

November 25, 2009

The Honorable Peter Orszag
Director
Office of Management and Budget
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Director Orszag:

We want to congratulate you again on the successful roll-out of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in October and the Administration's success in working with Congress to increase NIFA's budget in the FY 2010 appropriations process. These are important first steps in achieving the vision laid out by Secretary Vilsack at the roll-out:

"The opportunity to truly transform a field of science happens at best once a generation. Right now, I am convinced, is USDA's opportunity to work with the Congress, the other science agencies, and with our partners in industry, academia, and the nonprofit sector, to bring about transformative change."

We were pleased to support the Administration's efforts. We remain committed to supporting your efforts to fund and carry out this transformative change.

As such, the undersigned organizations are writing to urge the Administration to continue its commitment to transforming agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture by building upon the sound foundation that the President built in signing the FY 2010 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. This legislation provided the largest single-year increase in competitive research programs at USDA by providing \$262 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI).

The increase in funding for AFRI in the annual appropriations bill helps to address this, but the research needs are great and the challenges plentiful. For example, according to NIFA the success rate of proposals funded was only about 22 percent for FY 2007 and 16 percent for FY 2006. In FY 2007, a total of 1877 proposals were submitted to the NRI, requesting a total of \$772,095,728 in funding. Awards totaling \$164,372,877 were made to the 451 highest-ranked proposals submitted.

Providing \$500 million for AFRI in the FY 2011 Budget will not meet this entire need, but will ensure that we continue to address critical issues in agricultural research and extension funding for the coming year. This will also put us on a path to reaching the authorized funding level of \$700 million for AFRI by the end of this Farm Bill in 2012, consistent with the vision articulated by Secretary Vilsack.

However, we must emphasize that increases in competitive research cannot be at the expense or exclusion of funding for the core capacity programs at land-grant institutions or USDA's intramural research activities. In fact, these programs must substantially grow to ensure that we

have the capability to address the ever-increasing emergent threats in agricultural production and food safety, while continuing ongoing efforts on issues such as diet and nutrition and environmental stewardship. Similarly, proposals that reduce the farm safety net to fund increases in research will be unproductive.

We are encouraged by the leadership and engagement we have witnessed from the leadership team for the Research, Education and Economics mission area and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. We are confident that the Administration will appoint a new Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics at USDA who will build upon the vision and energy that Dr. Rajiv Shah brought to USDA in his short tenure.

We look forward to working with the Administration to achieve our mutual goals of supporting rural communities, providing affordable sources of renewable energy, protecting our environment, providing safe, affordable food and fiber both for Americans and for consumers around the world, and continuing to utilize USDA research to address growing complex issues in American agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration.

Agricultural Retailers Association
American Agri-Women
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Horse Council
American Malting Barley Association
American Nursery and Landscape Association
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Board on Agriculture Assembly of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
Council for Agriculture Science and Technology
Donald Danforth Plant Science Center
Horticultural Research Institute
Livestock Marketing Association
National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union

National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Renderers Association
National Restaurant Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
North American Millers Association
Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship
Oregon Association of Nurseries
South East Dairy Farmers Association
United Egg Association
United Egg Producers
United Fresh Produce Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
US Canola Association
U.S. Cattlemen's Association
US Dry Bean Council
US Rice Producers Association
Western United Dairymen