

# The American Phytopathological Society

## In Focus: The National Plant Diagnostic Network



### About APS

The American Phytopathological Society (APS), a non-profit, professional scientific organization representing over 3,600 scientists and practitioners of plant pathology, is dedicated to the study, diagnostics, and management of plant diseases, especially as it relates to providing food, feed, fiber, energy, and ecosystem services for an increasing world population. APS is the premier society dedicated to high quality, innovative science for crop and forest management of plant pathogens, pests and diseases. Many of our members lead and work within the National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN). The NPDN is a top priority for our society.

### About NPDN

The NPDN is a highly-respected consortium of over 70 plant diagnostic laboratories sponsored within the USDA - National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Implemented through and managed by land grant universities, state departments of agriculture, and other stakeholders, NPDN is structured as a cohesive, distributed system designed to provide rapid detection, accurate identification, and timely reporting of pests and pathogens of concern to enable effective responses by growers and state & federal regulators.

The NPDN was established in 2002, in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks as a means to ensure our national biosecurity. It has contributed to the early detection and accurate identification of pathogens and pests that have key importance to natural and agricultural plant systems, some of potential high consequences with implications for trade.



Using the inflation calculators from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$3 million in 2011 is worth only \$2.1 million in today's terms.

However, the situation is worse than this because lab consumables have increased in cost at rates well above the general level of inflation in the economy.

### Funding for the NPDN

In 2017, Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) requested a budget analysis on what would be required for the NPDN to fully meet its mission. That analysis concluded that an annual budget of \$15 million is needed and underpins language in the 2018 Farm Bill Title XII, which allows up to \$15 million in discretionary appropriations for the NPDN.

Despite this authorizing language, since 2011, the NPDN's budget has been allocated through a different budget line – at barely over \$3 million.

NPDN facilities have always operated within extremely tight constraints but are now at a tipping point. The NPDN's management team is no longer able to send adequate funding to state labs, causing some labs to cease participation in the network. Due to the lack of resources, NPDN labs are currently limited in their ability to support private landowners and federal agencies, such as the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

### Policy Asks

The NPDN is a critical component of national biosecurity infrastructure and an essential partner to state and federal regulatory agencies in safeguarding the trade of plants and plant products. If this USDA-NIFA program is to meet the increasing demands from APHIS-PPQ, industry, and the public for quality and reliable diagnostics, then support for the NPDN needs to keep pace with those demands.

APS requests the following in the 119th Congress:

- Retain authorization level of \$15 million for the NPDN.
- In the FY26 spending bill, appropriate \$15 million for the NPDN.