

Press Releases

Appropriations Committee Releases the Fiscal Year 2016 Agriculture Appropriations Bill

Bill will protect farmers and ranchers from overregulation, support rural communities, help the hungry, and maintain food and drug safety

Washington, June 17, 2015 -

The House Appropriations Committee today released the fiscal year 2016 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which will be considered in subcommittee tomorrow. The proposed legislation funds important agricultural and food programs and services, including food and medical product safety, animal and plant health programs, rural development and farm services, marketplace oversight, and nutrition programs.

The bill totals \$20.65 billion in discretionary funding, which is \$175 million lower (1 percent) than the fiscal year 2015 enacted level and \$1.1 billion below the President's budget request. Including both discretionary and mandatory funding for various nutrition programs, the overall bill totals \$143.9 billion. The legislation targets this funding to national programs that have the most benefit to the American people and the U.S. economy, while reducing inefficient, wasteful, or lower-priority programs and agencies. In addition, the bill contains several policy provisions to rein in regulatory overreach, such as unnecessary red tape that harms the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers and that impedes growth in vital U.S. industries.

"This bill prioritizes funding on programs that support the health of our rural communities, the ability of our farmers and ranchers to put safe, cost-effective food on our tables, and the advancement and reliability of drugs and medical devices that save lives," House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers said. "And by stopping harmful and excessive regulations, the legislation also ensures that our food, drug, and financial industries remain the best in the world – helping to keep our nation strong and prosperous."

"The engine that drives the American economy is not necessarily built in factories but grown on American farms," said Agriculture Subcommittee Chairman Robert Aderholt. "This bill puts resources to work in areas that not only help farmers, ranchers, and growers everywhere, but also supports rural economic development and infrastructure."

Bill Highlights:

The legislation focuses investments in programs that bolster U.S. agriculture, support rural communities, maintain food and drug safety, ensure sound markets, and provide nutrition for children, families, and seniors. In total, the bill provides \$143.9 billion in both discretionary and mandatory funding – \$3.2 billion below the President's request and \$3.8 billion below the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. Discretionary funding alone in the bill is \$20.65 billion, \$175 million below the fiscal year 2015 enacted level.

Agricultural Research – The bill provides \$2.7 billion for agriculture research programs, including the Agricultural Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This funding will support research to help mitigate and stop devastating crop diseases, improve food safety and water quality, and combat antimicrobial resistance. This also includes important research investments in U.S. land-grant colleges and universities.

Animal and Plant Health – The legislation includes \$871 million – \$15 million above the President's budget request and approximately the same as the fiscal year 2015 enacted level – for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. This funding will support programs to help control or eradicate plant and animal pests and diseases that can be crippling to U.S. producers. The increase will help address harmful outbreaks of citrus greening and highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Conservation Programs – The bill provides \$840 million to help farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners conserve and protect their land. This includes \$6 million in infrastructure rehabilitation funding to help small communities meet current safety standards for watershed projects.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) – The legislation provides \$1.5 billion for FSA, which is approximately the same as the fiscal year 2015 level and the President's budget request. This funding will support the various farm, conservation, and emergency loan programs, and will help American farmers and ranchers with the implementation of the farm bill.

Rural Development – The bill provides a total of \$2.5 billion for rural development programs, which is \$86 million above the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. These programs help create an environment for economic growth by supporting basic rural infrastructure, providing loans to increase opportunities for rural businesses and industries, and helping balance the playing field in local rural housing markets.

- **Business and Industry Loans** – The legislation includes a loan level of \$920 million – the same as the fiscal year 2015 enacted level – for the rural business and industry loan program. This funding will help small businesses in rural areas, many of which face unique challenges due to local economic conditions.
- **Rural Infrastructure** – The legislation includes responsible investments in infrastructure needs to help rural areas of the country access basic utilities. This includes \$1.25 billion – the same as the fiscal year 2015

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enacted level – for rural water and waste program loans, and \$474 million for grants and costs, an increase of \$9 million above current levels. In addition, \$6.2 billion is provided for rural electric and telephone infrastructure loans, the same level as fiscal year 2015.

- **Rural Housing Loans and Rental Assistance** – The bill provides a total of \$24 billion in loan authority for the Single Family Housing guaranteed loan program, which is equal to the fiscal year 2015 enacted level and the President's request. In addition, the bill includes \$900 million in direct loans – the same as the fiscal year 2015 enacted level and the President's request. These loans provide low-income rural families – many of whom would have few loan options for purchasing a home because of their geographical location – with home loan assistance. In addition, \$1.2 billion, an increase of \$79 million above current levels, is provided for rental assistance for affordable rental housing for low-income families and the elderly in rural communities.

Food Safety and Inspection Service – The legislation includes \$1 billion for food safety and inspection programs – approximately the same as the 2015 enacted level. These mandatory inspection activities help ensure the safety and productivity of the country's \$186 billion meat and poultry industry, and keep safe, healthy food on American tables. The funding provided will maintain more than 8,000 frontline inspection personnel for meat, poultry, and egg products at more than 6,400 facilities across the country.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – The FDA receives a total of almost \$2.6 billion in discretionary funding in the bill, an increase of \$30 million over the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. Total funding for the FDA, including revenue from user fees, is \$4.6 billion – \$106 million above fiscal year 2015. Within this total, food safety activities are increased by \$41.5 million, and medical product safety activities are increased by \$4.2 million.

The bill also includes a policy provision delaying the implementation of a new menu labeling regulation by a year, to give restaurants, local supermarkets, grocery stores, and similar retail establishments adequate time to comply with the law.

Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) – Included in the bill is \$250 million for the CFTC, the same as the 2015 enacted level and \$72 million below the President's budget request.

International Programs – The legislation contains \$1.8 billion for overseas food aid and to promote U.S. agricultural exports. This includes \$1.4 billion – a \$17 million increase above the President's request – for "Food for Peace" grants, and the requested level for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program. These programs seek to reduce chronic hunger and increase food security by providing American-grown food, transported by U.S. ships, to foreign countries in need of aid.

Food and Nutrition Programs – The legislation contains discretionary funding, as well as mandatory funding required by law, for food and nutrition programs within the Department of Agriculture. This includes funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Child Nutrition programs. The bill also includes a policy provision that will ensure any new USDA Dietary Guidelines focus only on food and nutrients and have a sound scientific evidence base.

- **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** – The bill provides \$6.5 billion in discretionary funding for WIC, which is \$139 million below the fiscal year 2015 enacted level and the President's request. The reduction reflects USDA's estimates of declining enrollments in the program, and will not prevent any eligible participant from receiving benefits. The legislation also includes \$55 million for management information systems and for states to transfer from paper vouchers to a more efficient electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system that will help identify waste or abuse within the program.
- **Child nutrition programs** – The bill provides for \$21.5 billion in required mandatory funding – which is outside the discretionary funding jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee – for child nutrition programs. This is \$207 million above the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. This funding will provide free or reduced-price school lunches and snacks for 30.3 million children who qualify for the program. The bill continues existing provisions that allow schools demonstrating a financial hardship to seek an exemption from the whole grain nutrition standards, and prevents the implementation of further sodium reduction standards until the latest scientific research establishes the reduction is beneficial for children.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** – The bill provides for \$81.7 billion in required mandatory spending – which is outside the discretionary funding jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee – for SNAP. This is \$184 million below last year's level and \$2 billion below the President's budget request, due to declining enrollment. The total includes \$3 billion for the SNAP reserve fund, \$2 billion below the President's request, which is used to cover any unexpected participation increases. In addition, the bill includes provisions to increase congressional oversight of administrative activities and expenses, such as nutrition research and evaluations.

For the text of the subcommittee draft bill please visit: /UploadedFiles/BILLS-114HR-SC-AP-FY2016-Agriculture-SubcommitteeDraft.pdf

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