

FY 2020 Appropriations Update: Senate Appropriations Committee Approves FY 2020 Agriculture Bill

Lewis-Burke Associates LLC – September 20, 2019

On September 19, the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously approved the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, which funds the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The bill would provide a total of \$23.1 billion in discretionary funding, which is \$1.2 billion less than the House version.

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Salaries and Expenses account would receive \$1.42 billion and Building and Facilities would receive \$305.8 million for a total of \$1.72 billion. This would be an increase of \$45.3 million compared to the FY 19 enacted level, and a \$335.3 million increase compared to the House proposed level of \$1.39 billion. Consistent with previous years, the Committee rejects the president's proposed termination of ARS laboratories and facilities and directed that extramural research programs be funded at "no less than the FY 19 enacted level."

The new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF), which is nearing completion, would receive \$41.1 million to support the continued transfer from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) jurisdiction. The Committee would provide flat funding for popular programs like Genomes to Fields, while providing an increase of \$1 million for the human nutrition research program, which had been proposed for a 50% reduction in the budget request. Additionally, \$2 million in new funding would be directed to the Center for Pollinator Health to foster better collaboration for a "federal voice" and working with land grant university partners.

Within the increase provided for ARS, there are several emerging topics of interest that would receive increase funding:

- \$3 million for a pilot Aquaculture Experiment Station in partnership with universities on coldwater and warmwater production;
- \$1 million to conduct a national blueberry breeding research program;
- Cotton Blue Disease research would receive \$5 million for ARS to coordinate with other agencies and academic research partners;
- Hemp research would receive \$2.5 million for "regionally-driven" development and stakeholder engagement;
- \$2 million for a Food Systems Center at a land-grant institution;
- \$7 million for new predictive modeling tools for crop diseases.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) would receive \$1.48 billion, an increase of \$13 million compared to the FY 2019 enacted level, but \$109.7 million less than the House bill. The Senate Committee would provide \$9.5 million to NIFA for relocation costs to the Kansas City area, unlike the House bill that included report language prohibiting the use of funds for the relocation. The bicameral

discrepancy in support for the Agency’s relocation will be a contentious issue to be resolved during conference on a final bill.

Unfortunately, the Senate failed to provide funding for the new Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA), that was authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill. Flat funding is provided for the Capacity Building for Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture at \$5 million. Additionally, the Senate would provide \$4 million for Rural Health and Safety Education programs focused on “educating nurses and allied health professionals in opioid abuse and prevention” with \$1 million of that funding targeted for telehealth, telemedicine, distance learning, and virtual experiences for opioid education in minority rural communities.”

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) would receive \$425 million, an increase of \$10 million compared to the FY 2019 enacted level of \$415 million, but less than the House proposed level of \$445 million and the president’s budget request of \$500 million.

Several notable pieces of report language were included:

- The Committee encourages the development of agricultural robots;
- The Senate directs NIFA to consider developing community-wide urban agriculture projects that address food deserts across the country;
- Support for the continuation for the interagency grants program with National Institute of Child Health and Human Development for dual use/dual benefit research in biomedicine and agriculture;
- The Committee directs NIFA to increase food safety research and defense technology, as well as food-borne illnesses: “novel bio detection technologies and the implementation of bio detection platforms in real-world conditions” and to designate, in coordination with the FDA, a “Center of Excellence for Foodborne Illness” to reduce risk of listeria.
- The Senate report supports the creation of a “Beta” model for multi-trophic aquaculture research.

Senate Agriculture Appropriations Bill, FY 2020

(in thousands of \$)

	FY 2019 Enacted	FY 2020 House	FY 2019 Senate	Senate vs. FY 2019 Enacted	Senate vs. House
ARS, Total	1,684,466	1,394,516	1,729,766	45,300 (2.62%)	335,250 (19.38%)
National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)	1,471,341	1,594,093	1,484,371	13,030 (0.88%)	-109,722 (7.39%)
AFRI	415,000	445,000	425,000	10,000 (2.35%)	-20,000 (4.71%)
Hatch Act	259,000	265,000	259,000	--	-6,000 (2.32%)

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Smith Lever Act 3(b) and 3(c)	315,000	325,000	315,000	--	-10,000 (3.17%)
McIntire-Stennis	36,000	38,000	36,000	--	-2,000 (5.56%)
Hispanic Serving Institutions Education Grants Program	9,219	20,000	9,219	--	-10,781 (116.94%)
Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)	1,049,344	1,054,344	1,054,344	5,000 (0.47%)	--
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)	1,011,136	1,034,011	1,031,091	19,955 (1.94%)	-2,920 (0.28%)
Food and Drug Administration	3,068,678	3,253,939	3,148,678	80,000 (2.54%)	-105,261 (3.34%)

Source: The Senate Agriculture, FDA, and Related Agencies bill for FY 2020 is available at <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FY2020%20Agriculture%20Appropriations%20Act,%20Report%20116-110.pdf>.