

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

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Point of Contact: Caron Gala Bijl

RE: Agriculture and Food Research Initiative in the FY 12 Spending Bill

Dear Chairman Kingston, Ranking Member Farr, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Agricultural research, education, and extension supported by AFRI, the principal competitive grants program at USDA's NIFA, drives innovation and global competitiveness. On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing research institutions, scientists, and other agriculture stakeholders, *we urge you to support funding of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program at \$350 million for FY 12.* This level of funding for AFRI is halfway to the fully authorized level identified in the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of \$700 million. Although far short of the authorized level, this funding level is sensitive to and appropriate for today's fiscal environment.

As our economy recovers, the United States cannot afford to lose momentum in areas where it excels internationally. At \$23 billion in FY 09, the U.S. trade surplus in agriculture is higher than that of all other U.S. product groupings and almost triple the next largest category—transportationⁱ. Despite this strength, declining support for agricultural research and education jeopardizes our ability to maintain a competitive advantage in these markets. Without continued advances to drive these markets, we risk losing out to global competition. Investments in AFRI have far reaching impacts, bolstering the essential work performed by USDA's Agricultural

Submitted to ag.approp@mail.house.gov on behalf of the AFRI Coalition on April 14, 2011.

Research Service, Land Grant Universities and Colleges, other academic institutions, and the private sector.

We therefore urge you to support AFRI in the FY 12 spending bill at \$350 million. Thank you for considering our request. If you would like to learn more about AFRI, please contact us at sciencepolicy@sciencesocieties.org.

Sincerely,

American Dairy Science Association

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

American Veterinary Medical Association

Aquatic Plant Management Society

Association of American Universities

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Biotechnology Industry Organization

Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics

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Crop Science Society of America
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

ⁱ USDA Foreign Agricultural Service. <http://www.fas.usda.gov/gats/default.aspx>