

Appendix

Report from NIFA - Louie Tupas:

1. **NIFA Budget:**

The FY2017 budget request for NIFA is for \$1.38 billion covering 57 distinct lines. Between the amounts already agreed to by the Appropriations committees, NIFA has a potential funding level of between \$1.32 billion and \$1.36 billion. The FY2017 request represents a \$50 million increase over the FY2016 appropriated amount.

2. **Funding Opportunities for the Next Farm Bill and/or Next Appropriation Process**

a. **Tactical science programs:** NIFA's current tactical science investments consist of multiple small programs distributed across administrative and disciplinary areas:

- i. Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative (FADI)
- ii. National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN)
- iii. National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)
- iv. Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN)
- v. Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM)
- vi. Minor Crop Pest Management (IR4)
- vii. Food Animal Residue Analysis Database (FARAD)
- viii. Minor Use Animal Drugs Program (MUADP)

NIFA intends to work with stakeholders to build a much stronger, better funded, and more integrated and coordinated infrastructure that will facilitate enhanced cooperation, leveraging of investments, protection for producers and consumers, and export trade in global markets.

NIFA is in the early stages to engage relevant stakeholders to 1) identify current and anticipated challenges to protect US plant and animal production systems against pests, diseases and other sources of contamination; 2) describe programmatic and infrastructure requirements to effectively address these challenges; and 3) provide input on possible strategies for re-aligning and/or re-inventing the current NIFA scientific tactical sciences framework.

- b. **AFRI Funding:** NIFA will continue to press the case that that AFRI needs, at a minimum, to be fully funded at \$700 million. Nutritional security is a matter of national security.
- c. **Additional Support for Capacity Programs:** Funding increases are still requested to support capacity programs - to be increased at least by five to six percent. Capacity funding has not seen an increase for three years.

3. **Administration Transition:** NIFA is starting to prepare for the transition of the next Administration. A working group has formed to coordinate a range of transition-related activities, including the development of NIFA briefing materials.

4. **Capacity Programs Evaluation:**

- a. NIFA's contract to TEconomy Partners to conduct an evaluation of the agency's capacity programs is scheduled for completion in late fall. The results of the evaluation will be used to:

- i. Demonstrate the value of the capacity programs to stakeholders and strengthen USDA REE’s focus on evidence-based decision-making;
 - ii. Identify research gaps and areas of improvement; and
 - iii. Leverage the visibility and accountability of capacity programs by this independent review.
 - b. A large-scale survey will be sent to our land-grant partners in mid-August. The survey will solicit feedback regarding strengths and weaknesses of capacity programs and collective impacts from research, education, and extension programs.
- 5. **Infrastructure Task Force:** The October 2015 APLU-funded ‘Sightlines’ study of our nation’s schools of agriculture found some \$8.4 billion in infrastructure and deferred maintenance at buildings and supporting facilities authorized to receive USDA funding.
 - a. An APLU Infrastructure Task Force has identified improved stewardship of facilities through adequate planning and funding of ongoing maintenance need, and investments in major renovations or new construction to replace aging and ineffective or unsafe or inadequate research facilities, and recommended several funding strategies.
 - b. NIFA supports the overall intent and approach of the Task Force’s proposed strategy. NIFA and ARS will continue to work closely with the committee and the APLU/BAA to develop a balanced and achievable approach through both the Farm Bill and the appropriation process.

Additional topics

1. Subcommittee on Food and Agriculture:

- a. NIFA Director Sonny Ramaswamy and Dr. Palmer Orlandi, Acting Chief Science Officer and Research Director of the Office of Foods and Veterinary Medicine, Food and Drug Administration, have been chosen to co-lead the newly established National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Subcommittee on Food and Agriculture (SFA). The SFA resides in the Committee on Science.
- b. Through extensive engagement with the federal food and agriculture science and technology community, the SFA will identify strategic research needs and resource gaps for the development, implementation, and promotion of sustainable food, fiber, and biofuel production systems.

2. A need for socio-economic assessment of science and science communication:

NIFA is considering developing a competitive program that would:

- a. Foster teams or forums involving a broad cohort of scientists, legal scholars, bioethicists, social scientists, journalists/communicators and engaging the general public.
- b. Assess the merits and risks science and technology, and pursue an open and effective means to credibly communicate those issues with the wider public.

3. Positive Youth Development:

Present funding resources enable 4-H to only reach one in 12 youth through Cooperative Extension programming. Funding must be increased for this important program.

4. Open Data Initiative

- a. The US Government, led by USDA, is a founding partner of the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition ([GODAN](#)) Initiative. The GODAN partnership is comprised of

nearly [300 organizations](#) focused on building high-level policy and public and private institutional support for open data.

- b. REE is supporting the Administration's efforts to increase access to the results of federally funded scientific research.
- c. USDA drafted a public access policy for federally funded scholarly publications as well as for scientific datasets produced with the use of federal funds, and held two listening sessions in December 2015 to solicit views from stakeholders. These views are being incorporated into future planning.
- d. NIFA is working with NAL, FS, and ARS to outline a more detailed implementation plan to deposit publications and data from extramural research into the PubAg system and Ag Data Commons.
- e. NIFA is considering requiring data management plans in all competitive grant programs in FY17.

5. NIFA addresses the substance abuse epidemic in rural communities, with a focus on opioids:

- a. NIFA's FY 2016 Rural Health Safety Education RFA included language that would provide rural communities the opportunity to use funds for programs that will address the opioid epidemic.
- b. The Community Assessment and Education to Promote Behavioral Planning and Evaluation Project is a collaborative USDA NIFA/HHS SAMHSA project creating a low-cost, replicable community-level monitoring system (CMS) for substance use and mental illness.
- c. The 4-H Healthy Living: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs (ATOD) Prevention efforts include Health Rocks!® uses hands-on activities that educate youth ages 8 to 14 on the consequences of tobacco, alcohol and drug use.

6. Training grants

- a. Since FY 2013, NIFA's Education and Literacy Initiative (ELI) has focused on producing more STEM graduates to meet the projected workforce shortage in agriculture related fields.
- b. The FY 2017 President's Budget Proposal includes a new program on training grants that will provide grants to consortiums of universities, agribusiness firms, and federal agencies to recruit, mentor, and train graduate and post-graduate scholars in agriculture-related disciplines.
- c. The new program will expand the competitive fellowships currently available to attract and train graduate students and postdoctoral researchers from diverse fields of basic sciences into the field of agriculture by:

Providing opportunities for hands-on research training in some of the leading government and industrial laboratories

Offering extension and teaching experiences through peer mentoring and networking among postdoctoral students and other experts in teaching, research and extension in the nation.

2014 Farm Bill Update

Commodity Boards

- a. The 2014 Farm Bill allows eligible national and state commodity boards to propose topics for research and outreach that they are willing to equally co-fund with NIFA

through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (AFRI).

- b. In FY16, five Commodity boards committed \$1.7 for seven topics that NIFA incorporated into the AFRI food security and foundational program RFAS. The five boards included the Kansas Wheat Commission, the National Pork Board, the Iowa Corn Promotion Board, the Washington State Potato Commission and the National Peanut Board. The topics they proposed are: novel pre-breeding applications for quality enhancement in hard red winter wheat; breeding for genetic resistance to wheat viruses; evaluation of various compounds as alternatives to antibiotics to treat and prevent disease in pork production; environmental influence on phenomics in crop improvement and production; understanding soil ecology to manage potato soil health; drought tolerance and efficient use of water resources in peanuts; and improved peanut and food allergy diagnostic methods.
- c. A Federal Register Notice was published in May that invited topic submissions from eligible commodity boards and marketing orders for the FY17 AFRI RFAs.

2. Veterinary Services Grant Program

- a. The Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP) is authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. Initial funding for the program, \$2.5 million, was appropriated in the FY 2016 budget. The program is intended to relieve veterinarian shortage situations and support veterinary services.
- b. Grants will be made available on a competitive basis to qualified entities to develop, implement, and sustain veterinary services through education, training, recruitment, placement, and retention of veterinarians and veterinary students.
- c. Grants will also be made to establish or expand veterinary practices.
- d. NIFA is actively engaged in developing and implementing this program. Listening sessions were held in mid-February. NIFA released the first Request for Applications for this program in May 2016 with the first grants anticipated to be awarded by Sept. 30, 2016.

1890s matching funds

- a. To address the complex questions regarding matching issues for the 1890s LGUs, NIFA undertook an evaluation of the Matching Program.
- b. While much of the data required to perform the analysis could be derived from existing NIFA data repositories, NIFA staff worked with the 1890 universities and the state governments in which the universities reside to determine each entity's approach to meeting the Federal funds matching requirement.
- c. NIFA is completing a report on its evaluation and is preparing to send it to Congress.
- d. NIFA has committed personnel in its Office of Grants and Financial Management to more closely work with 1890 leadership regarding justifications and use of matching funds.

2. Equipment Prior Approval for Capacity Grantees

- a. In accordance with OMB's Uniform Guidance regulation, NIFA plans to implement equipment prior approval for capacity grantees in FY 2017. OMB defines equipment as tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost great than or equal to \$5000.

- b. On June 15 and 16, NIFA hosted webinars to review the requirement, definitions, and implementation options. The recorded webinar, PowerPoint, and Q&A transcript are available online on NIFA's website.
- c. NIFA requested feedback and questions from capacity grantees to be submitted by July 30, 2016.

3. FY16 Capacity RFA Schedule

- a. In response to feedback from NIFA partners and stakeholders, NIFA released its FY 17 Capacity Grant RFAs earlier than in previous years.
- b. The Animal Health Disease Research capacity RFA is currently pending. All other FY 17 Capacity RFAs were published during June 2016.

4. Streamlined Process for Continuation Grants

- a. NIFA has recently approved a new streamlined process for continuation grants (approved awards that have annual installments). The new process will be rolled out in fall 2017.
- b. The new process decreases time spent for both NIFA staff and award institutions. It accomplishes this by removing non-essential forms and steps in the process. Removing these steps completely eliminates the involvement of two divisions, which is a major source of time savings.
- c. Two pilots were run to arrive at the streamlined process.

5. Data Gateway

- a. Last year, NIFA debuted a new online data tool on our public website that offers our stakeholders and partners a search capability that allows users to find a variety of funding data such as awards, knowledge areas, grantee type, fields of science, subjects of investigation, states, Congressional districts, and appropriation year. These data go back to 2002.
- b. REEport financial report data are now available in the Data Gateway. Financial information is searchable and can be exported to an Excel file.

6. "Just in Time" Submission Guidelines

- a. NIFA is implementing a new pilot in FY 2017 to allow applicants to submit "Just in Time" (JIT) documentation (supplemental application information, such as Other Support: Current and Pending Information) only if their application has been recommended for an award.
- b. Beginning in FY 2017, the pilot will be run on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program RFA and Higher Education Challenge (HEC) RFA.
- c. The benefit of Just in Time submission is that it will 1) streamline the application submission process (reducing administrative burden on the grantee); and 2) ensure that the supplemental documentation is up-to-date at the time the award is made.

7. REEport

- a. The REEport Financial Report was released in the fall of 2014 and must now be completed by all new non-Capacity grant projects awarded after October 1, 2014. These were due on Feb. 1, 2016. The requirement to submit a REEport Project Financial Report was written into all terms and conditions for new awards made beginning Oct. 1, 2014.
- b. A new function that allows non-Capacity grantees to change programmatic data in REEport was released late fall of 2015. This function will help grantees and NIFA improve and maintain data quality. Training for this new function will be provided through reporting webinars and guidance posted on the REEport section of the NIFA website.

- c. The next critical deployment (scheduled for fall 2016) will implement a workflow change that will enable easier editing on progress and final reports.

8. Grants Modernization

- a. NIFA is partnering with the USDA OCFO to implement ezFedGrants, a USDA enterprise-wide automated system for managing grants. NIFA will begin using the system for processing FY17 Capacity awards in the fall of 2016. NRCS, APHIS, FAS, FNS, AMS, RD, Forest Service, and others are also implementing or have plans to implement ezFedGrants as part of their grants management operations.
- b. ezFedGrants will benefit both agencies and their customers. Agency staff will have a paperless system that reduces the time it takes to process awards. External customers will have access to a portal which will provide status updates on their application/award and will allow them to submit required reports, such as the SF-425 Federal Financial Report (previously done through email).
- c. ezFedGrants will be fully integrated with Grants.gov and ASAP. This means applicants will still apply to all NIFA RFAs through Grants.gov, and awardees will still use ASAP to draw down funds.