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July 3, 2002

The Honorable Henry Bonilla  
Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies  
2362A Rayburn building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bonilla:

As the FY 2003 Agriculture Appropriations bill is being prepared, the Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM) urges you to support the President's proposal of \$240 million for the National Research Initiative (NRI).

CoFARM supports the President's proposal of \$240 million for the NRI. The NRI is a highly respected competitive grants program that funds the basic research necessary to improve crop and livestock production, and the processes that deliver quality food products from farm to table. This type of research is crucial to the future sustainability of our food and fiber system. The nation's food system is facing many significant challenges, ranging from environmental concerns to bioterrorism. In order to address these challenges and maintain our position in an increasingly competitive world, we must maintain and continue to support research programs such as the NRI.

Since 1992, funding for the NRI has decreased by 14% in constant dollars. This decline in research funding puts our nation at risk of losing our ability to survive amidst continually growing competition from overseas and lost agricultural exports. Agricultural research holds the promise of feeding our nation during turbulent times and maintains our ability to lend assistance to other less fortunate nations and people. Congress has the opportunity to encourage agricultural advancement through research by increasing the funding for USDA's NRI program. This program provides researchers the opportunity to produce excellent science that generates wide-ranging solutions to our nation's urban and rural problems.

Without ongoing research, many of our production practices will become obsolete. Scientists engaged in research on agricultural systems have looked at a wide range of issues including:

- Water and Energy Conservation
- Protection of Water Quality
- Development and Improvement of Biotechnology Innovations
- Environmental Quality
- Development of Global Markets
- Improved Control of Weeds, Insects, and Plant and Animal Diseases
- Child Health in Rural Communities
- Food Safety and Security
- Drought-Tolerant Food Crops
- Bone Mass Retention in Older Women

The production systems of the future will be based on the science we support today. Producers need research to achieve efficiency gains and environmental and community. Congress must 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 you lead the Congress in deliberation on funding levels for agricultural research, we urge you to support the President's proposal of \$240 million for the NRI. Please consider CoFARM as a supportive resource in efforts to improve agricultural research capacity. We hope you will call on our membership and scientific expertise.

Sincerely,

CoFARM

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