

House Subcommittee Advances FY 2020 Agriculture Appropriations Bill

The House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee approved the FY 2020 Agriculture Appropriations bill on May 23. The subcommittee markup concluded without any amendments offered and the bill was approved by a unanimous voice vote. This bill provides funding for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and other USDA Agencies. The bill totals \$24.310 billion in discretionary funding, an approximately \$1.3 billion increase from the FY 2019 enacted level.

The text of the bill only includes the topline numbers for FY 2020. The bill provides \$1.018 billion in funding for Research and Education Activities, \$536.086 million for Extension Activities, \$40 million for Integrated Activities. The bill also includes \$10 million for 1890 Institutions for Centers of Excellence and \$5 million to conduct a pilot program to for NIFA grants to establish and enhance farming and ranching opportunities for military veterans. NIFA funding is totaled to \$1.609 billion, a \$137.75 million increase from FY 2019.

The committee report, with detailed program funding, will not be released until immediately before the full committee markup, expected in early June.

Bill Language Highlights

Language included in each of the Research and Education, Integrated and Extension Activities accounts:

...Provided further, That none of these funds may be used to relocate the National Institute of Food and Agriculture outside the National Capital Region.

The bill includes language that would permanently block the Secretary from relocating NIFA and ERS, if the move is not completed before the enactment of the bill:

SEC. 758. Hereafter, and notwithstanding any other provision of law, no funds available to the Department of Agriculture may be used to relocate an agency, or any part of an agency, that was located within the National Capital Region on August 1, 2018, to a site outside of the National Capital Region in the absence of the prior enactment of a specific appropriation for that relocation.

SEC. 759. Hereafter, and notwithstanding any other provision of law, no funds available to the Department of Agriculture may be used to move any agency from the mission area in which it was located on August 1, 2018, to any other mission area or office within the Department in the absence of the enactment of specific legislation affirming such move.

Finally, the bill also includes language that would allow the Secretary to waive the matching funds requirement for SCRI:

SEC. 762. The Secretary of Agriculture may waive the matching funds requirement under Section 412(g) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7632(g)).

(Note: This waiver provision would be effective upon date of enactment of the FY 2020 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. Given the likely expected date of enactment of the bill, this waiver provision would not apply to FY 2019 SCRI awards.)

Next Steps

After today's action, the full House Appropriations Committee is expected to consider the bill on Tuesday, June 4.

The Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee is scheduled to meet on June 11 to approve their version of the FY 2020 Agriculture Appropriations Bill.

As always, we will continue to keep you informed as further developments occur.

THE CORNERSTONE TEAM