



American Society for Nutrition  
*Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice*

March 20, 2020

Outside Witness Testimony from Richard Mattes, M.P.H., Ph.D., RD, 2019-2020  
President, American Society for Nutrition; Professor, Purdue University, Department of  
Nutrition Science, regarding U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Fiscal Year 2021  
funding prepared for the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food  
and Drug Administration, and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food  
and Drug Administration, and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

**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 \$500 million and the USDA/ Agricultural Research Service receive \$1.789 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2021.** 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.

The USDA/NIFA/ Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) funds cutting-edge, agricultural research grants on key issues of timely importance on a competitive, peer-reviewed basis that address problems of national, regional, and multi-state importance in sustaining all components of agriculture, including nutrition. Adequate funding for AFRI 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 AFRI be funded at \$500 million in FY 2021, as recommended by the President's FY 2021 budget** (which also included an additional \$100 million for an AI in agriculture initiative).

### **Agricultural Research Service**

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) ensures high-quality, safe food and other agricultural products; assesses the nutritional needs of Americans; sustains a competitive agricultural economy; enhances the natural resource base and the environment; and provides economic opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society as a whole. ARS supports intramural and extramural research across four national program areas including nutrition, food safety and quality. **Therefore, ASN requests that ARS receive \$1.789 billion in FY 2021.** ARS's program of human nutrition research includes 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. HNRCs play an important role not only in generating knowledge, but also in translating it for stakeholders. 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 tracks nutritional status and health parameters.) Nutrition monitoring findings are essential for multiple government agencies, as well as the public and private sector 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.

As you consider future needs for programs and facilities, we emphasize that the funding increase provided in FY 2019 only brought ARS's budget slightly above the FY 2010 funding level when adjusted for inflation. 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 ARS continue to receive increased support to update food and nutrient databases and to continue critical surveillance of the nation's nutritional status and the many benefits it provides.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY 2021 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) or 240-428-3643, 9211 Corporate Boulevard, Suite 300, Rockville, MD 20850 if ASN may provide further assistance.

Sincerely,  
Richard Mattes, M.P.H., Ph.D., RD  
2019-2020 President, American Society for Nutrition