

# **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Coalition**

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June 2, 2009

Dear Dr. Holdren,

We applaud President Obama for emphasizing the importance of increasing funding for science in his FY 2010 budget. His awareness of and appreciation for the role that science investments play in achieving and maintaining a high standard of living, a healthy and sustainable environment, and improved workforce development and economic innovation is refreshing and greatly admired.

During his speech in April at the National Academy of Sciences Annual Meeting, the President stated that three percent of U.S. GDP should be invested in science to keep our nation competitive. Throughout his remarks, President Obama was very supportive of funding increases for agencies such as Department of Energy Office of Science, National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Standards and Technology. Unfortunately, there was no mention made of the agricultural sciences or USDA research agencies. More importantly, in his FY 2010 budget request, the President did not include Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) in his recommendations for increases in science funding.

The members of the AFRI Coalition each have important specific research priorities and priority programs. What draws us together, however, is a common interest in increasing funding for and awareness of the AFRI, USDA's largest agriculture and food competitive grants program. We share a common concern that AFRI, despite the important boost it received in the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act, received flat funding in the President's budget proposal for FY 2010. As a result, for FY 2010 AFRI will lose ground in constant dollars resulting in many lost opportunities to fund highly rated research proposals to address Administration priorities including clean renewable energy, climate change, health care, childhood hunger, and local and regional food systems, among others.

The successor to USDA's National Research Initiative (NRI) and the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS), AFRI is unique in that it combines basic and applied research and takes research and innovation through the development phase and into implementation through contemporary education and extension programs. AFRI funding also importantly supports sorely needed professional opportunities for young faculty and graduate students. These bright, young scientists are the foundation for the future of agricultural science. With increased federal investments to support AFRI, they will see tangible signs that there is opportunity in and a future for these sciences. If we

overlook these sciences, we will lose the next crop of innovators. By investing in AFRI, we are investing in our future, and theirs.

As the administration begins working on the FY 2011 budget, the AFRI Coalition hopes that President Obama will provide greater support for the agricultural sciences overall and for AFRI in particular. **As members of the AFRI Coalition, we, the undersigned organizations, ask the administration to support an AFRI funding level of at least \$350 million for FY 2011, with a goal of increasing funding for the program annually by \$50 million at a minimum for each fiscal year thereafter.**

Please see the attached AFRI Coalition flyer for additional information. Thank you for your consideration of our request for enhanced and strategic investment in competitive agricultural research, education, and extension through the AFRI program.

Sincerely,

American Phytopathological Society  
American Society for Horticultural Science  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society for Nutrition  
American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers  
American Society of Agronomy  
Aquatic Plant Management Society  
Crop Science Society of America  
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology  
Institute of Food Technologists  
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute  
National Association of Plant Breeders  
National Organic Coalition  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
North Central Weed Science Society  
Northeastern Weed Science Society  
Poultry Science Association  
Society of Nematologists  
Soil Science Society of America  
Southern Weed Science Society  
The Rodale Institute  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Weed Science Society of America  
Western Society of Weed Science