

AFRI Coalition

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April 28, 2009

The Honorable Herb Kohl, Chairman
United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Sam Brownback, Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

RE: Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Appropriations for FY-2010

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Brownback,

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 established the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), a new competitive grants program authorized at \$700 million annually, for research, extension, and education in support of our nation's food and agricultural systems within USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This unique program, the successor to USDA's National Research Initiative (NRI) and the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS), takes research and innovation through the development phase and into implementation through contemporary education and extension programs.

While the AFRI Coalition, including the signatories at the end of this letter, would like to see a full appropriation of \$700 million, we understand that in the current fiscal climate, that is unlikely. However, with the nation and world seeking solutions for climate change, sustainable food and fuel production, ecosystem health, food security and nutrition challenges, now is the time to renew public investment in our nation's agricultural research enterprise. Funding AFRI at \$300 million in the FY 2010 agriculture appropriations bill (exclusive of any funding identified for the former Section 406 programs), with a goal of an appropriation in FY 2015 of \$550 million, will show strong commitment to America's farmers, food and rural entrepreneurs. An AFRI appropriation of \$300 million will help to provide these entrepreneurs with the tools necessary to solve problems and keep the country competitive, while also protecting the natural resource base and environment, enhancing human nutrition and fostering vibrant rural communities.

See the attached informational flyer on AFRI for additional information. Thank you for supporting a stronger and more sustainable American food and agricultural

CC: J. Frederick, G. Fountain, F. Elder, S. McBride, and B. Fuller

system through strategic investments in competitive research, education, and extension.

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
Biotechnology Industry Organization
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