

Innovation Constrained in President's R&D budget

Washington, DC, 4 March 2014 -- The federal United States budget process started today with the release of the President's Fiscal Year 2015 Congressional budget request, which lays out the President's initiatives for the federal research and development (R&D) budget.

The President's budget request adhered to the \$1.014 billion discretionary spending caps for fiscal year 2015 set by the budget agreement Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 (BBA), which replaced some reductions from sequestration and set the spending cap for FY 2015.

The agreed upon caps resulted in small growth for some agriculture R&D programs, decreases for others and essentially a flat budget for NSF and DOE Office of Science.

The proposed discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the intramural research agency for the department, decreased \$18 million or 1.6%, from \$1.122 billion in FY 2014 to \$1.104 billion in FY 2015.

The budget redirects ARS funding toward three priority initiatives: climate change, pollinator health, and genetic improvements and translational breeding.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the extramural agency that provides both competitive and capacity funding for research, education, and cooperative extension would increase by \$59 million or 4.4%, from \$1.282 billion in FY 2014 to \$1.341 billion in FY 2015.

Within NIFA, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) would increase \$9 million or 2.8%, from \$316 in FY 2014 to \$325 in FY 2015. This is a retreat from last year when the President requested a 44% increase in FY2014. Hatch Act funds remain flat at \$244.

The budget also proposes \$75 million for three new Innovation Institutes supported by public-private partnerships at an initial federal investment of \$25 million per institute, per year for no less than five years, with one institute dedicated to advanced biobased manufacturing, another to focus on anti-microbial resistance research, and the third on pollination and pollinator health. These institutes, recommended by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology in December 2012, will leverage the best research within the public and private sectors to address emerging challenges to agriculture and facilitate technology transfer.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) would increase \$83 million or 1.2%, from \$7.172 billion in FY 2014 to \$7.255 billion in FY 2015. NSF expects 50,000 proposals to be evaluated through competitive merit review, with only a little over 10,000 proposals funded during the proposed fiscal year. NSF has supported over 47,800 graduate students since 1952.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Science is proposed to increase \$44 million or 0.9%, from \$5.066 billion in FY 2014 to \$5.111 billion in FY 2015. The Office of Science is the largest federal sponsor of basic research in physics, chemistry, biology, environmental science, applied mathematics, and computational science with programs investing in basic research for clean energy, to transform our understanding of nature and strengthen the connection between advances in fundamental science and technology innovation.

The President's FY 2015 budget also proposes a \$56 billion wish list for additional defense and domestic priorities. The so-called Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative (OGSI) would be paid for by closing tax loopholes and making alternative spending cuts. The additional funding is unlikely to receive Congressional support.

OGSI would add \$277 million to the USDA Research, Education, and Economics title, which includes ARS, NIFA, AFRI and Hatch Act funds; provide an additional \$552 million to NSF; and provide DOE \$684 million for clean energy technology development and deployment and support grid modernization .