

December 14, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader

Dear Senator McConnell and Senator Schumer,

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.ⁱ The sector supports over 22 million American jobs, or nearly 15% of U.S. employment.ⁱⁱ 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,ⁱⁱⁱ 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

cc:

The Honorable John Cornyn
Senate Majority Whip

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Senate Minority Whip

Endnotes

ⁱ 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>.

ⁱⁱ 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>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Congressional Research Service. "Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2017 Appropriations." June 26, 2017. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20170626_R44588_6f554ed0ec22ae1943c223e5c7b6af9c8684fde8.pdf.