

Sequestration and Beyond

Deans and directors of agricultural research and extension from America’s land-grant university system and citizen advocates from their states come to Washington every February to deliver the system’s budget and appropriations requests for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Given that the F. Y. 2013 appropriations process is not complete and the President’s Budget has been delayed until at least mid-March, we are not able—at this time—to provide congressional offices with our final F. Y. 2014 NIFA priorities. However, we make the following specific requests:

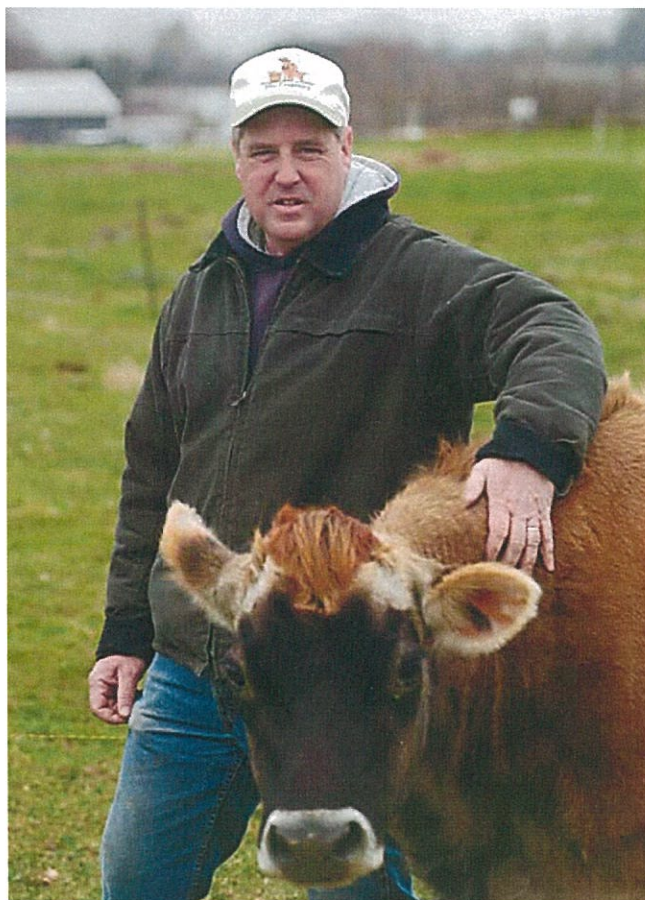
1. Sequestration. Congress and the President must work out a fiscally-sound alternative to the scheduled sequestration cuts. If it is not possible to avoid these reductions totally, then the effects on agricultural research, extension, and teaching must be minimized.

2. F. Y. 2013 Appropriations. Congress must act expeditiously to complete the F. Y. 2013 appropriations process and to do so without making further reductions to either the topline NIFA appropriation or the land-grant system’s seven core NIFA priorities displayed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. CORE NIFA PRIORITIES	\$Millions
Smith-Lever 3(b)-3(c)	294.000
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative	264.470
Hatch Act	236.334
Evans-Allen	50.898
1890 Institutions Extension	42.592
McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry	32.934
1994 Institutions Research and Extension	6.113

We urge Congress to fund these seven priorities in F. Y. 2013 at no less than their F. Y. 2012 levels as shown above. (The priorities have equal importance but are listed from largest to smallest in this table.)

3. Farm Bill. Congress must build upon the significant progress made in 2012 to craft a new multi-year Farm Bill that continues important mandatory funding for organic research and extension, specialty crops research, beginning farmer and rancher development, and biomass research and development. (The



Senate and House Agriculture Committees both included funding for some/all of these programs in last year’s bills.)

4. F. Y. 2014 Appropriations. Once the F. Y. 2013 appropriations decisions are final, Congress should complete the F. Y. 2014 appropriations process in a timely way and protect all NIFA programs from further budget cuts.

As outlined on the opposite of this sheet, America’s land-grant universities and related institutions are responsible for much of the world-wide increases in agricultural productivity achieved during the last 50-60 years and many other science breakthroughs. While we are justifiably proud of our past successes, we are extremely concerned about our ability to meet future challenges without stable federal and state funding.

For additional information, please email Hunt Shipman (hshipman@cgagroup.com) or Jim Richards (jrichards@cgagroup.com). Phone: 202.448.9500



Excerpts from the PCAST Report

The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) recently issued a report to the President addressing "the scientific challenges facing the Nation's agricultural research enterprise and [making] recommendations on how to refocus and re-balance the federal government's support of agricultural research to enable U.S. farmers to meet the critical challenges facing U.S. agriculture in the 21st century."¹

The PCAST report should be read in its entirety. However, the following direct quotes are worth highlighting:

- The American agricultural enterprise has consistently boosted productivity over the past few decades for most major crops and livestock, and it has been a hallmark of industrial innovation... *Numerous studies attribute these successes to the discovery, development, and rapid adoption of new technologies and agronomic practices, which directly stem from the U.S. investment in basic and applied plant, animal, and agricultural research across the federal agencies and its translation to farms by both the land-grant universities and the private sector.* (Emphasis added.)
- [However,] public financial support for agricultural research has waned over the past three decades... as other areas of science and technology research and development have seen substantial growth. *Public funding of agricultural research, in real dollars, has remained at nearly the same level for the last 30 years.* (Emphasis added.)
- Excluding recent research on biofuels production, less than \$500 million per year is available for competitive grants in agriculture, roughly 2 percent of the amount of competitive funding from the National Institutes of Health and 6 percent from the [National Science Foundation].
- One consequence of the small amount of competitive funding for agricultural research is the decline in the training of new agricultural scientists and the hindered recruitment of a new generation of the best young scientists into this area.
- *Although the United States is the undisputed world leader in agricultural production today, continued innovation and investment are essential to maintaining a competitive advantage in the future.* (Emphasis added.)

- [A]griculture faces a series of new challenges that will require a renewed commitment to innovation and advanced technology development. Private industry will play an important role in the research required to meet these challenges, just as it does today in areas directly related to product development. But much of the necessary research is unlikely to result in new products in a time horizon short enough to incent the private sector to shoulder the entire research burden. *Moreover, many of these challenges are clearly in the public domain, as they focus on critical public goods, such as long-term water security; integrated pest-management strategies; or the development of new varieties of livestock, cereal, vegetable, and cover crops that commercial enterprises may not have an interest in.* (Emphasis added.) In many cases, important benefits of agricultural research cannot be monetized, making them an unlikely focus for the private sector.
- *The waning public investment in agricultural research in the United States contributes significantly to the risk of losing [our] international leadership in agriculture [to nations such as China, India, and Brazil].* (Emphasis added.)

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PCAST:

- Increase funding for basic science relevant to agriculture.
- Increase competitively awarded funding within the USDA, raising the current level of funding for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative from \$265 million to \$500 million (the original Congressional authorization was \$700 million).
- (NIFA) in collaboration with NSF (should) expand the national competitive fellowship program for graduate students and post-doctoral researchers.
- Expand the USDA program of competitive awards for new infrastructure investments for agricultural research with an emphasis on specialization and consolidation to avoid redundancies.
- Create a permanent, independent science advisory committee to advise the Chief Scientist of the USDA.

¹ President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, "Agricultural Preparedness and the Agriculture Research Enterprise," Dec. 2012. www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast_agriculture_20121207.pdf

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