



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice

March 14, 2012

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

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

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Blunt,

The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding fiscal year (FY) 2013 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) and the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Founded in 1928, ASN is a nonprofit scientific society with more than 4,500 members in academia, clinical practice, government and industry. **ASN respectfully requests \$1.2 billion for USDA's Agricultural Research Service, and we urge you to adopt the President's request of \$325 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative competitive grants program in FY 2013.**

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 AFRI competitive grants program is charged with funding research, education, and extension grants and integrated research, extension, and education 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 these benefits, AFRI must be able to advance fundamental sciences in support of agriculture and coordinate opportunities to build off of these discoveries.

Therefore, ASN strongly urges you to adopt the President's request of \$325 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative competitive grants program in FY 2013.

ASN also strongly supports funding AFRI at the fully authorized level of \$700 million as soon

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as practical. Current flat and decreased funding for AFRI hinders scientific advances that support agricultural funding and research.

Agricultural Research Service

The 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. It is also 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.

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 don't reflect 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.

With the growing need for agricultural research to ensure that the country is healthy, ARS requires access to sufficient funding. **Therefore, ASN requests that ARS receive \$1.2 billion in FY 2013.** At least ten million dollars above current funding levels is necessary to ensure that the critical surveillance of the nation's nutritional status and the many other benefits ARS provides continue. With such funding, the ARS will be able to continue its vision of leading America towards a better future through agricultural research and information.

USDA AFRI and ARS programs are both equally important to the nutrition field because together they provide the infrastructure and the investigator-initiated, peer-reviewed research that generates new knowledge and allows for rapid progress towards meeting national dietary needs. These programs allow USDA to make the connection between what we grow and what we eat. Through strategic nutrition monitoring, we can also learn how dietary intake affects our health.

Thank you for your support of USDA ARS and AFRI, and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY 2013 appropriations. Please contact John E. Courtney, Ph.D., Executive Officer, at jcourtney@nutrition.org or 301-634-7078, if ASN may provide further assistance.

Sincerely,
Sharon M. Donovan, Ph.D., R.D.
President, American Society for Nutrition