



April 9, 2026

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 2027 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 minimum
 - i. A consistent and predictable funding mechanism for state and local programs is essential to ensure regulatory oversight, outbreak prevention, and long-term stability.
 - ii. This funding will sustain existing programs, supporting training, inspections, outreach, and education programs at the local level, including:
 1. Produce Safety Rule
 2. Food Safety Outreach & Education Programs
 3. Preventative Controls for Human Food Rule Implementation
 - iii. Additionally, this funding would enable the implementation of the FDA Better Regulatory Inspections for Dynamic Government Efficiency (BRIDGE) initiative, ensuring states are able to absorb and support the Administration's priority of moving more routine inspections to states, to meet public health outcomes, and cost-efficiency priorities.
 - iv. Produce Safety Alliance, administered by Cornell University, which provides nationally recognized produce safety training and is funded separately from state programs under the Human Foods Program.

2. Food Safety Inspection Service

- a. State Food Safety and Inspection – \$82.5 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 for MPI and 60% for CIS. NASDA requests \$82.5 million to ensure states maintain these programs; otherwise, states will be forced to turn away facilities for state inspection, reducing the processing capacity available to 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 various cooperative agreements funded by USDA-APHIS. With USDA's support, states take the lead on prevention, surveillance, early detection, management, and ultimately eradicating foreign animal diseases. These cooperative agreements with USDA-APHIS help states protect our domestic livestock industry from animal disease threats.
- b. Plant Health Programs – \$390 million (or 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. These cooperative agreements facilitate uniform and efficient mitigation efforts across the country for plant pests.
- c. National Animal Health Laboratory Network - \$30 million
 - i. NAHLN funding is essential for responding to large-scale animal disease outbreaks. NASDA members, who regulate and oversee animal health in the states, serve as the first line of defense against animal disease outbreaks and depend on NAHLN labs to track disease progression and test 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 on high-value projects that improve prevention, preparedness, detection, and response to the most harmful emerging and foreign animal diseases.
- e. National Veterinary Stockpile - Authorized Level
 - i. The National Veterinary Stockpile is a critical component of APHIS emergency response capability.
- f. Biotechnology Regulatory Service (BRS) – Authorized Level
 - i. NASDA supports the key role APHIS BRS plays in creating a clear, predictable pathway for innovative plant biotechnologies while protecting against plant pest risks.

4. USDA Regional Food Systems & Nutrition Programs – Authorized Levels

- a. Cooperative Agreements for State-Led Food Purchases
 - i. NASDA supports funding cooperative agreement purchasing models that provide flexibility to state departments of agriculture to source and

distribute local and regional foods into public and private institutions, including but not limited to schools, food banks, and “food as medicine” programs.

b. Nutrition Education and Community-Based Initiatives

- i. NASDA supports increased federal investments in nutrition education programs and community-based initiatives that help individuals enrolled in SNAP or other food assistance programs make healthier choices.

c. NASDA supports funding the following programs at the authorized level:

- i. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- ii. Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
- iii. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP)
- iv. Child Nutrition and Elderly Nutrition Programs
- v. 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.
- vi. 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.
- vii. Local Agriculture Market Programs (LAMP)
 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.
- viii. Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)
 1. NASDA requests \$5 million in additional appropriation funding. GusNIP currently receives \$56 million in mandatory funding, while states support \$88 million annually - creating a \$32 million shortfall and growing demand from new states and programs.
 2. This funding level would expand farmers markets and authorized retailers accepting SNAP. GusNIP’s emphasis on regional specialty crop growers continues to drive strong participation and underscores the need for increased funding.
- ix. Food Waste & Crop Surplus Utilization Programs
 1. These programs assist farmers and food processors in offsetting the costs of processing and distributing food the charitable food system. Funding is also 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. Minor Crop Pest Management Program (IR-4)
 - i. NASDA recommends authorized funding for this important initiative to support the registration of pest management tools for specialty crop producers, as well as tools for minor use on major crops.
- e. Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network - \$10 million
 - i. Funding allows state departments of agriculture and other partners to continue efforts to expand access to mental health providers for rural Americans, 60 percent of whom live in an area with a shortage of mental health professionals.

6. Agriculture Research

NASDA supports USDA's Agricultural Research Service funding at \$1.877 billion. In addition, NASDA supports the following activities:

- 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 \$455 million, as well as other competitive-based funding initiatives.
- c. Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA) at no less than \$1 million, to ensure the program has the necessary funds to promote collaborative solutions to some of U.S. agriculture's biggest challenges.
- d. Maintaining and strengthening program funding through the Hatch, Smith-Lever Act, and other formula-based funding authorities.
- e. 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.
- f. Animal Disease Research Funding:
 - i. Provide \$11.8 million for the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System. NARMS serves as a data source for the approval of new animal antibiotics and for the post-approval safety monitoring of these compounds.

g. 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 the full authorized funding for USDA export promotion programs, specifically the Market Access Program, the Supplemental Agriculture Trade Promotion Program, the Emerging Markets Program, and the Foreign Market Development Program.

8. National Agricultural Statistics Service

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

9. Wildlife Services

NASDA supports \$82 million in no-year funding for FY 2027 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 for the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production at the authorized level of \$25 million, and for the urban agriculture data collection initiative at \$5 million.

11. Cyber Security - \$20 million

NASDA supports funding the Comprehensive Food Safety Network Consortium to help the agriculture industry defend against potential cybersecurity threats.

12. Office of Pest Management Policy

NASDA supports funding the Office of Pest Management Policy at a minimum of \$3 million to provide ongoing technical expertise for various user groups throughout the pesticide regulatory process. This funding 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 - \$7 million

NASDA supports funding the Certified Mediation Programs at \$7 million, as these state-managed grant programs have maintained their cost-efficiency while being authorized to mediate significantly more types of disputes, particularly amidst challenging farm economics.

14. Rural Development - Biobased Markets Program - \$3 million

NASDA supports USDA Rural Development's Biobased Markets Program as a key tool for strengthening domestic markets for agricultural feedstocks and supporting innovative U.S.

biobased manufacturing. This funding will allow the program to implement recently announced regulatory changes and bolster timely access to key domestic markets.

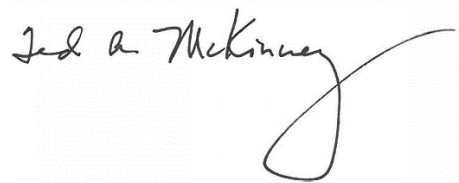
15. Agricultural Marketing Service – Pesticide Data Program

NASDA supports funding USDA AMS's Pesticide Data Program (PDP) at no less than \$15.3 million. PDP leverages partnerships with state departments of agriculture and other cooperators to provide critical sampling, testing, and reporting of pesticide residues in the U.S. food supply. This amount would restore funding to FY25 levels and support EPA's establishment of pesticide tolerances and FDA's Pesticide Residue Monitoring Program.

Conclusion

NASDA thanks you for your careful consideration of these requests as you work to fund programs that support farmers and ranchers and ensure a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply. If you have any questions, please contact RJ Karney, Senior Director of Public Policy, at RJ.Karney@nasda.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ted McKinney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Ted McKinney
Chief Executive Officer
NASDA