



April 10, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Committee on Appropriations
Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Committee on Appropriations
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris
Committee on Appropriations
Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Committee on Appropriations
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Heinrich, Chairman Harris, Ranking Member Hoeven, and Ranking Member Bishop:

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) commends the subcommittee for its work in support of farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. NASDA represents the Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of agriculture in all 50 states and 4 territories. NASDA members are co-regulators with the federal government and strong advocates for American agriculture.

As you begin the fiscal year (FY) 2024 appropriations process, NASDA asks you to prioritize the following programs that enhance farmers, ranchers, and rural communities and ensure a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply.

1. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA): Produce, Animal Food, Produce Safety Alliance, Food Safety Outreach Program

- a. \$150 million – State, Local, Tribal, Territorial Human and Animal Food Programs
 - i. New funding would be for funds that exceed the amount FDA spent in support of the states in previous years.
- b. \$2 million – Produce Safety Alliance Funding (PSA)
- c. \$2 million – FDA Center for Excellence
 - i. The Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition's (CFSAN) Centers of Excellence program is one CFSAN partnership to develop new approaches to food safety issues. While the Centers work with their partners on limited approaches to food safety, more needs to be done in the fresh produce industry.

NASDA members are at the forefront of implementing FSMA. Funding these programs will allow NASDA to continue building state regulatory programs required by FSMA and educate and train the farm and food sectors on compliance. The education, outreach, and training provided by state programs, and PSA are critical to meeting FSMA's mandate and ensuring a safe food supply.

2. Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network - \$10 million, full funding

Funding will continue efforts to scale assistance programs and create training and partnerships to serve rural Americans—60% of whom live in areas with mental health professional shortages.

3. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Programs

a. National Animal Health Laboratory Network - \$30 million, full funding

- i. NAHLN funding is critical for large-scale animal-disease outbreak response. NASDA members, who regulate and oversee animal health in the states, are the first line of defense against animal disease outbreaks and rely on NALHN labs for tracking disease progression and performing tests on thousands of diagnostic samples. Federal funding for the NAHLN will expand surveillance and surge capacity to diagnose diseases and ramp up during emergencies.

b. National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program – Full funding

The National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program allows APHIS to collaborate with animal health partners throughout the nation to implement high-value projects that enhance prevention, preparedness, detection, and response to the most damaging emerging and foreign animal diseases that threaten U.S. agriculture.

c. National Veterinary Stockpile - Additional \$20 million

- i. The National Veterinary Stockpile is a critical component of APHIS emergency response capability. Additional funding for depopulation equipment is needed to avoid catastrophic supply chain disruption in the event of a Foot-and-mouth disease outbreak.

d. Foreign Animal Disease

- i. NASDA urges providing \$1 million to APHIS to strengthen the federal oversight of imported canines and other imports that could transfer foreign animal diseases that will devastate the U.S. livestock industry.

4. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Programs

a. Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program - \$10 million

- i. Since 2010, USDA has executed 552 VMLRP awards to veterinarians. Meanwhile, 1,632 veterinarians have applied to the program. Of those who completed service, 80% remained in underserved rural communities. NASDA urges Congress to exempt VMLRP awards from the 37% withholding tax currently paid by USDA with appropriated dollars to maximize the federal funding provided to the program.

b. Veterinary Service Grant Program - \$3.5 million

- i. VSGP offers competitive grant funding to address gaps in veterinary shortage situations by bolstering national food supply veterinary capacity through education and training activities and practice enhancement or expansion.

5. Agriculture Research

- a. Agriculture research, education, and extension efforts are vital in creating short and long-term advancements in food and agriculture to benefit farmers, ranchers, industry, and consumers. NASDA supports funding USDA's Research, Education and Economics mission areas to support short-term and long-term research needs. Specifically, NASDA supports funding for:
 - i. The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, National Institute for Food and Agriculture, and USDA-Agricultural Research Service.
 - ii. Competitive research grant programs, including the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and other competitive-based funding initiatives.
 - iii. Maintaining and strengthening program funding through the Hatch, Smith-Lever Act, and other formula-based funding authorities.
- b. NASDA supports USDA's Agricultural Research Service in maintaining a focus on agricultural-related legal issues within the National Agricultural Library and encourages ARS and the National Agricultural Library to engage in multi-year cooperative agreements with the Agricultural Law Information Partnership's partner institutions.
- c. Animal Disease Research Funding:
 - i. Provide \$50 million in authorized funding to support the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority, authorized in Section 7132 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018.
 - ii. Provide \$11.8 million for the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS). This represents a \$500 increase over FY 2019 and maintains FY 2021 funding. NARMS serves as a source of data for the approval of new animal antibiotics and the post-approval safety monitoring of these compounds.
- d. Minor Crop Pest Management Program (IR-4):
 - i. NASDA recommends funding this program at the authorized funding level because developing pest control tools has high regulatory costs. This funding ensures safe and effective agrichemicals and biopesticides are available for small, specialty crop markets.
- e. Food Safety Research
 - i. Provide \$5,000,000 to NIFA for the purpose of funding projects that identify viable human health hazard mitigations for agricultural regions where plant and animal operations coexist, with the goal of improving and assuring maximized and flexible utility of agricultural lands.
 - ii. Provide \$5,000,000 to NIFA for the purpose of funding projects that identify, validate, and facilitate human-pathogen kill step technologies and systems for the fresh produce industry.

6. Agricultural Trade

NASDA supports maintaining funding for essential export promotion and market development funds provided by the Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation programs. NASDA requests at least \$200 million for the Market Access Program and \$34.5 million for the Foreign Market Development program. In addition, we ask for discretionary funds to provide \$7 million – less

than 3 percent of the program investment - for USDA administrative and operational costs. With administrative funding in place, the full investment of MAP and FMD can be realized for the intended purpose of U.S. agricultural export promotion and long-term market development.

7. Wildlife Services

NASDA supports \$82 million in no-year funding for FY 2024 to implement the complete modernization of the U.S. Geological Survey, National Wildlife Health Center. The NWHC is the nation's only federal BSL-3 facility exclusively dedicated to scientific investigation and research on wildlife diseases that threaten human, animal, and environmental health.

8. Urban Agriculture

Urban farming has grown more than 30 percent in the U.S. in the last 30 years. There is great potential for urban agriculture to help address the poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity that often come as a result of urbanization.

- NASDA supports funding the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production at the full authorized level of \$25 million.
- NASDA recommends an additional \$14 million for the urban agriculture data collection initiative.

9. Cyber Security

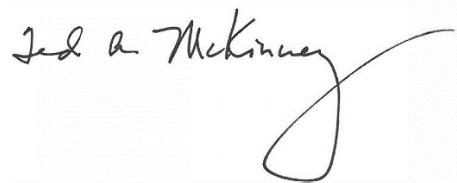
Recognizing the potential cyber security risks of the agriculture industry is a gap in agriculture's preparedness for such an attack. As industry giants and cooperatives have undergone cyber-attacks within the last year, the agriculture industry needs to be better equipped to deal with these threats from foreign nation actors.

NASDA supports fulling funding of the Comprehensive Food Safety Network Consortium at the full authorized level of \$20 million. This consortium was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (7 U.S. Code § 5925).

Conclusion

NASDA thanks you for your careful consideration of these requests as you work to fund the programs that enhance farmers and ranchers and ensure a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply. If you have any questions, please contact RJ Karney, senior director public policy, rj.karney@nasda.org.

Sincerely,



Ted McKinney
Chief Executive Officer