

April 11, 2018

The Honorable Chairman Robert Aderholt
House of Representatives
Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies
2362-A Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Sanford Bishop
House of Representatives
Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies
1016 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Maintain or Increase Funding for USDA Economic Research Programs in FY19

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop:

The undersigned groups, coordinated by the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA), strongly support federal investment to advance economic research in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), particularly for the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA). We support funding for these agencies in fiscal year 2019 (FY19) at levels that are *at least* those approved in the FY18 omnibus appropriations bill.

Economic research at ERS and NIFA addresses questions like these: How well does the current farm safety net allow farmers to manage risk? How would changes to trade policy affect farmers and consumers? What are low cost ways to track food safety? What are economic benefits and costs of conservation programs? What is the payoff to public investments in agricultural research? These questions are predominantly national in scope and would not be addressed by the private sector; their answers require public investment at the federal level.

The ERS is *the* intramural economic research agency of the USDA. As such, it provides timely, impartial, research-based economic analysis to meet the needs of the public, of the Executive and Congress, of U.S. universities, of USDA partner agencies, and for USDA program evaluation. Like the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the ERS is a statistical agency, but its primary value lies not in the data that it collects with NASS, but rather in its economic research. The ERS plays a unique role in providing economic expertise and data-driven models that enable timely, objective analysis. Examples include: 1) agricultural market price and quantity forecasts using U.S. and international data; 2) international trade analysis and global land use; 3) consumer food choices and expenditures; and 4) farm sector economics of energy, biofuels, and conservation policies. The ERS is a global leader in modeling economics of agriculture and food, with highly cited research and leadership of the top U.S. annual agricultural economic model improvement workshop. ERS data and analysis have proven essential for states to make rapid assessments of recent hurricane and flood damage.

The NIFA manages extramural programs of crucial importance to supporting agricultural and applied economics research, education, and outreach outside of the federal government. We support increased funding for these research programs, especially those including economics. In particular, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) provides competitive research grants both in disciplinary fields like the Agriculture Economics and Rural Communities (AERC) program and in multi-disciplinary Challenge Areas. NIFA's formula funding to land-grant institutions continues to play a crucial role in supporting the institutional base that enables state-level research, education, and extension.

The ERS and NIFA are warp and weft in the fabric of economic research at the USDA. The strength of the fabric depends on the strength of both the intramural and extramural parts. As representatives of the larger community that values and benefits from USDA economic research, we the organizations signed below are deeply concerned about the cuts to USDA economic research proposed in the President's FY2019 budget. We urge you to maintain or increase funding in FY19 for ERS, NIFA, NASS, and other USDA agencies supporting economic research.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Associations

- **Agricultural & Applied Economics Association**
- **Association of Aquaculture Economics and Management**
- Laura Taylor, President, **Association of Environmental and Resource Economists**
- **Food Distribution Research Society**
- **North American Association of Fisheries Economists**
- **Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association**
- **Southern Agricultural Economics Association**
- **Western Agricultural Economics Association**

University Departments

- Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, **University of Arizona**
- Agriculture Department, **Southern Arkansas University**
- Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, **Auburn University**
- Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, **University of California-Berkeley**
- Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, **University of California-Davis**
- Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, **California State University-Fresno**
- Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, **Colorado State University**
- Department of Applied Economics and Statistics, **University of Delaware**
- Octavio Ramirez, Professor and Head, Department of Agricultural, and Applied Economics, **University of Georgia**
- Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, **University of Idaho**
- Department of Agricultural & Consumer Economics, **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**
- Department of Agriculture, **Illinois State University**
- Department of Economics, **Iowa State University**
- Department of Government & Economics, **Eastern Kentucky University**

- School of Economics, **University of Maine**
- Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, **Michigan State University**
- Department of Applied Economics, **University of Minnesota**
- Agricultural Economics Department, **Mississippi State University**
- Department of Agricultural Economics, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, **University of Nebraska-Lincoln**
- Department of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Business, **New Mexico State University**
- Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, **North Carolina State University**
- Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics, **North Dakota State University**
- Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, **The Ohio State University**
- Department of Agricultural Economics, **Oklahoma State University**
- Department of Applied Economics, College of Agricultural Sciences, **Oregon State University**
- Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education, **The Pennsylvania State University**
- Jayson Lusk, Distinguished Professor and Head, Department of Agricultural Economics, **Purdue University**
- Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, **Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey**
- Department of Agricultural Economics, **Texas A&M**
- Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, **Texas Tech University**
- Department of Community Development and Applied Economics, **University of Vermont**
- Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, **Virginia Tech**
- School of Economic Sciences, **Washington State University**
- Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics, **University of Wisconsin-Madison**

College Deans

- Wayne B. Powell, Interim Dean, College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, **Arkansas Tech University**
- Shane C. Burgess, Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, **University of Arizona**
- Kathryn J. Boor, The Ronald P. Lynch Dean, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, **Cornell University**
- Lynn Perry Wooten, The David J. Nolan Dean, The Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics & Management Cornell SC Johnson College of Business, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, **Cornell University**
- Randy Harp, Dean and Professor, College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, **Texas A&M University – Commerce**
- Cathann Kress, Dean, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, **The Ohio State University**
- Daniel Arp, Dean, College of Agricultural Sciences, **Oregon State University**
- Richard Roush, Dean, College of Agricultural Sciences, **The Pennsylvania State University**
- Dariush Mozaffarian, Dean and Jean Mayer Professor of Nutrition and Medicine, Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, **Tufts University**

CC: Members of the House Committee On Agriculture