

April 5, 2019

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
House of Representatives
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
House of Representatives
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for USDA-REE-ERS and NASS FY20 Funding

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

The undersigned groups, which include various members of the Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis, strongly support federal investment to advance agricultural statistics and research in the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). We support funding for these agencies in fiscal year 2020 (FY20) at levels that are at least \$87 M for ERS and \$180 M for NASS.

The USDA produces valuable data that directly informs decisions by food and agricultural market participants, agricultural input and food businesses, banks and other credit institutions and those who make food, farm, economic development and trade policy. American agriculture, rural America and food- and resource-based industries depend on the reliable production of timely, accurate and objective food, agricultural, rural economic and resource statistics and market information. Additionally, the statistics and analysis made possible by these agencies provide a greater understanding of farm household dynamics, advance evidence-based policy approaches and give insight into the health of the farm economy.

The mission of ERS is to inform and enhance public and private decision making on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment and rural development. To accomplish this mission, ERS manages a comprehensive program of economic research and analysis (including development of economic and statistical indicators). The ERS is a primary source of economic information and research in USDA. ERS' economic research, statistics, and analysis improves policy effectiveness. In the President's FY20 budget request, funds for the ERS are cut by 47% (from \$87 M in the FY19 omnibus to \$46 M in the FY20 budget request), including consideration of support for a relocation. The President's budget proposal cuts statistics and research on important topics, including trade, food security, food safety, conservation, and rural development. The ERS serves as the world's premier source of agricultural economic research and information. Its global preeminence mirrors the strength of

the United States agricultural and food sector. We urge you to maintain its funding at a level of *at least* \$87 M for FY20.

NASS is committed to providing timely, accurate and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture. NASS does not undertake the economic research or analysis that ERS does; it is home to important statistics research, statistical information, and analysis. The agency conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares reports and information to communicate the survey results. Production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, farm finances, chemical use, and changes in the demographics of U.S. producers are only a few examples of the information gathered. NASS reports the facts on American agriculture, facts needed by people working in and depending upon U.S. agriculture. A primary concern of NASS is to “safeguard the privacy of farmers, ranchers, and other data providers, with a guarantee that confidentiality and data security continue to be our top priorities.” The President’s budget includes \$163 M in program funding, including \$5 M to supplement funding from the Department of Labor, necessary to expand the Farm Labor Survey to publish more granular data and \$2 million for a new survey on technology use by agricultural producers. The proposed budget will cut the Agricultural Estimates program by \$8 M, an important program for American agriculture. We urge you to reject these cuts and provide support for the NASS at \$180 M for FY20.

USDA’s data products, economic and statistical research, and analytical programs provide the U.S. with an important edge against increasingly fierce global agricultural competition as well as to serve as a reflection of our strength as a nation. These research, statistics, and interagency efforts benefit the entire supply chain, starting at the farm gate and enhancing decisions throughout national and international food, feed, fiber and fuel economies. Public data products and projections serve to improve the accuracy of the expectations of market participants, reducing market pricing errors. The U.S. agricultural data information and analysis system is second to none, worldwide. Today, NASS is experiencing increased demand for its statistical products and reports. Similarly, ERS is experiencing significant requests for its research, data products and services. To continue to build future trade and finance capacity in an increasingly competitive marketplace, the U.S. must invest in and leverage all its strengths, including the food and agricultural data and information system.

We encourage you to support these agencies so that they can continue to provide essential information to farm and agribusiness, government agricultural program, and food policy decision makers. If you have any specific questions with regard to agricultural data products related to your state, please contact (agricultural.statistics@gmail.com).

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

Sincerely,

Agricultural and Applied Economics Association
Agricultural Retailers Association
American Association for Public Opinion Research
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases

American Dairy Science Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farmland Trust
American Malting Barley Association
American Phytopathological Society
American Public Health Association
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers
American Statistical Association
California Institute for Rural Studies
Center For Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Organizations on Federal Statistics
Crop Science Society of America
Decision Demographics
Fair Food Network
Family Farm Defenders
FASS
Fertile Ground
Global Cold Chain Alliance
Hop Growers of America
International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Kansas Black Farmers Association, In.
Keep Antibiotics Working
Land For Good
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College Columbia University
League of Rural Voters
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Midland Research
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals Multistate Initiative
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Barley Growers Association
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Union
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Lime Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Sunflower Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National WIC Association

North American Regional Science Council
Northeast Organic Farming Association
Pinnacle Prevention
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Rural Coalition
Share Our Strength
Slow Food USA
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
Society for Range Management
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Regional Science Association
The Fertilizer Institute
US Canola Association
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholders Committee
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
Utahns Against Hunger
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Western Agricultural Economics Association
World Perspectives, Inc.

CC: Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies