

March 29, 2013

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman, Agriculture Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building, 2362-A
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr
Ranking Member, Agriculture Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Longworth House Office Building, 1016
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr:

We appreciate your leadership in providing additional investment in the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) over the last four years. These funding decisions, in the face of tough budgets and political expediency, will result in meaningful contributions to society.

We're writing to ask that you continue this investment in agriculture and food research by appropriating at least \$325 million for AFRI in fiscal year 2014. As you well know, agricultural research will contribute significantly to resolutions for some of society's greatest challenges, including how to grow more of our food, fiber and fuels in a way which protects our natural surroundings while ensuring a safe and nutritious food supply. Today, just as it has been throughout time, agricultural innovation is vital to the advancement of our nation. The principal competitive grants program administered through AFRI for only four years is already showing promising results.

AFRI grants have led to key discoveries in the pig genome which are likely to translate into important biomedical discoveries. AFRI grants funded the first draft genome sequencing of one of America's most economically important species of pine for timber and biofuel production. AFRI funds are now credited for improved economics of "barley-followed-by-soybean" double crop systems because of reduced barley inputs and a longer growing season. New barley varieties have opened poultry and beef feed markets for barley growers. An AFRI-funded project has identified the physiological and genetic mechanisms for drought tolerance in tomato that will be used to produce tomato varieties which will ensure crop yields and food quality in the water-limited future.

Even with recent success we have much ground to cover. For thirty years, agricultural research funding has been stagnant while our national needs and global economy demanded more. Every year, hundreds of exceptional research proposals go unfunded because of AFRI's limited budget. In fiscal year 2010, 1,012 AFRI grant proposals were recommended for funding, but only 403 proposals were awarded funding. The scientific need indicates that AFRI should be funding more than twice as many research proposals. A December 2012 report authored by the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST) urged a commitment of \$700 million in additional money for new agricultural research. The PCAST report concludes that now is the time to move agricultural research ahead by greatly increasing funding for competitive grants. The report noted further that competitively-awarded research funding such as

AFRI grants are paramount to addressing a number of challenges including weather risk, depleted water resources, animal disease and emerging plant pest risks.

We ask that you give our request careful consideration as you set out to fund the nation's agricultural policy priorities in fiscal year 2014, and we hope this correspondence will be the first step in an ongoing dialogue between the Subcommittee and stakeholders about the fiscal year 2014 budget needs of AFRI. We realize the difficulty of your task but know that increased investment in the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative will prove to be a wise decision now and for the future.

Sincerely,

American Society for Horticultural Science
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Soybean Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Association of American Universities
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Center for Foodborne Illness Research and Prevention
Christopher R. Daubert, Ph.D., Food, Bioprocessing & Nutrition Sciences, NC State University
Consumer Federation of America
Crop Science Society of America
Dan Bernardo, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Agriculture, Washington State University
Entomological Society of America
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Michigan State University
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
North Carolina State University
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