



April 4, 2014

**Testimony of Roger Johnson, President, National Farmers Union
To the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee
Regarding Fiscal Year 2015 Funding for Agricultural and Related Programs**

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On behalf of the family farmer and rancher members of National Farmers Union (NFU), thank you for the opportunity to present funding requests for Fiscal Year 2015. As a general farm organization, NFU has a broad array of interests in the agricultural appropriations process. This letter enumerates a few of the highest priorities for our members.

Additionally, the recent passage of the 2014 Farm Bill deserves the attention of the subcommittee. I ask that programs that were granted discretionary funding through the farm bill receive their full appropriations, and that the subcommittee not reduce other program funding through changes in mandatory programs.

REQUEST: No legislative riders or targeted funding reductions to limit or restrict the enforcement, legal defense or study of Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL).

The 2008 Farm Bill requires retailers to notify customers through labeling of the source of nearly all muscle cuts and ground meat, along with fish, fruits, vegetables, nuts and a variety of other generally unprocessed products. As of 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enacted rules that require the labeling of production steps – for example, “Born, Raised, and Harvested in the U.S.” – as directed by a World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute. Another WTO proceeding is currently underway to review the new COOL regulations’ compliance with trade agreements. A lawsuit is pending in U.S. court regarding implementation of the new labels and initial attempts to enjoin the new COOL requirements were defeated. Additionally, the 2014 Farm Bill requires a study on the economic impact of COOL.

NFU opposes any funding cuts or legislative riders that would circumvent enforcement, implementation, legal defense or study of COOL. Studies have found that more than 90 percent of consumers support COOL. Any threats of retaliation from Canada and Mexico are extremely premature, as WTO appeals are slow-moving and typically last for years.

REQUEST: No legislative riders to limit or restrict the USDA's rulemaking and enforcement authority under the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921.

Because of appropriations riders in the last three years, USDA has not been allowed to write rules that would provide greater fairness for livestock sellers and poultry growers in the agriculture marketplace, as directed by the 2008 Farm Bill. This includes prohibiting deceptive or fraudulent buying practices and permitting farmers and ranchers to seek protection under the Packers and Stockyards Act if they have been harmed by unfair trade practices.

While the last three legislative riders on GIPSA have varied, they each have significantly undermined important protections for livestock and poultry ranchers and growers. These provisions must not be prevented; thus, NFU strongly urges the Subcommittee to reject any legislative riders that would undermine GIPSA's authority and ignore congressional intent.

REQUEST: Funding for the Food and Drug Administration to implement the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and to study its economic impacts on farmers.

NFU asks that the FDA be adequately funded at the president's request level for fiscal year 2015 with \$253 million to be used for implementation of FSMA. There are many areas of possible improvement within the proposed FSMA rules, but it is imperative that the process be provided resources in order to be effective. Of particular importance is funding to provide food safety training to family farmers and small processors. The president's request to spend \$2.5 million on that initiative is a low amount but a good start to prepare our members to work well within the upcoming FSMA rules.

Additionally, I ask that no action be taken during the appropriations process that would derail or detract from FDA's study of the economic impacts of FSMA on farmers, as mandated by the 2014 Farm Bill.

REQUEST: Report language on public cultivar development through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI).

The 2008 Farm Bill created the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), which called for AFRI to make "conventional" plant and animal breeding a priority for research grants. Implementation of these directives has been slow. NFU asks that the FY 2015 appropriations bill include report language that reiterates the need to prioritize funding for classical plant and animal breeding within the AFRI process.

REQUEST: Provide \$25.9 million to the Genetic Improvement and Translational Breeding Initiative, along with report language directing funds to the development and release of regionally adapted, public cultivars.

The administration's FY 2015 budget requests \$25.9 million for a new Genetic Improvement and Translational Breeding Initiative to be administered by the Agricultural Research Service. Given the very substantial private and public investments in genomics and the lack of funding for classical breeding for public cultivar development, clear language ought to be included to

direct ARS to focus all of the funding provided for this initiative on the development and release of regionally adapted, publicly held, cultivars to benefit farmers and ranchers across the country.

REQUEST: Fully fund farm bill energy title programs at discretionary funding levels and do not reduce program funding through changes in mandatory programs. Also, allow 2014 Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) funds to carry over into 2015 if they are not expended.

The 2014 Farm Bill makes substantial investments in existing energy programs such as the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), and Biorefinery Assistance Program (BAP). NFU asks that the subcommittee not reduce any of the funds allocated to these programs. In addition, because USDA may not expend all funds for BCAP in 2014, NFU asks that language be inserted allowing for unexpended 2014 BCAP funds to be carried over into 2015.

REQUEST: Provide \$10 million for competitive grants and formula-based funding for animal health and disease research.

Public investment in animal science has slipped in recent years, especially in comparison to the economic impact of animal agriculture. By 2050, global meat consumption is expected to increase by 73 percent, dairy production by 57 percent, and per capita egg consumption in developing countries is projected to rise by almost 40 percent. Animal agriculture has a clear impact on rural America, as livestock and poultry sales account for 40 percent of all U.S. farm income.

The 2014 Farm Bill revitalized the structure of a public funding opportunity for animal science. I ask that \$10 million be made available to establish the new competitive grants program on sound financial footing.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.