



June 4, 2025

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 Harris and Ranking Member Bishop:

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture commends the subcommittee for its work in support of farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. NASDA is a nonpartisan organization representing the unified voice of the commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the state departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA members are co-regulators with the federal government and strong advocates for American agriculture.

As you begin the fiscal year 2026 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. FDA Human Foods Program: Cooperative Agreements**

- a. State & Local Food Safety Programs & Contracts – \$200 million
  - i. A consistent and predictable funding mechanism for state and local programs is essential to ensure regulatory oversight, outbreak prevention, and long-term stability. NASDA urges Congress to provide and direct no less than \$200 million to the FDA Human Foods Program for State & Local Food Safety Programs. This funding is necessary to align with the President's proposal to transition most routine food safety inspections to state agencies. This shift reflects FDA's recognition of the efficiency, local expertise, and cost-effectiveness of state-led programs.
  - ii. A \$200 million allocation would provide states with budgetary certainty and capacity building for the following:
    1. Produce Safety Rule Implementation through the State Cooperative Agreement Program
    2. Food Safety Outreach & Education Programs led by states
    3. Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule Implementation
    4. Preventative Controls for Animal Food Rule Implementation
    5. NASDA also supports funding for the Produce Safety Alliance, administered by Cornell University, which is funded separately from state programs under the Human Foods Program.

**2. Food Safety Inspection Service**

- a. State Food Safety and Inspection – \$75 million
  - i. FSIS cooperates with state agencies in developing and administering the State Meat and Poultry Inspection and Cooperative Interstate Shipment

programs by supporting up to a 50% funding match for inspection activities. In recent years, FSIS has been providing state programs with significantly less funding, challenging states' ability to provide inspection services. However, USDA announced in May 2025 that it would use the FY25 Non-Recurring Expense Fund to increase the reimbursement rates for states. NASDA appreciates USDA issuing this increase, but these funds are not guaranteed in FY26. NASDA requests the \$75 million to ensure states maintain these programs; otherwise, states will be forced to turn away facilities for state inspection, resulting in a reduction in the amount of processing capacity available for farmers.

### **3. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Programs**

- a. Animal Health Programs - \$400 million
  - i. State departments of agriculture and state animal health officials work collaboratively with federal partners through numerous cooperative funding agreements administered by USDA-APHIS and serve as the frontlines for prevention, surveillance, early detection, management, and ultimately eradication of foreign animal disease. These cooperative agreements include programs related to avian health, particularly in the wake of recurring and new outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in multiple species, protections against the threat of African Swine Fever, efforts to protect the livestock sector against Foot and Mouth Disease, as well as many program diseases such as bovine tuberculosis, chronic wasting disease, and scrapie.
- b. Plant Health Programs – Authorized Level
  - i. State departments of agriculture work in tandem with federal partners through cooperative agreements administered by USDA-APHIS, alongside industry, academia, and other stakeholders, to safeguard our Nation's crops and forests against the entry, establishment, and spread of economically and environmentally significant pests.
- c. National Animal Health Laboratory Network - \$30 million
  - 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.
- d. National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program
  - i. Funding the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program at the authorized level allows APHIS to collaborate with animal health partners to implement high-value projects that enhance prevention, preparedness, detection, and response to the most damaging emerging and foreign animal diseases.
- e. National Veterinary Stockpile - \$20 million increase
  - i. The National Veterinary Stockpile is a critical component of APHIS emergency response capability.
- f. Foreign Animal Disease (imported canines) - \$1 million

- 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. USDA Regional Food Systems & Nutrition Programs – Authorized Levels**

- a. NASDA supports programs that ensure federal policies align with the needs of regional food systems and improve access to a variety of nutrient-dense foods. These programs should prioritize U.S. farmers and ranchers, particularly local and regional food systems, and bolster market resilience, mitigate supply chain disruptions, and enhance economic opportunities for agricultural producers. These programs should also support health-driven outcomes.
- b. NASDA advocates for continued funding for programs, including:
  - i. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children Program
  - ii. The Emergency Food Assistance Program
  - iii. Commodity Supplemental Food Program
  - iv. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs
  - v. Child Nutrition and Elderly Nutrition Programs
  - vi. National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program
    - 1. An update is necessary to reduce administrative burdens on school districts, emphasize the consumption and procurement of local foods, assist districts with the costs of preparing and storing food, and provide federal resources to make meals more affordable and widely available for students.
    - 2. Reimbursement rates need to be adjusted to reflect current bulk food prices.
  - vii. USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Programs
    - 1. This program increases access to and use of local foods in schools while also fostering experiential food education for our nation's children. Participating schools should be given more opportunities and financial flexibility to increase direct purchases of local products outside of the school food service contracts.
  - viii. Local Agriculture Market Program
    - 1. NASDA supports increasing funding for the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program to enable the expansion of these programs into additional states.
  - ix. Cooperative Agreements for Purchasing Local & Regional Foods
    - 1. NASDA supports funding cooperative agreement purchasing models that provide flexibility to state departments of agriculture to source and distribute local or regional foods to regional nutrition programs, including but not limited to schools, food banks, and "food as medicine" programs.
  - x. Food as Medicine Procurement
    - 1. NASDA supports the utilization of federal funding to create "food as medicine" programs, including medically tailored meals, that

will use regionally-sourced agricultural products to achieve improved health outcomes and reduce medical treatment costs.

xi. Food Waste Programs

1. These programs would assist farmers and food processors in offsetting the costs of processing and distributing food to be donated to the charitable food system. Funding is also required to support the infrastructure needed for the storage of perishable, recovered food products on-farm and in communities.

**5. National Institute of Food and Agriculture Programs**

- a. Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program - \$10 million
  - i. 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, as well as practice enhancement or expansion.
- c. Agriculture in the Classroom – \$1 million
  - i. This program improves student achievement by applying agricultural-based content as the context to teach core curriculum concepts in science, social studies, language arts, and nutrition.
- d. SNAP-Ed
  - i. This program teaches recipients how to make their SNAP dollars go further, while also providing nutrition education.
- e. Gus Schumacher Incentive Program (GusNIP)
  - i. NASDA encourages the continued investments in GusNIP to increase the number of farmers markets and other authorized retailers who accept SNAP benefits as a means of encouraging participants to consume a greater volume and variety of fruits and vegetables while also supporting the farmers closest to their community. Every effort should be made to assist farmers with becoming qualified SNAP retailers, including full support of grant funding for wireless point-of-sale equipment.
- f. Minor Crop Pest Management Program (IR-4)
  - i. NASDA recommends authorized funding because developing pest control tools has high regulatory costs. This funding ensures small specialty crop markets have safe and effective agrichemicals and biopesticides.
- g. Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network -- \$10 million
  - i. 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.

**6. Agriculture Research**

NASDA supports funding for USDA's Research, Education, and Economics mission areas to address both short-term and long-term research needs, specifically:

- a. The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research
- b. Agriculture Research Service competitive research grant programs, including the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative at no less than \$500 million, as well as other competitive-based funding initiatives.
- c. Maintaining and strengthening program funding through the Hatch, Smith-Lever Act, and other formula-based funding authorities.
- d. 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.
- e. Animal Disease Research Funding:
  - i. Provide \$10 million 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 serves as a source of data for the approval of new animal antibiotics and the post-approval safety monitoring of these compounds.
- f. 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 funding projects that identify, validate, and facilitate human-pathogen kill step technologies and systems for the fresh produce industry.

## **7. Agricultural Trade**

NASDA requests at least \$200 million for the Market Access Program and \$34.5 million for the Foreign Market Development Program. NASDA supports maintaining funding for essential export promotion and market development funds provided by the Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation programs. 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.

## **8. National Agricultural Statistics Service**

NASDA supports funding NASS at a level that allows NASS to conduct and publish all necessary reports for the entire agriculture industry.

## **9. Wildlife Services**

NASDA supports \$82 million in no-year funding for FY 2026 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.

### **10. Urban Agriculture**

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

### **11. Cyber Security - \$20 million**

NASDA supports funding of the Comprehensive Food Safety Network Consortium to prepare the agriculture industry against potential cybersecurity attacks.

### **12. Office of Pest Management Policy**

NASDA supports increased funding for the Office of Pest Management Policy at \$3.4 million to provide ongoing technical expertise for various user groups throughout the pesticide regulatory process. This increase will allow OPMP to keep pace with increasing regulatory pressures that require increased coordination with state departments of agriculture, pesticide end-users, and other federal agencies.

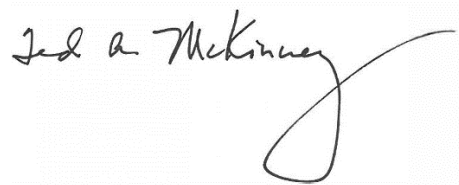
### **13. Certified Mediation Programs**

NASDA supports funding the Certified Mediation Programs at its authorized level, as these state-managed grant programs have maintained their cost-efficiency while being authorized to mediate significantly more types of disputes following the 2018 Farm Bill.

### **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](mailto:rj.karney@nasda.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ted McKinney", with a large, stylized loop at the end of the signature.

Ted McKinney  
Chief Executive Officer  
NASDA