

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Coalition

November 3, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chairman
House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Ranking Member
House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable John Hoeven, Chairman
Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Jeff Merkley, Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

The AFRI Coalition, comprised of organizations representing research institutions, scientific societies, and other agricultural stakeholders, writes to thank you for your commitment to continued investment in agricultural research and your support for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), in Fiscal Year 2018. As USDA's largest competitive grants program, AFRI complements other USDA research programs by funding cutting-edge science to meet 21st century challenges in public health, food production, national security, and global competitiveness.

The Coalition appreciates the support for agricultural research included in both the Senate and House Agriculture Appropriations bills, with \$375 million provided for AFRI research grants in Fiscal Year 2018. However, nearly a decade after its founding, the program has yet to reach its authorized funding level of \$700 million a year.

Food, agriculture, and natural resources research has been woefully underfunded over recent decades. In the past four years, for example, over 75 percent of AFRI proposals deemed worthy by expert review panels go unfunded due to budget constraints. Without adequate funding for agriculture science, valuable research is never performed; students and farmers miss out on education and training opportunities; companies settle for undertrained workers, slowing their growth and the economy; and America loses its position of global agricultural leadership.

Falling short in funding AFRI and other important agricultural research now would be a strategic setback as well as a disservice to our nation's farmer, consumers, and oldest industry. Global competition, unprecedented demand, resource constraints, emerging pests and pathogens, and volatile weather are posing new challenges for farmers. We have a responsibility to develop the next generation of tools, technologies, and knowledge that will enable them to succeed.

We understand the difficult environment surrounding budget discussions and the many competing priorities with which you are faced. We also acknowledge and appreciate the priority given to increased funding for AFRI and other agricultural research programs in previous years. As you

prepare to finalize appropriations legislation for FY 2018, we write on behalf of our wide-ranging constituencies to thank you for your continued support of the program, and urge you to work towards full funding for AFRI.

Again, thank you for your stalwart support of agricultural research, including your commitment to fully funding AFRI. The Coalition recognizes that lawmakers have many difficult decisions to make, especially in this austere budget environment. If you would like to learn more about AFRI or specific funding in each state, please contact Karl Anderson at kanderson@sciencesocieties.org.

Sincerely,

The AFRI Coalition

American Dairy Science Association	Entomological Society of America
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering	Federation of Animal Science Societies
American Phytopathological Society	Genetics Society of America
American Society for Horticultural Science	Institute of Food Technologists
American Society for Microbiology	Iowa State University
American Society for Nutrition	Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers	National Association of Plant Breeders
American Society of Agronomy	National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
American Society of Animal Science	National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
American Society of Plant Biologists	National Turfgrass Federation
American Soybean Association	North Central Weed Science Society
American Veterinary Medical Association	Northeastern Weed Science Society
Aquatic Plant Management Society	Poultry Science Association
Association of American Universities	Society of Nematologists
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges	Soil Science Society of America
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities	Southern Weed Science Society
Biotechnology Industry Organization	The American Physiological Society
Consortium of Social Science Associations	The Rodale Institute
Crop Science Society of America	Union of Concerned Scientists
	Weed Science Society of America
	Western Society of Weed Science

CC: Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture
Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture