

June 3, 2009

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
The Honorable Jack Kingston
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Herb Kohl
The Honorable Sam Brownback
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representatives DeLauro and Kingston and Senators Kohl and Brownback:

Our organizations represent livestock and dairy producers, those who grow feed grains, fiber crops, fruits and vegetables, and others in the food chain. While we embody a wide diversity of interests, we are united in our support for a sustained effort to increase funding for the USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) until this competitive research program reaches its full authorized level of \$700 million per year. As the first step, we support an increase of \$100 million in F.Y. 2010.

The importance of agricultural research has never been more evident:

- Global food security is a challenge. World food demand is expected to increase 100 percent by 2050.
- Foreign crop pests and diseases, introduced either by the weather or the movement of goods, threaten row crops and orchard stocks.
- Novel and exotic animal diseases threaten herds, flocks, and even human health.
- New crops and trees are urgently needed to provide renewable fuels to balance the U.S. energy portfolio and to help sequester carbon to address global climate change.

At the same time, the research needs for other agricultural and natural resource priorities, including conservation, food safety, human health and nutrition, and obesity also continue to rise — creating tougher competition for increasingly scarce USDA research dollars.

We do not expect the federal government to provide all food and agricultural research funding. To cite but one example, agricultural producers will provide \$58 million for crop research this year, through check-off programs and other means (not including funds generated through similar state programs). While funding provided by the private sector is substantial — as this example illustrates — it still falls far short of what is needed to provide the fundamental and applied science breakthroughs needed to ensure that U.S. consumers will continue to have a safe, nutritious, and bountiful food supply. And likewise, it is not enough to assure affordable fuel and fiber produced on a renewable and sustainable basis. However, we must emphasize our belief that providing this requested increase through reductions in other programs or through offsetting reductions in mandatory programs would be counterproductive.

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We believe that American citizens benefit from agricultural research just as they benefit from other health and science research. While AFRI is a smaller program than those of other agencies, it is USDA's premier competitive program. For this reason, we urge you to provide a \$100 million increase for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative as part of the F.Y. 2010 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

American Agriculture Movement
American Corn Growers Association
American Feed Industry Association
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
Biotechnology Industry Organization
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology
Midwestern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Organization
National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Renderers Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship
State Agriculture and Rural Leaders
United Egg Producers
United States Dry Bean Council
U.S. Canola Association
U.S. Cattlemen's Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation