

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Coalition

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March 17, 2010

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chairwoman
The Honorable Jack Kingston, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for FY11 Funding of AFRI

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Kingston:

The AFRI Coalition (Coalition), which represents a diverse array of scientific societies and agricultural science stakeholder organizations united in support of the USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), respectfully requests that you make AFRI, the nation's premiere competitive research program in applied and fundamental agricultural science, a priority in the FY 2011 appropriations bill. The Coalition believes that robust funding of AFRI shows strong commitment to America's farmers, consumers, and food and rural entrepreneurs, bringing them the tools necessary to maintain the country's competitiveness. At the same time, work performed through AFRI helps to protect the natural resource base and environment, enhance human nutrition, and foster vibrant rural communities.

The AFRI Coalition supports funding the program at the fully authorized level of \$700 million as soon as practicable. 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.

A substantial step towards the authorized level of \$700 million is necessary in FY 2011 to ensure the achievement of the scientific underpinnings necessary to increase productivity, improve nutrition and food safety, and fulfill the promise of the next generation of biofuels. The President's FY 2011 budget recognized the value of competitive agricultural research by proposing a significant funding increase to AFRI. The recent establishment of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture at USDA with a visionary scientist at the helm has sparked a renewed energy at the Department and throughout the stakeholder community. Furthermore, USDA Secretary Vilsack has testified before Congress that "underlying the achievement of all of the Department's goals is a strong research program."

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The diverse research interests of the AFRI Coalition are represented in the attached flyer, which highlights some of the many achievements and exciting, ongoing initiatives funded by AFRI. Thank you for your continued support of competitive, peer-reviewed agricultural research. We look forward to working with you toward the important goal of funding AFRI at the fully authorized level as soon as practicable.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us if we may provide additional information.

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
American Society of Animal Science
American Society of Plant Biologists
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Biotechnology Industry Organization
Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics
Crop Science Society of America
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Federation of Animal Science Societies
Institute of Food Technologists
Iowa State University
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
National Association of Plant Breeders
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
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

CC: Ag Approps Subcommittee Members