



American Society for Nutrition
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American Society for Nutrition 2018 Farm Bill Priorities

Human nutrition research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) addresses the prevention of many nutrition-related health concerns we face as a nation; most notably overweight, obesity, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers and cardiovascular disease. One out of three U.S. children are overweight or obese. Preventing these diseases through better nutrition could save billions in health care expenditures annually. An estimated \$190.2 billion is spent on obesity-related health issues each year, 21% of annual medical spending¹. Medical costs for all obesity-related preventable diseases in the U.S. are estimated to increase \$48 to \$66 billion a year by 2030². The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) urges the following recommendations be implemented in the Farm Bill to support nutrition research and education.

Fully funding nutrition research will improve the health of Americans and reduce long-term health care costs

- Ensure food, nutrition, and agricultural research in the U.S. keeps pace in the 21st century, remains competitive in a global economy, and provides training to the next generation of scientists by authorizing the USDA's principal extramural competitive grants program, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), with \$700 million annually.
- Maintain continuous support for all USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Human Nutrition Research Centers. ARS facilities are integral to the federal infrastructure – currently supporting 690 research projects and 5,522 permanent employees across the country, with ongoing collaborations with state colleges, universities, local state governments, and the private sector. ARS facilities are critically important resources for the national and local economies, advancing cutting-edge research that benefits the U.S. population, while supporting thousands of jobs. ARS nutrition centers research a wide spectrum of human nutrition challenges, which inform USDA policies and programs and provide resources for other federal agencies. ARS needs \$1.286 billion in Fiscal Year 2018 to rebuild and expand the in-house research capacity at USDA. Despite its important contributions to agricultural research and the critical shared resources it provides to the science community, ARS has seen its budget decline by more than \$100 million in real terms since 2001. Investment in Human Nutrition Research Centers is cost-effective, as the centers support and train thousands of physicians and scientists in nutrition across the country, protect the health of children and adults, and address rising healthcare costs associated with nutrition by contributing the most comprehensive reference data available to support nutritional recommendations which cannot be produced on a typical 3-5 year grant cycle.
- Continue support for nutrition research to allow researchers to answer the questions identified in the National Nutrition Research Roadmap developed by the Interagency Committee on Human Nutrition Research. Evidence from such nutrition research will benefit 10 different federal agencies that have similar priorities of understanding the role of nutrition in enhancing the health of all Americans. Hence, increasing funds for nutrition research will benefit multiple federal agencies, as well as public health, ensuring the maximum use of limited resources.

¹ Cawley J, Meyerhoefer C. 2012. The medical care costs of obesity: an instrumental variables approach. *Journal of Health Economics*. 31(1)219-230.

² Trasande L, Chatterjee S. 2009. The impact of obesity on health service utilization and costs in childhood. *Obesity*. 17(9): 1749.

- Continue to strengthen linkages to nutrition programming and nutrition education research through the Interagency Committee on Human Nutrition Research, as outlined in the National Nutrition Research Roadmap.
- Provide sufficient funding for the completion of the Pregnancy and Birth to 24 Months nutrition guidance project, as required in the Agricultural Act of 2014. The Act called for the development of the pregnancy and birth to 24 months dietary guidance, and USDA and Health and Human Services (HHS) will need funding to conduct numerous, rigorous science-based systematic reviews to provide the data necessary to develop this guidance.

Nutrition and health monitoring and surveillance are essential for science-based dietary recommendations and combating nation-wide antibiotic/antimicrobial resistance

- Establish a consistent USDA funding authorization to accomplish the requirements in the 1990 National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act that support nutrition monitoring. Nutrition monitoring and surveillance is essential to track what Americans eat, but also how their diets directly affect their health. Information from dietary surveys and food composition databases is essential to guide federal policies on food safety, food labeling, food assistance, food fortification, military rations, pesticide exposure, dietary guidance and more. In addition to having an impact on billions of dollars in federal expenditures, the information from national nutrition surveys leverages billions of private sector dollars allocated to nutrition labeling, food product development and production. Nutrition monitoring and surveillance data informs policymakers and researchers, as well as the public, about the health and nutrition status of American adults and children and allows researchers to evaluate nutrition-related programs and study nutrition-related disease outcomes.

For example, data collected provided critical information to the National Academies of Sciences expert committee reviewing the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food package in 2016. The panel provided recommendations to USDA to improve balance and food choice, based on these data, which will be used to support and guide future revisions of the food package. Funding support will allow USDA/ ARS to update its food and nutrient databases and the “What We Eat in America” dietary survey.

- The National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System for Enteric Bacteria (NARMS) helps contain bacterial outbreaks from food in the U.S. and helps protect public health by providing information about emerging bacterial resistance and the ways in which resistance is spread. Food safety and foodborne illness can impact nutritional status and food choices of the American population and foodborne bacteria that are antibiotic resistant are a growing national problem. *Each year* in the U.S., at least 2 million people become infected with antibiotic resistant bacteria and at least 23,000 people die as a direct result of these infections. Support for this monitoring system, a collaborative effort among USDA, state and local public health departments, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as a part of our food and nutrition monitoring surveillance should be maintained.

Nutrition research evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency of nutrition assistance & education programs

- Keep nutrition assistance programs together in Title IV as one comprehensive Farm Bill and not separated into different legislation. A comprehensive Farm Bill provides continued political support for both agricultural and nutrition programs and a predictable opportunity for multi-year support for these programs. A comprehensive Farm Bill allows policymakers who may not otherwise work together the opportunity to effectively do so.

- Increase access to and maintain the current structure of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to help ensure nutrition security for many Americans. Nutrition assistance programs provide assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provide economic benefits to communities. Any effort to change the structure and shift this program to a state-based grant system, such as block grants, would cap funding and limit the agility of the program to be responsive to fluctuating economic conditions.
- Continue support for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives, SNAP EBT, and other programs that improve diet quality for many Americans.
- Provide sufficient funding for effective, evidence-based and innovative nutrition education programs and initiatives authorized in the Farm Bill Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). These nutrition education programs empower more Americans to be in charge of their health and make healthy food choices. Nutrition education must be a critical component of all nutrition assistance programs.
- Prioritize research on the effectiveness of nutrition assistance programs and nutrition education to allow for continual improvement in the contribution of these programs to improving the nutrition status and well-being of Americans. Adequate evaluation funding and program expertise is needed to examine ways to improve health outcomes related to nutrition status and improve program effectiveness and efficiencies, such as SNAP benefit adequacy, SNAP disbursement frequency (i.e., weekly or bi-monthly), reduction of participant stigma in nutrition assistance programs and child nutrition programs, and improved nutritional health of SNAP participants.

Public-private research funding partnerships complement and grow nutrition research funding

- Continue support for the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR), created through the 2013 Farm Bill. FFAR creates unique public-private partnerships that complement existing research efforts and grow the funding pool for nutrition, food and agricultural research. In 2017, FFAR has \$88M for nearly 20 new programs currently in development and the average matching “rate” is 140%.

The American Society for Nutrition Foundation supports new public-private partnerships among academia, industry, non-profit organizations, and government entities which fund food, nutrition, and agricultural research. These are critically important to ensure *sustainable* funding for important basic, applied, and translational research in nutrition research.

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