



Plants from our production systems provide us food, feed, fiber and medicines and account for a considerable portion of the Gross Domestic Product and payments in foreign trade. Hence, growing plants in a sustainable and economically viable manner is required for the United States to be secure. Maintaining plant health from naturally occurring or purposefully introduced disease agents is the role of research, instruction and outreach programs in plant pathology, but there are many voids in the security and sustainability of our plant production systems.

The American Phytopathological Society (APS) is a non-profit, professional scientific organization representing more than 5,000 scientists and practitioners of plant pathology dedicated to the study and control of plant disease. The **APS Public Policy Board** (PPB) provides scientific input on public policy issues, from funding and regulatory issues to increasing the awareness of plant pathology among policy makers and agency personnel. www.apsnet.org

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The APS seeks your support for the following:

NRI **The National Research Initiative** (NRI), housed within the USDA, has the mission of funding essential, fundamental research targeting current agricultural problems, and anticipating future research needs. The NRI has sponsored research projects that have dramatically benefited agricultural science and technology, and the agency is highly respected within the research community because of the very competitive process used to identify projects for funding. Although originally authorized at \$500 million in 1990, the actual allocation for NRI has never approached this level, and the President's request for FY 07 is \$247.5 million. ***The NRI is and has been chronically and significantly under funded.*** A result of this under-funding is that many important projects are turned away each year, with substantial opportunity missed to improve our nation's international competitiveness. ***We therefore urge that funding for the NRI be increased to \$247.5 million to ensure that the NRI advances its stature as the premiere program for competitive agricultural research funding, and so that critical fundamental research in plant and microbial genomics, plant-microbe interactions, and crop biosecurity can be conducted.***



The National Plant Diagnostics Network (NPDN) was established in 2002 to enhance national agricultural security. The charge to NPDN was to establish a means of efficient, timely, secure exchange of plant disease information and provide a coordinated infrastructure for effective diagnostics and rapid response to threats to plant health. In this relatively short time, significant progress has been made toward establishing a nationwide network of public and state institutions and organizations with a cohesive system to facilitate detection, identification, notification and response to pests and pathogens introduced into our agricultural and natural ecosystems by intentional or unintentional means. Many gaps remain, however, and it is clear that the \$9.9 million allocated this year is inadequate for the 50 states to properly fund and operate their diagnostic centers. ***Therefore, we urge that funding for the NPDN be increased and annualized to expedite progress in this nationwide effort as part of the \$30 million outlined in the President's budget for the Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative.***

NCPB Securing our crop production systems, forests, and rangelands requires a multi-agency, and highly coordinated effort. Many initiatives on the part of Federal agencies, academic institutions, and the private sector have significantly improved our understanding of these issues and our ability to address them. To enhance this effort even further, APS has joined with seven other related scientific organizations on a proposal for the establishment of a **National Center for Plant Biosecurity** (NCPB) within the USDA as a Federal coordinating office staffed by Federal employees and administered at the level of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture. The NCPB will provide a focal point for the enhancement, and coordination of current efforts relating to defense against bioterrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, such as the recent introduction of soybean rust into the U.S. ***We therefore urge for development of the NCPB to provide a strong framework and leadership for anticipating, detecting, responding to, managing, and recovering from such events, as mandated in presidential directive HSPD-9 and will complement the National Plant Disease Recovery System called for in HSPD-9.***