



April 10, 2018

Outside Witness Testimony from Mary Ann Johnson, Ph.D. re: USDA appropriations

2017-2018 President, American Society for Nutrition

Flatt Professor in Foods and Nutrition, University of Georgia

Athens, GA

The Honorable Robert Aderholt

Chairman

Appropriations Subcommittee on

Agriculture, Rural Development, Food  
and Drug Administration, and Related  
Agencies

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop

Ranking Member

Appropriations Subcommittee on

Agriculture, Rural Development, Food  
and Drug Administration, and Related  
Agencies

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop:

**The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) respectfully requests that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)/ National Institute of Food and Agriculture/ Agriculture and Food Research Initiative receive \$525 million and that the USDA/ Agricultural Research Service receive \$1.35 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2019. ASN has**

more than 7,000 members working throughout academia, clinical practice, government, and industry, who conduct research to advance our knowledge and application of nutrition.

### **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative**

The USDA has been the lead nutrition agency and the most important federal agency to influence U.S. policies on dietary intake and food patterns for years. Agricultural research is essential to address the ever-increasing demand for a healthy, affordable, nutritious and sustainable food supply. The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program is charged with funding research, education, and extension and integrated, competitive grants that address key problems of national, regional, and multi-state importance in sustaining all components of agriculture. These components include human nutrition, farm efficiency and profitability, ranching, renewable energy, forestry (both urban and agro forestry), aquaculture, food safety, biotechnology, and conventional breeding. AFRI has funded cutting-edge, agricultural research on key issues of timely importance on a competitive, peer-reviewed basis since its establishment in the 2008 Farm Bill. Adequate funding for agricultural research is critical to provide a safe and nutritious food supply for the world's population, to preserve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace, and to provide jobs and revenue crucial to support the U.S. economy.

In order to achieve those benefits, AFRI must be able to advance fundamental sciences in support of agriculture and coordinate opportunities to build off of these discoveries.

**Therefore, ASN requests that the AFRI competitive grants program be fully funded at \$525 million in FY 2019.** Current flat and decreased funding for AFRI hinders scientific advances that support agricultural funding and research.

### **Agricultural Research Service**

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is the Department of Agriculture's lead scientific research agency. The ARS conducts research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority. USDA's program of human nutrition research is housed in six Human Nutrition Research Centers (HNRCs) across the nation, that link producer and consumer interests and form the core for building knowledge about food and nutrition. HNRCs conduct unparalleled human nutrition research on the role of food and dietary components in human health from conception to advanced old age, and they provide authoritative, peer-reviewed, science-based evidence that forms the basis of our federal nutrition policy and programs. Funding for ARS supports all of the USDA/ HNRCs and ensures that these research facilities have adequate funding to continue their unique mission of improving the health of Americans through cutting-edge food, nutrition and agricultural research.

Nutrition monitoring conducted by the USDA/ARS in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is a unique and critically important surveillance function in which dietary intake, nutritional status, and health status are evaluated in a rigorous and standardized manner. (ARS is responsible for food and nutrient databases and the “What We Eat in America” dietary survey, while HHS is responsible for tracking nutritional status and health parameters.) Nutrition monitoring is an inherently governmental function and findings are essential for multiple government agencies, as well as the public and private sector. Nutrition monitoring is essential to track what Americans are eating, inform nutrition and dietary guidance policy, evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of nutrition assistance programs, and study nutrition-related disease outcomes. Because of past funding deficiencies, some food composition database entries do not reflect the realities of the current food supply, which may negatively impact programs and policies based on this information. It is imperative that needed funds to update USDA’s food and nutrient databases and the “What We Eat in America” dietary survey, both maintained by the USDA/ARS, are appropriated to ensure the continuation of this critical surveillance of the nation’s nutritional status and the many benefits it provides.

It is the job of ARS to ensure high-quality, safe food, and other agricultural products; assess the nutritional needs of Americans; sustain a competitive agricultural economy; enhance the natural resource base and the environment; and provide economic

opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society. **Therefore, ASN requests that ARS receive \$1.35 billion in FY 2019**, with Congress directing the use of some of these funds for both intra- and extramural human nutrition research. Resources above current funding levels are necessary to ensure the critical surveillance of the nation's nutritional status and continuation and expansion of translational research to determine dietary and nutritional needs to ensure optimal health across the life span, and to continue the many other benefits that ARS provides. With adequate funding, the ARS will be able to support its vision of leading America towards a better future through agricultural research and information.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY 2019 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture/ National Institute of Food and Agriculture/ AFRI competitive grants program and Agricultural Research Service. Please contact John E. Courtney, Ph.D., Executive Officer, at [jcourtney@nutrition.org](mailto:jcourtney@nutrition.org) if ASN may provide further assistance.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Johnson, Ph.D.

2017-2018 President, American Society for Nutrition