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April 6, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Room S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Mikulski, and Ranking Member Lowey:

As Congress prepares legislation making Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations for federal agencies, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) encourages you to support important programs to ensure a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply.

NASDA represents the Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of agriculture in all fifty states and four territories. As elected and appointed officials, our members are strong advocates for American agriculture and are partners with a number of federal agencies in regulating, marketing, and providing services to the agricultural industry.

While there are many important programs funded annually by the various appropriations measures, there are a few we want to specifically highlight and encourage the committee to adequately fund.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Integrated Food Safety System

- **Increase for the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) implementation at $109 million, including $32 million for state implementation programs**

NASDA supports the President's proposed budget increase of $109.5 million in which $32 million is for states to implement FSMA in an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS). However, our support comes with some caveats. Further, funding of state program is of vital importance for the successful implementation of FSMA. This proposed FY 2016 increase for states is not enough for fully successful implementation

and therefore should be considered a first down payment. The amount needed for the National IFSS will require substantial state-level investment in program development and expansion for human food safety and animal food safety programs in addition to that needed for the produce safety rule implementation.

While FDA has made progress in meeting Congressional goals, many parts of the future program are still unknown. We philosophically support the directive from Congress to build an integrated food safety system, but NASDA remains concerned that FDA may not get some of the most critical aspects right. It is vital that FDA works to ensure the rules are written correctly, FSMA is implemented successfully; and the agency adopts a change in its current culture to become an active partner in helping to prevent foodborne outbreaks through education, technical assistance, cooperation and involvement with industry, consumers, governmental partners and other stakeholders working together. It is recognized that the United States (U.S.) has the safest food supply in the world; however, through the implementation of good agricultural/manufacturing practices in existing food safety programs, we have recognized the value of implementing preventive controls, which could further reduce the likelihood of foodborne illnesses.

FSMA created a need for continuous improvement in the safety of fruits and vegetables. And while FSMA seeks to improve food safety, it was not created to drive American farmers away from growing fruits and vegetables and into growing other crops. As FDA continues to meet the milestones set out by legislation and the courts in the coming months, we will have an opportunity to assess its progress in striking the right balance and establishing the right methods to enhance public health.

NASDA is very concerned about the possibility that FSMA could become an unfunded mandate for state programs; which will not work. We appreciate the current FDA budget request recognizing the need to start funding state programs. The building of an infrastructure is needed to achieve the goals of FSMA, even if the future paths forward are not yet clear. Funding for state programs is of vital importance for the successful implementation of FSMA. Adequate oversight will be necessary to ensure a successful transition to a modernized and integrated food safety system.

Areas where funding will create the most value include:

- Education, outreach and training programs;
- Creation/expansion of state programs—specifically funding for produce safety infrastructure development (NASDA recommends a new line item be included in the budget) and expanded funding to support enhancements to existing state animal feed control and manufactured (human) food programs to meet FSMA standards;
- Funding for FDA to establish an integrated food safety system where each “partner” has support and authority to carry out responsibilities with shared values for enhanced and integrated public health programs where state programs are on par with federal programs;
- The need to ensure a level playing field between imported and domestic food production requirements will be an absolute necessity for the implementation of FSMA; and
- Expanding the “rapid response team” concept to invest in all states and bring program development and performance up to a high standard.

Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM)

- **CVM program areas at $130.1 million**
- **National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) funding at $10.8 million**

NASDA supports President's budget request for **$130.1 million for CVM, which oversees the safety of animal drugs, feeds and biotechnology-derived products**.

NASDA strongly supports the continuation of the **National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) presently funded at $10.8 million**. NARMS detects trends in antibiotic resistance and protects human and animal health through integrated monitoring of antimicrobial resistance among foodborne bacteria. NASDA also supports efforts to advance the protection of human and animal health through integrated monitoring of antimicrobial resistance within the FDA food safety program. Finally, NASDA supports developing scientifically valid methods to better understand antimicrobial drug use practices in animals and the public health impacts of resistant bacteria.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

- **Fully fund ARS at $1.426 billion**
- **Fully fund Office of Pest Management Policy (OPMP) at $3 million**
- **Fully fund National Agricultural Law Center (NALC)**

NASDA supports the President's request for $1.426 billion for ARS, which has the potential to make significant progress towards solving problems facing America's crop, livestock and poultry producers as well as natural resources, human nutrition, food production and food processing. ARS intramural research is uniquely suited for projects requiring a long term investment leading to high-impact payoffs, while maintaining the capacity and readiness to respond to emerging and pressing problems. ARS also plays a critical role in partnering with the university, community, and industry to advance science and address emerging issues.

NASDA urges the committee to **fully fund the Office of Pest Management Policy (OPMP) at $3 million**, as authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014, and we **further request assurances USDA-ARS executes this complete funding allocation to OPMP.** OPMP plays a critical role in coordinating policies and activities at USDA related to pesticides. Furthermore, OPMP provides a crucial source of leadership in the coordination of interagency activities between USDA, the Environmental Protection Agency, the FDA, as well as state agencies.

NASDA encourages continued extramural funding for the National Agricultural Law Center (NALC), **and its partners in the Agricultural & Food Law Consortium (Consortium) through the USDA-ARS National Agricultural Library** in order to support development and dissemination of objective, scholarly, and

relevant agricultural and food law research and information to producers, policy makers, Cooperative Extension Service professionals and others in the land grant university system, among others. Led by the NALC, the Consortium includes the National Sea Grant Law Center at the University of Mississippi School of Law, the Agricultural & Resource Law Program at The Ohio State University, and the Agricultural Law & Resource Center at Penn State Law. The National Agricultural Law Center is a formal NASDA partner, and as such directly provides NASDA leadership and members with objective agricultural and food law research and information on an ongoing basis.

Requested report language: *The Committee expects USDA-ARS National Agricultural Library extramural research and information consortium projects to be funded at no less than the fiscal year 2014 levels.*

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

- **Fund APHIS program areas at $900 million**
- **Fully fund Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Program**
- **Fully fund Wildlife Services at $99 million**
- **Fully fund Feral Swine Control at $20 million**
- **New research funding for National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS)**

NASDA members are key regulatory partners with USDA-APHIS in protecting American agriculture and rural economies from the threats posed by animal and plant diseases and pests. It is estimated that plant pests alone cost the US economy over $100 billion a year.

NASDA is concerned with the President's proposal to further reduce APHIS funding to $858.8 million in FY2016, and we **recommend a minimum of $900 million in funding for APHIS**. Any additional reductions to APHIS' budget will result in further deterioration of essential services and impair the Agency from carrying out its fundamental mission, which is "to protect the health and value of American agriculture and natural resources."

We urge the committee to fully fund the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) program, which is an important state-federal cooperative program that conducts science-based national and state surveys targeted at specific exotic plant pests, diseases, and weeds identified as threats to U.S. agriculture and/or the environment. These activities are accomplished primarily under USDA funding that is provided through cooperative agreements with state departments of agriculture, universities, and other entities. The Pest Detection program supports APHIS' goal of safeguarding U.S. agricultural and environmental resources by ensuring that new introductions of harmful plant pests and diseases are detected as soon as possible, before they have a chance to cause significant damage.

NASDA encourages the committee to **fully fund APHIS's critical Wildlife Services (WS) programs at $99 million** and opposes efforts to restrict or eliminate WS funding. In cooperation with state departments of agriculture, other state agencies, industry and other cooperators, WS provides needed federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts and protects agriculture from detrimental animal predators through identification, demonstration, and application of the most appropriate methods of

control. WS is an important partner in the development of methods to resolve conflicts between humans and wildlife. These include wildlife management programs such as livestock protection, migratory bird damage to crops, and invasive species damage.

NASDA also **supports $20 million to the national control program for feral swine**. These invasive species are associated with an estimated $1.5 billion annually in damages to pastures, agricultural crops, and other natural areas. Feral swine are an invasive species and pose significant animal health and environmental risks by causing crop damage, livestock predation, environmental degradation, and disease transmission, primarily swine brucellosis and pseudorabies.

The President's budget includes several requests for funding on the issue of antibiotic resistance across the government. USDA and FDA-CVM have been allocated $57 million and $7.1 million respectively. NASDA supports funding for antibiotic research as long as it is **new money** and funding to crucial programs within USDA and CVM are not being redirected. **Antibiotic use data collection should be through the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) program within APHIS.** NAHMS conducts national studies on the health and management of U.S. livestock populations, which makes the program the natural choice to collect antibiotic use data. NAHMS has defined protocols in place, is already on-farm collecting data, and provides confidentiality protections.

Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS)

- **Remove Prohibitions on USDA Horse Meat Inspections**
- **Fully fund State Food Safety and Inspection at $63 million**

We encourage the committee to **resist attempts to include language that would prohibit funding for USDA ante-mortem horse inspection**. A 2011 GAO study concluded that removal of funding for USDA inspectors of horse meat has resulted in widespread starvation, neglect, abandonment, and unnecessary suffering of horses and resulted in unwanted horses being shipped greater distances to processing facilities in Canada or Mexico.

The USDA budget requests $61 million in funding for state meat inspection programs, down from $63 million in previous years, as a complement to the federal meat inspection program. This funding is critical for states that provide state meat inspections under a variety of programs regulated by FSIS. We urge the committee to **restore funding for State Food Safety and Inspection to $63 million** and refrain from any further funding reductions to these important programs.

Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)

- **Market Access Program (MAP) at $200 million**
- **Foreign Market Development (FMD) program at $34.5 million**

Funding for the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is a key NASDA priority, and is vital to ensuring American agricultural producers and related businesses are able access important export markets. NASDA urges the committee to **fully fund the Market Access Program (MAP) at $200 million**. MAP

encourages the development, maintenance, and expansion of commercial agricultural export markets. In addition, the program works to stimulate interest of small companies in exporting, open new markets, and increase commercial sales of U.S. agricultural products abroad. While MAP benefits farmers by increasing demands for their products, the program especially helps small businesses in urban, suburban, and rural areas access foreign markets and increase export opportunities. In addition, we encourage you to **fully fund the Foreign Market Development (FMD) program at $34.5 million** and help foster trade opportunities with American businesses in emerging markets.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

- **Fully fund NASS at $180 million**

NASS provides objective, timely, accurate, and essential statistics in service to U.S. agriculture. NASS statistics provide the information necessary for producers, agribusinesses, farm organizations, commodity groups, economists, public officials, and others for critical decision making in agricultural marketing and investing. **NASDA urges the committee to fully fund the President's budget request for NASS at $180 million** as NASS data is vital to keeping agricultural markets stable, efficient, and fair by ensuring accessible and objective data are available to both commodity market buyers and sellers. NASS has made considerable enhancements within its programs and operations to deliver improved results, including opening a National Operations Center that centralizes data collection and service.

National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)

- **Fully fund NAHLN at $15 million**

NASDA was pleased the 2014 Farm Bill authorized $15 million annually for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), which is a cooperative effort composed of USDA-APHIS, NIFA, university, and state veterinary diagnostic labs. NAHLN is an early warning system for emerging and foreign animal diseases, and **we urge Congress to provide the full authorized funding in FY2016 for the new budget line** to expand surveillance and surge capacity of the NAHLN by: increasing the number and level of participating state labs; spur development of infrastructure for electronic transmission of data between sample collectors, labs and state and federal databases; and, increase efficiency and effectiveness of lab personnel training and employment both regionally and nationwide.

National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

- **National Agriculture in the Classroom at $1 million**
- **Fully fund Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) at $450 million**
- **Level funding for Veterinary Medical Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) at $5 million**
- **Fund Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP) at $2.5 million**
- **Fund Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database (FARAD) at $2.5 million**
- **Fund Section 1433 at $10 million**

NASDA encourages funding for Agriculture in the Classroom (AIC) Programs at $1 million. This funding supports state programs that provide tools to improve agriculture literacy among PreK-12 teachers and

their students. NASDA Members assert that AIC is a critical educational tool to inspire our next generation of farmers, ranchers, and diverse food system workforce. NIFA has provided critical funding to this program since its inception over 30 years ago. While the President's FY16 budget proposes to zero-out the funding for this program, NASDA requests this program be fully funded at $1 million. The President's budget also requests to move AIC programming to the Department of Education and bundle it with other STEM programs. **NASDA recommends this programming remain under USDA's scope due to their closely aligned mission areas.**

NASDA supports the President's proposal of $450,000,000 for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). AFRI competitively funds new projects and addresses emerging issues in food, agriculture, and natural resources research. NASDA strongly supports the AFRI program and urges that the increase over FY15 should not come at the expense of other critical food and agricultural research, education and economics programs. NASDA is heartened to see some of the proposed increase requested in the President's budget would go toward animal science in the area of antimicrobial resistance. In addition, NASDA is supportive of the Farm Bill language including a funding priority within AFRI for research to expand and advance drug approvals to treat minor species. AFRI should be encouraged to establish a competitive grant program to carry out research on drugs for minor species and for minor uses in major species.

Within other NIFA accounts, NASDA requests support for the following programs with specific emphasis and impacts on animal agriculture:

- $5 million, or level funding, for the **Veterinary Medical Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP).** Since 2010, 286 veterinarians have participated in the VMLRP and nearly 860 have applied. NASDA also urges congress to exempt VMLRP awards from withholding taxes.
- $2.5 million for the **Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP)** in FY 2016 with future increases to the full authorized level of $10 million. Congress needs to begin initial funding for the newly authorized competitive grant program to address gaps in rural areas. The President did not include funding in his budget proposal for this newly authorized program.
- $2.5 million for the **Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database (FARAD)**. The President has level-funded the program at $1.25 million. In 2013, there were more than 7.5 million animals impacted in nearly 2,000 residue avoidance cases handled by FARAD. NASDA supports this increase for FARAD.

The 2014 Farm Bill includes enhancements to **Section 1433, Continuing Animal Health and Disease, Food Security, and Stewardship Research, Education and Extension Programs**. The expanded Section 1433 maintains the capacity program for animal health and disease and adds a competitive grant program focusing on critical priorities in the areas of food security, one health and stewardship. NASDA recommends funding of $10 million for fiscal 2016 to "kick start" the program, less than half of its authorized level of $25 million. The President has proposed level funding for the program, just $4 million. Funding at this level will permit the competitive side of the program to commence and allow both land-grants and non-land-grant colleges of agriculture to compete for grants. The first $5 million appropriated will go toward capacity distribution while funds above $5 million will be distributed with 15 percent to capacity and 85 percent to competitive grants.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- **Fully fund the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) at $1.65 billion**
- **Fully fund the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) at 10.34 million acres**
- **Fully fund the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**
- **Fully fund Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**

NASDA encourages Congress to fully fund Farm Bill Title II conservation programs. These invaluable programs help farmers, ranchers, and other landowners address important conservation concerns. Voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs are the bedrock for agriculture's efforts to improve water quality, soil health, air quality, and address water quantity concerns. In addition, these programs help producers avoid burdensome regulatory pressures.

Specifically, we urge Congress to maintain all mandatory conservation program funding for FY2016, including funding the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) at $1.65 billion**, funding **full enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**, and ensuring both the **Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** and the **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** are fully funded. In addition, NASDA encourages Congress to provide the maximum possible funding for Conservation Technical Assistance and to resist efforts to charge producers user fees for accessing NRCS services.

U.S. Forest Service

- **Forest Inventory and Analysis program at $83 million**

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program provides critical information on the state of our nation's forests. We ask the committee to reverse recent spending cuts to this program and **fund FIA at a level of at least $83 million** toward providing an updated inventory of America's forests.

The program provides unbiased information that serves as the basis for monitoring trends in wildlife habitat, wildfire risk, insect and disease threats, predicting spread of invasive species and for solving many other resource questions. We ask you to renew a strong commitment to the program and the crucial data it supplies to decision makers at state and federal regulatory agencies as well as a host of other stakeholders.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP)

- **State and Tribal categorical grants at $108 million**
- **State Pollinator Protection Plans at $0.58 million**

NASDA supports the President's budget request of **$108 million in funding for State and Tribal Assistance categorical grants**, which helps continue our partnership efforts with EPA. This funding is especially critical in assisting states to develop and implement state managed pollinator plans and forwarding the Federal Pollinator Task Force's mission.

NASDA also supports EPA's FY 2016 budget request for OPP for **an increase of approximately $1.5 million above FY 2015.** This increase will fund OPP work to improve pollinator health by performing laboratory research and technical analysis on pollinators (e.g., honeybees, monarch butterflies) and related resources (e.g., hive structures), improving our scientific understanding to promote pollinator health through the regulatory processes. The FY 2016 budget also includes a **$0.5 million increase for OPP over the FY 2015 budget to supplement existing resources available to states and tribes to develop pollinator protection plans**.

Office of Water

- **Clean Water Action Section 319 Program at $164.9 million**

NASDA requests a minimum of **$164.9 million for the Clean Water Act Section 319 program** which was included in the President's budget. These funds are important in that they help facilitate state non-point source water quality efforts.

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Army Corps of Engineers

- **Fully fund Inland Waterway Trust Fund (IWTF) at $360 million**
- **Fund Operations & Maintenance (O&M) at $2.9 billion**
- **Provide $10 million in pre-construction engineering and design (PED) for the Navigation & Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP)**
- **Fund Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) at $1.25 billion**

We request support for an appropriate a level of construction funding for the Corps to ensure that funding of **Inland Waterway Trust Fund (IWTF) for the inland waterway modernization, replacement, rehabilitation, & expansion projects is maintained at the highest level ($360 million)** that can be supported by the inland waterway diesel tax revenues expected to be received for FY 2016 by Treasury for the IWTF.

NASDA supports the **Corps of Engineers' Operations & Maintenance (O&M) account funding level of $2.908 billion that was provided in FY 2015 to $3 billion in FY 2016** for the operations and maintenance activities of the Corps including those affecting inland and coastal navigation throughout the nation.

NASDA supports providing a total of **$10 million in FY 2016 from the Investigations account of the Corps of Engineers to continue pre-construction engineering and design (PED) for the Navigation &**

Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP)—Upper Mississippi River & Illinois Waterway System as authorized in title VIII of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-114). We request reaching the **Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) Target level of $1.25 billion** for FY '16 for the benefit of our nation's ports and channels.

Conclusion

NASDA asks that you give our requests careful consideration as you set out to fund the nation's agricultural policy priorities in fiscal year 2016. NASDA is a partner with federal agencies in the implementation of a host of food, agricultural and natural resources programs. In prioritizing our support for federal appropriations, NASDA Members have a unique wealth of information, experience, and expertise. We realize the difficulty of your task but know that increased investment in the outlined programs will prove to be a wise decision now and for the future. NASDA stands ready to work with you and your staff to expeditiously pass the agriculture appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration, and please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Barbara P. Glenn, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
NASDA

Enclosure: NASDA Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations Priorities Table

Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations Priorities

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