

September 3, 2009

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
The Honorable Jack Kingston
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Herb Kohl
The Honorable Sam Brownback
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representatives DeLauro and Kingston and Senators Kohl and Brownback:

The undersigned organizations represent agricultural producers and others that support food, fiber, and other agriculture production in the United States. We appreciate the efforts the House and Senate have made to increase funding for agricultural research and extension programs in the F.Y. 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Act.

We write to indicate our strong support for the \$295.2 million provided for the USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) in the Senate-passed bill and urge you to sustain this level in conference. This is a significant step towards our goal of reaching the full authorized level of \$700 million per year for this competitive research program.

Funding for this competitively-awarded program has not kept pace with the need for innovation and demand. In fact, USDA reports that it had to reject — solely on the basis of funding constraints — 78% of the meritorious proposals it received and peer-reviewed in F.Y. 2007 and 84% in F.Y. 2006.

While we support the appropriation for this program approved by the Senate, we express strong concern about guidance included in the Senate Committee report which would designate at least ten percent of future funding for the AFRI for forestry and natural resources related research. We fear that such set-asides set a dangerous precedent and could undermine the objectivity and integrity of the competitive process — and efforts to secure future funding for this program

We believe that agricultural research is vital to the lives of citizens and the economic well-being of our nation. We urge you to agree to the Senate's proposed \$295.2 million funding level for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative as part of the F.Y. 2010 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

American Agriculture Movement
American Beekeeping Federation
American Corn Growers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Malting Barley Association
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association

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American Veterinary Medical Association
Biotechnology Industry Organization
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology
CropLife America
Midwestern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Organization
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
National Turkey Federation
National Wheat Improvement Committee
North American Millers' Association
Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship
Pet Food Institute
State Agriculture and Rural Leaders
Syngenta
US Canola Association
US Rice Producers Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
United Dairymen of Arizona
United Egg Producers
United States Cattlemen's Association
United States Dry Bean Council

CC: Members of the Subcommittee