARS. So, I hope that we can appropriately find the money to fund them to continue".