



Dear Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Kohl and Members of the Subcommittee:

The Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 appropriation for the United States Department of Agriculture. CoFARM is a coalition of 23 professional scientific organizations with 130,000 members dedicated to advancing and sustaining a balanced investment in our nation's research portfolio. CoFARM understands the challenges the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee faces with this year's (FY 2006) tight agriculture budget. 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. We are particularly grateful to the Subcommittee for funding the NRI at \$180 million in FY 2005. Below we have highlighted recommendations for the FY 2006 appropriations cycle.

National Research Initiative: CoFARM strongly endorses the President's proposed FY 2006 budget of \$250 million for the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (NRI). 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.

NRI Integrated Research: CoFARM requests 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.

Indirect Costs: CoFARM applauds the administration's proposal to eliminate the indirect cost cap on the NRI, set at 20% for FY 2005, 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.

Formula Funding: CoFARM believes that cuts to and proposed elimination of CSREES' formula-funded research programs can be detrimental to the entire USDA research portfolio. Because of their timing and potential regional and intra-state impacts,

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much of the infrastructure needed to conduct competitively funded research would be compromised if formula funds were to be cut. To cut Hatch, McIntire-Stennis, and Animal Health & Disease in a *single* fiscal year would irreparably harm those projects. This would mean a huge and potentially damaging loss of research data nationwide.

Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative: CoFARM supports the request of the administration that \$30 million be provided for the Homeland Security Program to facilitate protecting America's agricultural production systems. 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.

A balance of funding mechanisms, including competitive and formula funding, is essential if the capacity of the United States to conduct agricultural research, both basic and applied, is to be maintained and the country is to continue to improve crop and livestock quality, and the processes that deliver safe and nutritious food products from farm to table 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 CSREES.

Past investments in agricultural research have yielded many breakthroughs in American agricultural productivity, including these few Hatch and NRI funded research success stories:

*Pennsylvania researchers are developing rapid diagnostic tests to curb avian influenza, a disease that could cripple the state's \$700 million poultry industry.

*University of Maryland researchers have created an advanced machine vision technology to detect bone fragments and foreign objects in meat.

*Researchers in Florida have tested a common fern's ability to soak up arsenic, a cancer-causing heavy metal, from contaminated soils. The market for plant-based remediation of wastes is estimated to be \$370 million in 2005.

*NRI funded research supported research by a University of California scientist who has genetically engineered a breed of corn with half the usual amount of carbohydrates and double the protein, which should lead to the development of new crops that will help alleviate protein deficiencies in children in developing countries.

*Entomologists and Nematologists developed a vaccine for the protection of cattle from the horn fly, a major insect pest in many parts of the world costing the North American cattle industry alone more than \$1 billion annually.

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*As a result of NRI funding, a group of economists found that the competitive environment of supermarket retailers encourages patterns of adoption of food products using technologies that are new to the market.

*Through NRI funded research, scientists developed a new assay that allows for rapid identification of *Clostridium perfringens*, which is associated with common food-borne illness, in hospital outbreaks and has resulted in improved diagnostic procedures.

*Florida family and youth researchers have shed light on crime and violence trends in schools and evaluated prevention programs. The result has been a decline in disruptive behavior in classrooms by 40 percent over two years. The work is a national model for improving school safety.

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.

As you lead the Congress in deliberation on funding levels for agricultural research, please consider CoFARM as a supportive resource. We hope you will call on our membership and scientific expertise.

Sincerely,

American Phytopathological Society
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Society for Horticultural Science
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutritional Sciences
American Society of Plant Biologists
Council of Entomology Department Administrators
Council on Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics
Crop Science Society of America
Federation of Animal Science Societies
Institute of Food Technologists
Poultry Science Association
Society of Nematologists
Soil Science Society of America
Weed Science Society of America

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Financial Disclosure
Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions

The Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Mission (CoFARM) has received no Federal grants during the current year or within the past two years.

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