

Science Policy Office

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Headline: Support Federal 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. Tell them to prioritize food, agriculture, and natural resources research programs in FY2019.

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 which asks 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 food, agriculture, and natural resources research by signing the Davis-DelBene-Panetta AFRI “Dear Colleague” letter.**

The deadline to sign on to the letter is Tuesday, March 13, so **we must act now.**

You can make a difference. Be a voice for research and contact your Representative today!

Email to Representatives

Headline: Support Agriculture Research in FY19

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 FY20.

Agricultural research is one of the best investments our government can make, and yet it accounts for a mere 2% of total federal R&D spending. A recent study estimates there is a \$20 return for every one dollar invested in agricultural research through USDA-NIFA, specifically the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), USDA’s premiere competitive grants program.

Scientific advances that result from AFRI-funded research can enhance the competitiveness of American agriculture, ensure the safety of the nation’s food supply, improve the nutrition and health of communities, sustain the environment and natural resources, and bolster the economy. However, due



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to budget constraints, AFRI awards have supported only about a quarter of the science that the program's expert review panels deemed worthy.

We believe that the need for competitive agricultural research funding is clear: Disease, pests, market volatility, climate variability, labor instability, and water quality are just a handful of challenges which make agriculture an enterprise that relies disproportionately on good science to thrive. A significant investment in AFRI is desperately needed to support the best scientists and innovators working in the crucial fields of agriculture.

Therefore, we hope you will join us in signing the below letter to House Agriculture Appropriations Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry 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 Janie Costa with Representative Rodney Davis at (Janie.Costa@mail.house.gov) , Shantanu Tata with Representative Suzan DelBene at (shantanu.tata@mail.house.gov), or Matt Manning (Matthew.Manning@mail.house.gov) by COB March 8th. Thanks for your consideration.

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Granger and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

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) 2020, 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 development spending. According to the USDA, total agricultural production has slowed significantly since the turn of the century.



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In Fiscal Years 2012-2016, the USDA-NIFA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) review process identified \$4.9 billion in grants worthy of funding. However, with a limited annual budget, the program could only award \$1.3 billion—about 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 2020. 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,

