

The American Phytopathological Society

In Focus: The National Plant Diagnostic Network



About APS

The American Phytopathological Society (APS) is a non-profit, professional organization of 3,600 plant pathology scientists and practitioners whose work safeguards agriculture, food security, and the national ecosystem to prevent billions of dollars in crop losses in the U.S. each year. Spanning industry, academia, government, and private practice, APS members study and manage plant pathogens, pests, and diseases to ensure healthy plants thrive in crops of all types across all 50 states. Many of our members lead and work within the National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN), a cornerstone of U.S. agricultural biosecurity and plant health infrastructure. Ensuring the longevity of NPDN is a top priority for our society.

About NPDN

NPDN is a highly respected consortium of over 70 plant diagnostic laboratories spanning all regions of the United States. Sponsored within the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the network is executed and overseen by land grant universities, state departments of agriculture, and other key stakeholders. NPDN facilitates real-time communication and coordination among federal agencies, state partners, diagnosticians, growers, and regulators—ensuring rapid detection, accurate identification, and swift, science-based responses to emerging pest and pathogen threats. Funding for NPDN supports operational and workforce support for these biosecurity efforts, as well as investment in advanced diagnostic tools like Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS) and ongoing training for diagnosticians, keeping the U.S. protected and at the forefront of plant health innovation.

NPDN was established in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks to ensure the future of national biosecurity. Since 2002, it has contributed to the early detection of invasive plant and pest species, preventing outbreaks that could devastate U.S. crops and natural ecosystems.



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.