

The American Phytopathological Society



In Focus: Building out the Plant Pathology & Microbe Workforce

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.

APS supports workforce expansion policies that protect US agriculture, ensuring skilled plant pathologists hold vital positions to mitigate disease outbreaks, disease spread, and the introduction of new, invasive plant pathogens. We work closely with the Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research and the private industry to identify sector-wide solutions that sustain —and expand—the workforce pipeline to strengthen national food security, economic stability, and biosecurity.

Growing our Workforce

Healthy plants are essential for ensuring the quality and affordability of the nation's food, fuel, and fiber supply. Addressing plant health challenges and safeguarding agricultural productivity require a robust, skilled, and well-trained workforce. As the threats to plant health become more complex due to natural/environmental hazards, globalization, and emerging pathogens, APS recognizes the urgency of investing in initiatives that grow and sustain the next generation of plant health professionals. Expanding workforce capacity ensures that we have the expertise to advance scientific research, protect ecosystems, and bolster the nation's agricultural and economic resilience.



Plant pathology is an interdisciplinary science that includes knowledge of botany, microbiology, crop science, soil science, ecology, genetics, biochemistry, molecular biology, and physiology.

Policy Asks

- In the FY 26 spending bill, we encourage the increased funding levels:
 - Increase funding levels for NIFA Research & Education Activities.
 - Increase funding levels for scholarships and education grants within NIFA.
- Incorporate plant health into more comprehensive bills, such as pre-disaster mitigation, agriculture, environment, national and international food security, human health, and defense. As agencies and the private sector increase their need for skilled plant pathologists, investments in training will need to increase from academia, agencies, and the private sector as a united effort.
- Encourage federal agencies to continue inclusive hiring practices that broaden the workforce and to increase practical training and skill development opportunities.