



American Society of Agronomy | Crop Science Society of America | Soil Science Society of America

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March 23, 2007—BY E-mail to approp.ag@mail.house.gov

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2362A Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Attention: Jamie Swafford

**RE: FY08 Appropriations—Support for Enhanced Food and Agricultural
Research, Extension and Education Funding**

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Kingston and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the **American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America (ASA/CSSA/SSSA)**, we are pleased to submit comments in *strong support of enhanced public investment in food and agricultural research, extension and education* as a critical component of federal appropriations for FY08 and beyond. With nearly 18,000 members, ASA/CSSA/SSSA are the largest life science professional societies in the United States dedicated to the agronomic, crop and soil sciences. ASA/CSSA/SSSA play a major role in promoting progress in these sciences through the publication of quality journals and books, convening meetings and workshops, developing educational, training, and public information programs, providing scientific advice to inform public policy, and promoting ethical conduct among practitioners of agronomy and crop and soil sciences. The programs and activities of ASA/CSSA/SSSA are tailored not only to our members' interests and scientific advancement, but also serve the public interest. ASA/CSSA/SSSA publish six peer-reviewed journals in which over 1100 scientific articles are published yearly. The peer-review procedures for manuscripts published in ASA/CSSA/SSSA journals as well as our activities and procedures for publishing ensure the highest quality and integrity in our scientific literature.

ASA/CSSA/SSSA understand the challenges the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee faces with the tight agriculture budget for FY 2008. We also recognize that the Agriculture Appropriations bill has many valuable and necessary components, and we applaud the efforts of the Subcommittee to fund mission-critical research through the USDA-Cooperative State, Research, Education and Extension Service as well as its intramural research portfolio funded through the Agricultural Research Service. We are particularly grateful to the Subcommittee for funding the NRI at \$190 million and Hatch formula funding at a record \$322.6-million in FY 2007. Below we have highlighted recommendations for the FY 2008 appropriations cycle.

Agricultural Research Service

ASA/CSSA/SSSA applaud ARS's ability to respond quickly and flexibly to rapidly changing national needs. With more than 22 National Programs, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and its 2,100 scientists located at 100 research locations, including a few in other countries, works to ensure that Americans have reliable, adequate supplies of high-quality food and other agricultural products. ARS accomplishes its goals through scientific discoveries that help solve problems in crop and livestock production and protection, human nutrition, and the interaction of agriculture and the environment. Therefore, ASA/CSSA/SSSA strongly oppose the President's FY 08 proposal to cut ARS funding for salaries and expenses to \$1.024 billion which would reduce funding by \$123 million or -10.72% from FY 07 enacted (\$1.147 billion). ASA/CSSA/SSSA urge the Subcommittee to act judiciously and not implement such drastic funding cuts for this critical intramural research agency. ASA/CSSA/SSSA support a funding increase of 10% or 115 million for ARS, bringing total funding to \$1.262 billion for ARS in FY 08.

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)

Hatch and McIntire-Stennis Formula Funding:

ASA/CSSA/SSSA understand that the shift of earmarked funds to **Hatch formula funding** (Hatch formula funding reached a record \$322.6-million in FY 07) and **McIntire-Stennis** (McIntire-Stennis was funded at \$30 million in 07) which occurred in FY 07, will not likely occur again. Nevertheless, the need has never been greater to enhance funding for Hatch and McIntire-Stennis formula funding if we are to maintain the research capacity at our nation's land grants universities and colleges of agriculture necessary to keep American agriculture competitive. Therefore, ASA/CSSA/SSSA strongly oppose the President's FY 08 budget proposal which recommends cuts to both **Hatch** (to \$164 million, a decrease of \$18.84 million from 07 enacted minus the earmark addition) and **McIntire-Stennis** (down by \$2.18 million to \$20.487 million from 07 enacted without earmark transfer).

ASA/CSSA/SSSA also oppose the administration's proposal to change the methodology for distributing Hatch Funds and McIntire-Stennis Funds through a multistate, competitively awarded proposal program. Such drastic changes would be detrimental to the entire USDA research portfolio. Because of their timing and potential regional and intra-state impacts, much of the infrastructure needed to conduct competitively funded research could be compromised if formula funds were to be redirected as proposed, and could irreparably damage programs housed at each land-grant university. This would mean a huge and potentially damaging loss of national infrastructure to conduct agricultural research. The private sector depends heavily on the agricultural technology and training provided by the U.S. land grant system, and the impact of such a drastic transfer of formula funds to a competitive grants program would affect not only the viability of U.S. industry but also the health and survival of millions of people across the globe. Moreover, investments in formula funded research show an excellent annual rate of return.

Cooperative Extension Service:

Extension forms a critical part of research, education and extension program integration, the hallmark of CSREES which is not seen in other agencies. Unfortunately, the Smith Lever 3(b) and 3(c) account has been flat-funded (in constant dollars, this account has seen a gradual erosion in funding), in recent years. ASA/CSSA/SSSA supports \$474 million (an increase of \$43.1 million or 10% over FY 07 enacted) for the continuing education and outreach activities of the Extension System. Specifically, ASA/CSSA/SSSA support \$300 million for Smith-Lever Formula 3(b)&(c), an increase of \$27.3 million or 10% over 07 enacted.

National Research Initiative:

ASA/CSSA/SSSA strongly endorse the President's proposed FY 2008 budget increase of \$66 million for the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (NRI) which would bring total funding for this important research program to a record \$257 million in FY 08. However, we do not support the President's proposal to transfer Hatch funding or \$42.3 million in funding from Sec 406 (Integrated Research, Education, and Extension program) into the NRI. This transfer may result in the loss of critical programs such as the Organic Transitions Program.

NRI Integrated Research/Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems:

ASA/CSSA/SSSA request that any new monies appropriated for the NRI, as requested by the administration, allow the Secretary the discretion to apply up to 30% towards carrying out the NRI integrated research, extension and education competitive grants program.

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Programs:

ASA/CSSA/SSSA oppose the administration's request to cut funding for SARE by more than \$3.06 million. At a minimum, the Subcommittee should fund SARE at the FY 2007 enacted (pre-rescission) level of \$12.2 million.

Organic Farming Transition Program:

ASA/CSSA/SSSA urges the Subcommittee to fund the Organic Farming Transition Program at \$5.0 million in FY 08 with no transfer.

Indirect Costs: ASA/CSSA/SSSA applaud the administration's proposal to eliminate the indirect cost cap on the NRI, set at 20% for FY 2007, which will broaden its appeal by putting the NRI on equal footing with other federal competitive grants programs such as those of NSF and NIH. However, we are concerned that new funding was not provided to cover this change.

Agrosecurity: ASA/CSSA/SSSA endorse the administration's request (\$5.0 million) for the Agrosecurity Curricula Development, which we consider to be a critical new initiative. Recent security threats facing America require new and expanded agricultural research to protect our nation's natural resources, food processing and distribution network, and rural communities that will secure America's food and fiber system.

Higher Education:

ASA/CSSA/SSSA urge the Subcommittee to fund the Institution Challenge Grants at \$6 million which will restore some of the funding lost due to the 06 rescission and 07

Continuing Resolution. We applaud the administration's budget request of \$4.445 million for the Graduate Fellowships Grants.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Security Program:

ASA/CSSA/SSSA urge the Subcommittee to fund this important working lands conservation program as an uncapped mandatory program, as intended in the 2002 Farm Bill legislation.

Wetlands Reserve Program:

ASA/CSSA/SSSA urge the Subcommittee to fund the Wetlands Reserve Program with no limitation provision (250,000 acres) in FY 08.

A balance of funding mechanisms, including intramural, competitive and formula funding, is essential to maintain the capacity of the United States to conduct both basic and applied agricultural research, improve crop and livestock quality, and deliver safe and nutritious food products, while protecting and enhancing the nation's environment and natural resources. In order to address these challenges and maintain our position in an increasingly competitive world, we must continue to support research programs funded through ARS and CSREES. Congress must enhance funding for agricultural research to assure Americans of a safe and nutritious food supply and to provide for the next generation of research scientists. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service (Agricultural Economic Report Number 735), publicly funded agricultural research has earned an annual rate of return of 35%. This rate of return suggests that additional allocation of funds to support research in the food and agricultural sciences would be beneficial to the U.S. economy. We must also continue support for CSREES-funded education programs which will help ensure that a new generation of educators and researchers is produced. Finally, we need to ensure support for CSREES-funded extension programs to guarantee that these important new tools and technologies reach and are utilized by producers and other stakeholders.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Conservation Security Program and Wetlands Reserve Program are two critical conservation programs which should receive strong support from the Subcommittee.

As you lead the Congress in deliberation on funding levels for agricultural research and conservation, please consider **American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America** as supportive resources. We hope you will call on our membership and scientific expertise whenever the need arises.

Sincerely,



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