



Ecological Society of America  
1990 M St, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036

April 6, 2017

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug Administration,  
and Related Agencies  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

The Ecological Society of America (ESA) is the world's largest society of professional ecologists representing over 10,000 members across the country. We write to urge you to support **strong investments in agricultural research, science, and technology within the Department of Agriculture (USDA) for Fiscal Year 2018**. We respectfully request robust funding for two USDA programs in particular – **\$1.3 billion for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS)**, and **\$420 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) within the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**.

#### **Agricultural Research Service Solves Critical Agricultural Problems**

ARS is USDA's primary in-house scientific research agency, tasked with finding science-based solutions to critical agricultural problems. ARS is uniquely positioned to tackle challenges that require long-term investments and provide high-impact results that increase the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture. At the same time, ARS research maintains the industry's capacity to respond to emerging agricultural problems. As a result of the multidisciplinary research conducted by ARS, America's agricultural sector is better able to address pests and diseases, drought and water availability, agricultural byproducts, food safety, and agricultural sustainability. The ARS is a critical agency whose investments in agricultural research contribute to healthier animals, plants, farms, soil, and people, and ESA urges you to provide **\$1.3 billion for ARS in FY 2018**.

#### **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Grants Advance the Agricultural Sciences**

AFRI, a program housed within NIFA, is the nation's leading competitive grants program for agricultural sciences. AFRI grants are awarded for research, education, and extension to address challenges facing agricultural producers and systems. These grants sustain all components of agriculture, targeting everything from plant and animal health to farm efficiency and profitability, and they also help develop the next generation of agricultural workers and scientists. The 2014 Farm Bill reauthorized AFRI and continues the authorized full funding level of \$700 million through FY 2018. This program is critical to meeting the challenges facing U.S. agriculture, and ESA urges you to provide **\$420 million for AFRI in FY 2018**.

Federal investments in agricultural science are essential to maintaining the competitiveness and leadership of America's agricultural sector. To support U.S. agricultural advancement and innovation, we urge you to provide this funding for these important programs and to reject proposed cuts to USDA research and scientific programs. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Katherine S. McCarter". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Katherine S. McCarter  
Executive Director