

Science Policy Office

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Ask your Representative to show their support for agriculture research

Members of Congress are currently working on their appropriations requests for fiscal year (FY) 2019. **Now is the time** for constituents like you to reach out to your members of Congress to help shape their funding priorities.

This year, three respected members of Congress have stepped forward to champion the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the competitive grants program within USDA-NIFA. Representatives Rodney Davis (IL-R), Suzan DelBene (WA-D), and Jimmy Panetta (CA-D) are circulating a “Dear Colleague” letter in the U.S. House of Representatives asking the House Appropriations Committee to provide strong support for AFRI in the FY2019 appropriations process.

Please contact your Representative today and ask them to **support AFRI by signing the Davis-DelBene-Panetta “Dear Colleague” letter.**

The deadline to sign on to the letter is this Friday, March 9, so **we must act now.**

[Use this link to email your members of Congress and ask for their support.](#)

You can make a difference. Be a voice for research and contact your members of Congress today!

Support Agriculture Research in FY19

Dear Congress(wo)man _____,

As a constituent living in your district, I urge you to support robust agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) for FY19.

The unparalleled success of the U.S. agricultural enterprise is the result of decades of investments in food, agriculture and natural resources research. Our Nation enjoys the safest, most abundant, nutritious, and economical food supply in the world due to the hard work of our producers and the ingenuity of our agricultural researchers.

In the coming decades, our agricultural system must sustainably produce food for a rapidly growing domestic and global population. The Nation’s economic prosperity and security depend on developing innovative, science-based solutions to meet our growing agricultural needs.

To meet these challenges, Congress created the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) in the 2008 Farm Bill. AFRI is the premier agricultural competitive grants



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program for basic and applied research on food, agriculture, natural resources, plant and animal science, rural development, and nutrition.

While Congress' continued support of AFRI is much appreciated, AFRI's current funding level represents significant missed opportunities. Over three quarters of the AFRI research grant proposals rated as highly innovative go unfunded. These grants could hold the keys to solving some of the most pressing challenges facing our Nation - food safety and security, sustainable natural resource management, and clean energy production.

Therefore, I ask you to show your support for agriculture research by joining your colleagues, Reps. Rodney Davis, Suzan DelBene and Jimmy Panetta by signing the below letter to House Agriculture Appropriations Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop requesting robust support. Increased funding for AFRI will ensure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive, and it will narrow the gap between current productivity and future anticipated need.

If you would like to sign the below letter, please contact Jimmy Ballard with Representative Rodney Davis at (Jimmy.Ballard@mail.house.gov), Shantanu Tata with Representative Suzan DelBene at (shantanu.tata@mail.house.gov), or Brandon Honeycutt (Brandon.honeycutt@mail.house.gov) with Representative Jimmy Panetta by COB March 9th. Thanks for your consideration.

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member Lowey and Ranking Member Bishop:

Thank you for your previous support for competitive agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). As you meet to consider funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, we urge you to sustain this critical effort. Your leadership will make a difference in helping to ensure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive globally and our country continues to lead the way in food and agriculture innovation.

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.

Investments in public agricultural research are the major factors driving technological change that leads to growth. In the 1940s, almost 40 percent of American research and development spending was focused on agriculture. Today, agriculture research only accounts for 2 percent of federal research and



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development spending. According to the USDA, total agricultural production has slowed significantly since the turn of the century.

In Fiscal Years 2012-2015, 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.

In order to continue the important work made possible by the Committee's prior support, we request robust funding in FY 2019. The Nation's economic prosperity and security depend on our dedication to developing innovative, science-based solutions to meet our growing agricultural needs and managing efficient food systems.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We are grateful for your leadership in ensuring that the necessary funds to protect animals, crops, and people will continue to be available.

Sincerely,

