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October 2, 2002

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka
United States Senate
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Akaka:

As the full Senate begins deliberation of the FY 2003 agriculture spending bill, the Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM) urges you to vote in support of the Senate Appropriations Committee's mark, which significantly increases funding for agricultural research in the United States. In particular, CoFARM strongly encourages you to support \$164 million funding for USDA's National Research Initiative competitive grants program and \$108 million funding for the integrated research, education and extension (Integrated) competitive grants program. Furthermore, we support having \$60 million of this Integrated amount administered like the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems program

Farmers in the United States are the most efficient in the world, and receive lower per acre federal subsidies than the countries of the European Union or Japan. In order to increase efficiency and maintain our strong position in an increasingly competitive world, we must expand our funding of agricultural research. There has been a steady decline, however, in competitively awarded agricultural research funding since 1992. Over this time period, funding for the National Research Initiative (NRI) has decreased by more than 6% in constant dollars, and this decline puts our nation at risk of being unable to competitively manage our lands for agriculture. These agricultural lands, among the most fertile in the world, have helped the United States survive amidst continually growing competition from overseas, as well as feed our nation during turbulent times. Without an expanded research program, current changes in international agriculture threaten to weaken U.S. agriculture and greatly increase our dependency on agricultural imports from abroad. At home, U.S. agriculture also faces an array of challenges including threats of new and reemerging diseases, public concern about food security, and impacts of agriculture on the environment. It is therefore critical that we increase our Nation's investment in agricultural research to respond to these international and domestic challenges.

The production systems of the future will be based on the science we support today. Congress has the important opportunity to enhance funding for competitive agricultural research to assure Americans of a safe and affordable food supply and to provide for the next generation of research scientists. As the Senate begins deliberation of its FY 2003 agriculture spending bill, we urge you to stand by the funding levels for agricultural research as included in the committee-passed bill. Thank you for moving forward towards achieving adequate funding for agricultural research.

Member Societies

- o American Dairy Science Association
- o American Institute of Biological Sciences
- o American Phytopathological Society
- o American Society for Horticultural Science
- o American Society for Microbiology
- o American Society for Nutritional Sciences
- o American Society of Agricultural Engineers
- o American Society of Agronomy
- o American Society of Animal Science
- o American Society of Plant Physiologists
- o Crop Science Society of America
- o Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics
- o Entomological Society of America
- o Federation of Animal Science Societies
- o Genetics Society of America
- o Institute of Food Technologists
- o Poultry Science Association
- o Rural Sociological Society
- o Society of Nematologists
- o Soil Science Society of America
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