

Call to Action - NPDN Funding in Jeopardy

Background: Federal funding for the National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN) is at grave risk for FY2012. The U.S. House of Representatives, Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee reduced to zero the funding for the Food and Agricultural Defense Initiative (FADI) within the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) budget. FADI is the program that provides funding for the NPDN and several other critical programs for food security in the U.S. FY 2010 levels for FADI were more than \$9 million, which included \$4.4 million for the NPDN. Recently, FY2011 funding was reduced by 39.1%, a level that cannot sustain the program and risks the closure of essential diagnostic laboratories. Without adequate funding from USDA (FY2010 level), the award-winning and highly successful NPDN program will, at best, stop funding many state diagnostic laboratories, and at worst, cease to exist.

NPDN provides critical infrastructure and programs that are not available elsewhere and requires federal funding to support its mission. NPDN laboratories help protect our nation's crops, forests, rangelands and ornamentals and their associated industries through careful analysis of hundreds of thousands of samples every year to detect threats that would have significant negative economic impact on agriculture, threaten the safety of our food supply, harm public health, and jeopardize trade.

- The NPDN provides essential multistate coordination of surge capacity during large outbreaks ensuring that samples are diagnosed without delay.
- The NPDN provides required training support for advanced diagnostic procedures for high consequence pests, diseases and weeds.
- The NPDN provides outreach and education for first detectors and best management practices for expeditious sample submission, processing, and communications of results.
- The NPDN maintains a national repository of diagnostic results to document and recognize local, state, regional and national trends in outbreaks.

Need for Action: Right now, funding for the FADI is under consideration by the U.S. Senate. If the House subcommittee's proposal is accepted and enacted by Congress, then funding for FADI, and consequently NPDN, will be eliminated. Thus, it is important that the Senate and other congressional representatives are made aware of the importance of FADI and the programs supported by it; e.g., NPDN.

What You Can Do: Please contact your Senate (www.senate.gov) and House (www.house.gov) members immediately to convey your concern and support for the NPDN. You should also communicate with your institution's government relations officers to engage their advocacy. Please urge them to oppose reductions in NPDN and FADI at the USDA. The APS Public Policy blog website (PhytoPath Blog: <http://www.apsnet.org/members/outreach/ppb/blog/default.aspx>.) contains links and other information for contacting your members of congress. A sample email or letter text is below. For additional information or help, contact any of the PPB board members or Kellye Eversole (Eversole@eversoleassociates.com). Additional information about the programs and impact of the NPDN can be found at www.npdn.org and www.npdn.org/webfm_send/1608.

Sample Email or Letter Text:

Please modify the wording (without losing the message) and add state-specific examples to make your letter unique and not just another form letter.

Date:

Dear Senator _____: (or Dear Representative _____ :)

Subject: Appropriations for the National Plant Diagnostic Network, Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative

*I am writing to urge you to **oppose elimination** of the funding for the Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative (FADI) at the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and to **restore funding** for the programs supported by this initiative, including the National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN). As a plant diagnostician at _____, my work is essential to the efforts to detect and mitigate emerging or introduced pathogens and pests that threaten plant-based agriculture and other plant resources. Without funding to maintain our country's critical infrastructure for plant diagnostics, we will not be able to rapidly identify high consequence agents, such as the _____ that was detected recently in our state. The ten-year investment in the National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN), funded by FADI, has created a state-of-the art system that is now recognized as a critical component in our country's efforts to protect our food supply and our ability to export agricultural products. I recognize that sacrifices must be made; however, elimination of the successful NPDN program will irrevocably damage our state's and our nation's ability to protect against agents that threaten our crops, rangelands, forests and landscapes. In support of our domestic and export economies, I strongly encourage you to establish plant diagnostics as a national priority and to **oppose cuts** to NPDN.*

Thank you for your consideration.

*Sincerely,
Your name,
phone number,
email address*