

From: Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis <agricultural.statistics@gmail.com>
Subject: Stakeholder Letter Re: USDA Statistical Agency Funding in FY16 House Appropriations Bill

Dear Congressional Staff Member:

As Congress considers fiscal year 2016 Agriculture Appropriations bill, we, the undersigned organizations, encourage our nation's elected leaders to maintain and grow agriculture, food, and resource statistics, data, and analysis. As currently written, the House FY16 Agricultural Appropriations bill proposes to steeply decrease the budgets for the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) and the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), two of the vital programs in the USDA Research, Education and Economics Mission Area (USDA REE). We encourage Congress to *maintain and grow* agriculture, food, and resource statistics, data, and analysis by supporting these agencies at the FY 2015 appropriations levels.

The ERS generates the [farm financial statistics](#), [consumer prices and expenditures for food](#), [measures of food consumption behavior](#), [estimates of food security](#) and the distribution of hunger in the United States. ERS also conducts, with federal data, [science based research and analysis](#) on the consequences of changes in farm management, food taxation, nutrition assistance, food safety, agri-environmental quality, rural development and other circumstances, programs, or alternative policies. Between 2013 and 2015, ERS has had actual or inflation adjusted decreases in funding for its programs. During this period, the agency had reduced its cooperative research and competitive funding programs. The 8.6% cut to ERS below FY 2015 suggested will now have direct impacts on the agency's core data product and research and analysis programs-efforts critical for the health of the agricultural economy. While we do not know which programs ERS would cut, in the past the agency has reduced, and later reinstated, the agricultural market outlook program relied upon by commodity market participants across the food chain.

Similarly, the \$11.2M cut to NASS will most likely impact the data products within the *agricultural estimates* portion of its agency budget. The NASS is the only public collector of statistics on farm and ranch operations and the prospect and production of crop and animal products in the United States. The markets for tradable agricultural commodities hinge on NASS statistical reports. Farmers, ranchers, farm and commodity groups, agricultural businesses, researchers, and international traders rely on the [accurate, objective, reliable, timely and accessible statistics in reports](#) released by NASS [over the course of every year](#). The agency is also responsive to the data needs associated with critical issues that emerge in the agricultural sector like the recent [avian flu outbreak](#). In 2011-2013, NASS was forced to suspend, eliminate, or reduce the frequency of reporting on a [variety of 'minor' commodities](#). However, the 6.5% reduction in NASS funding would mean that additional key data products essential to the agricultural marketplace would be at risk.

Furthermore, in FY 2015, both ERS and NASS were required to cover rent and building management costs, expenses previously covered by the General Services Administration. Thus, appropriation increases in FY 2015 did not increase agency programs or data products. Virtually all of the FY 2015 increase over FY 2014 for ERS and NASS was used to cover the new rent and building management costs.

In closing, we encourage you to support these critical agencies and related data products and analytics so that they can continue to provide essential information to farm and agribusiness, government agricultural program, and food policy decision makers. The efforts to strengthen

policy-making in support of U.S. agricultural markets and expanded trade in 2015 would be reinforced by maintaining these critical resources. These investments seem small, but have a great impact on thousands to millions of farm and agri-business operations throughout the supply chain. We urge you to reconsider cutting these critical data products and programs and support these agencies at FY 2015 levels at the very least.

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 & Applied Economics Association
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Dairy Science Association
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Statistical Association
American Sugar Alliance
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Crop Science Society of America
CropLife America
Federation of Animal Science Societies
Global Cold Chain Alliance
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Coalition for Food and Agriculture Research
National Farmers Union
National Organic Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
North American Regional Science Council
Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association
Poultry Science Association
Restaurant Services, Inc.
Soil Science Society of America
The Fertilizer Institute

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