



March 24, 2015

Outside Witness Testimony from Simin Nikbin Meydani, D.V.M., Ph.D. regarding U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Fiscal Year 2016 funding  
2014-2015 President, American Society for Nutrition  
Director, Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food  
and Drug Administration, and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food  
and Drug Administration, and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Merkley:

**The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) respectfully requests that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)/ National Institute of Food and Agriculture/ Agriculture and Food Research Initiative receive \$450 million and that the Agricultural Research Service receive \$1.2 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2016, the Administration's proposed funding levels.** ASN has more than 5,000 members working throughout academia, clinical practice, government, and industry, who conduct research to advance our knowledge and application of nutrition.

#### **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative**

The USDA has been the lead nutrition agency and the most important federal agency influencing U.S. dietary intake and food patterns for years. Agricultural research is essential to address the ever-increasing demand for a healthy, affordable, nutritious and sustainable food supply. The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program is charged with funding research, education, and extension and integrated, competitive grants that address key problems of national, regional, and multi-state importance in sustaining all components of agriculture. These components include human nutrition, farm efficiency and profitability, ranching, renewable energy, forestry (both urban and agro forestry), aquaculture, food safety, biotechnology, and conventional breeding. AFRI has funded cutting-edge, agricultural research on key issues of timely importance on a competitive, peer-reviewed basis since its establishment in the 2008 Farm Bill. Adequate funding for agricultural research is critical to provide a safe and nutritious food supply for the world population, to preserve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace, and to provide jobs and revenue crucial to support the U.S. economy.

In order to achieve those benefits, AFRI must be able to advance fundamental sciences in support of agriculture and coordinate opportunities to build off of these discoveries. **Therefore, ASN requests that the AFRI competitive grants program receive \$450 million**, the Administration's proposed funding of AFRI, **in FY 2016. ASN also strongly supports funding AFRI at the fully authorized level of \$700 million as soon as practical.** Current flat and decreased funding for AFRI hinders scientific advances that support agricultural funding and research. ASN also urges Congress to direct the use of some of these funds for both intra- and extramural human nutrition research.

### **Agricultural Research Service**

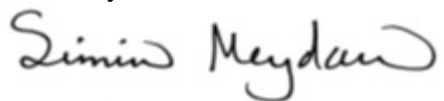
The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is the Department of Agriculture's lead scientific research agency. The ARS conducts research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority. USDA's program of human nutrition research is housed in six Human Nutrition Research Centers (HNRCs) across the nation, that link producer and consumer interests and form the core for building knowledge about food and nutrition. HNRCs conduct unparalleled human nutrition research on the role of food and dietary components in human health from conception to advanced old age, and they provide authoritative, peer-reviewed, science-based evidence that forms the basis of our federal nutrition policy and programs. Funding for ARS supports all of the USDA/ HNRCs and ensures that these research facilities have adequate funding to continue their unique mission of improving the health of Americans through cutting-edge food, nutrition and agricultural research.

Nutrition monitoring conducted in partnership by the USDA/ ARS with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is a unique and critically important surveillance function in which dietary intake, nutritional status, and health status are evaluated in a rigorous and standardized manner. (ARS is responsible for food and nutrient databases and the "What We Eat in America" dietary survey, while HHS is responsible for tracking nutritional status and health parameters.) Nutrition monitoring is an inherently governmental function and findings are essential for multiple government agencies, as well as the public and private sector. Nutrition monitoring is essential to track what Americans are eating, inform nutrition and dietary guidance policy, evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of nutrition assistance programs, and study nutrition-related disease outcomes. Because of past funding deficiencies, some food composition database entries do not reflect the realities of the current food supply, which may negatively impact programs and policies based on this information. It is imperative that needed funds to update USDA's food and nutrient databases and the "What We Eat in America" dietary survey, both maintained by the USDA/ ARS, are appropriated to ensure the continuation of this critical surveillance of the nation's nutritional status and the many benefits it provides.

It is the job of ARS to ensure high-quality, safe food, and other agricultural products; assess the nutritional needs of Americans; sustain a competitive agricultural economy; enhance the natural resource base and the environment; and provide economic opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society as a whole. **Therefore, ASN requests that ARS receive at least \$1.2 billion in FY 2016**, with Congress directing the use of some of these funds for both intra- and extramural human nutrition research. Resources above current funding levels are necessary to ensure the critical surveillance of the nation's nutritional status and to continue the many other benefits that ARS provides. With such funding, the ARS will be able to support its vision of leading America towards a better future through agricultural research and information.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY 2016 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture/ National Institute of Food and Agriculture/ AFRI competitive grants program and Agricultural Research Service. Please contact John E. Courtney, Ph.D., the American Society for Nutrition's Executive Officer, at 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda MD 20814; 301-634-7078; or [jcourtney@nutrition.org](mailto:jcourtney@nutrition.org) if ASN may provide further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Simin Meydani". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Simin Nikbin Meydani, D.V.M., Ph.D.  
2014-2015 President, American Society for Nutrition