

December 14, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman, Senate Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug Administration,  
and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug Administration,  
and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

Dear Chairmen, Vice Chairman, and Ranking Member,

We write as a coalition of organizations from the food, agriculture, scientific, academic, veterinary, and consumer communities to urge you to substantially increase the discretionary budget cap for domestic programs and provide an allocation for the FY 2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill of 5 percent of the total domestic discretionary budget cap increase.

The food and agricultural sector alone contributes nearly \$1 trillion to the national economy every year, or approximately 5.5% of the nation's GDP.<sup>i</sup> The sector supports over 22 million American jobs, or nearly 15% of U.S. employment.<sup>ii</sup> This segment of our economy is the best example of how the combination of technology, ingenuity, and hard work have made our country the strongest force for improving the lives of billions of people here and around the world.

However, more support is needed if we are to maintain our historic leadership in this area. If the budget caps are raised, additional agricultural investment should be a top priority within the final omnibus bill. We believe that the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees are currently hamstrung by a discretionary allocation that is not commensurate with the importance of this sector to the daily lives of Americans. This is a challenge that can only be remedied by leadership on both sides of Capitol Hill, and by the full Appropriations Committees.

The USDA and FDA bill is the smallest of all the appropriations bills, save for the legislative appropriation. The success of the American farm and food system has made it possible for the consistent transfer of resources into other sectors. Since FY 2010, the inflation-adjusted agricultural appropriations budget has fallen by 20 percent,<sup>iii</sup> while most other allocations have grown or not faced the same dramatic cuts. These reductions pose immediate and long-term threats to our production, natural resources, and ability to lead on an increasingly competitive global stage, which is why the trend of declining investment must be reversed now. The marginal value of this extra funding to promote science, rural development, and the economic health of agriculture far outweighs the last dollars of spending in many other areas and these investments will improve food security and national security.

Thank you for your leadership and for your continued support of this vital sector of our nation's economy. We look forward to informing you and your colleagues about the importance of agriculture as we move ahead in the FY 2018 appropriations process, as well as FY 2019 and beyond.

Sincerely,

AFRI Coalition  
Alliance of Crop, Soil and Environmental Science Societies  
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Farmland Trust  
American Malting Barley Association  
American Phytopathological Society  
American Society for Horticultural Science  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society for Nutrition  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Animal Science  
American Society of Plant Biologists  
American Soybean Association  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
AmericanHort  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
Brooks Tropicals  
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association  
Center for Rural Affairs  
Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Foundation  
Consumer Federation of America  
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics  
Crop Science Society of America  
Entomological Society of America  
Farm Journal Foundation  
Farm to Table New Mexico  
FASS  
Global Harvest Initiative  
Land for Good

Maine Farmland Trust  
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association  
MBG Marketing  
Midwest Poultry Consortium  
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals Multistate Initiative  
National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance  
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science  
National Association of Plant Breeders  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Barley Improvement Committee  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Farmers Union  
National Onion Association  
National Organic Coalition  
National Sunflower Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council  
Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides  
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association  
Oregon Tilth  
Pesticide Action Network  
Poultry Science Association  
Restaurant Services, Inc.  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
Rural Advancement Foundation International  
Society for Range Management  
Soil and Water Conservation Society

Soil Science Society of America  
Supporters of Agricultural Research Foundation  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
US Canola Association  
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee  
US Dry Bean Council  
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council  
Village Farms  
Virginia Association for Biological Farming  
Western Growers  
Xerces Society

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> USDA Economic Research Service. "Ag and Food Sectors and the Economy." Accessed December 14, 2017.

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/ag-and-food-sectors-and-the-economy.aspx>.

<sup>ii</sup> The Goodstone Group. "U.S. Food and Agriculture Industries Economic Impact Study, 2017." Feeding the Economy. October 3, 2017. <http://www.feedingtheeconomy.com/assets/res/methodology.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> Congressional Research Service. "Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2017 Appropriations." June 26, 2017. [https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20170626\\_R44588\\_6f554ed0ec22ae1943c223e5c7b6af9c8684fde8.pdf](https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20170626_R44588_6f554ed0ec22ae1943c223e5c7b6af9c8684fde8.pdf).