



American Society of Agronomy • Crop Science Society of America • Soil Science Society of America

5585 Guilford Road, Madison WI 53711-5801 • Tel. 608-273-8080 • Fax 608-273-2021

[www.agronomy.org](http://www.agronomy.org) • [www.crops.org](http://www.crops.org) • [www.soils.org](http://www.soils.org)

March 11, 2016

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Culberson  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Honda  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Culberson and Ranking Members Mikulski and Honda:

The American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA), represent over 18,000 scientists in academia, industry, and government, 12,500 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA), and 781 Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS), as the largest coalition of professionals dedicated to the agronomic, crop and soil science disciplines in the United States.

The Nation's economic prosperity and security depend on our dedication to developing innovative, science-based solutions to meet our growing agricultural needs. 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.**

We support **\$8 billion for the National Science Foundation** for the fiscal year 2017. This funding level will put the premier government-funding agency for scientific research on track to address these challenges by increasing the broad knowledge base supported by a wide range of scientific disciplines, such as biology, plant science, chemistry and soil science.

NSF also develops a highly skilled U.S. workforce in areas of national need through the Graduate Research Fellowship program, which recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students who are pursuing research-based master's and doctoral degrees in science and engineering. According to a recent study done by the Coalition for a Sustainable Agricultural Workforce (CSAW), nearly half of the future agricultural scientist workforce in the plant science discipline will require a doctoral degree.

Within NSF, we are very supportive of the new **Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy, and Water Systems (\$62 million)**. There is a pressing need to understand the interconnectedness of food, energy and water. Of particular interest is the production, resilience, safety, and security of food, energy, and water resources. The recent drought in the U.S., which includes major areas of California and Texas, and the corresponding impacts on water, food production and the energy sector is an example of these challenges. We urge you to include report language highlighting the importance of this new effort and the need to better understand the fundamental science behind the interconnected food-energy-water system.

These investments are essential to meeting 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges in public health, food production, national security and global competitiveness. A strong commitment to federally funded scientific research will boost the Nation's capacity for innovation, agricultural productivity and economic prosperity.

Thank you for your consideration. For additional information or to learn more about the ASA, CSSA and SSSA, please contact Karl Anderson, Director of Government Relations, at [kanderson@sciencesocieties.org](mailto:kanderson@sciencesocieties.org) or 202-408-5382.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ellen Bergfeld". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ellen" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bergfeld".

Ellen Bergfeld, CEO  
American Society of Agronomy  
Crop Science Society of America  
Soil Science Society of America

Cc:

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran  
House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers  
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Nita Lowey  
Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science,  
and Related Agencies  
Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science,  
and Related Agencies