

Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations Request

Requesting entity: Organic Farming Research Foundation
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1. Programmatic Funding Request – Organic Transitions Program (ORG)

Appropriations Bill: Agriculture
Specific agency: National Institute of Food and Agriculture
Appropriations account: Research and Education
Program: **Organic Transitions Program (ORG)**
Amount requested for FY 2021 Appropriations: **\$10 million**
Amount requested in the President's FY 2021 Budget: \$6 million
Amount provided in FY 2020: \$6million

Explanation justifying the request, describing how funding will be used, and relevance to California:

This is a key competitive grants program that supports organic agriculture research at universities around the country, including many research programs that benefit farmers and consumers across CA. The overall goal of the Organic Transition Research Program (ORG) is to support the development and implementation of research, extension and higher education programs to improve the competitiveness of organic livestock and crop producers, as well as those who are adopting organic practices and transitioning to organic certification. Investing in organic systems, which show exciting potential to sequester carbon and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in an effective way to invest in tools to support both climate mitigation and adaptation. Practices and systems addressed by ORG include those associated with organic crops, organic animal production, and organic systems integrating plant and animal production. ORG consistently receives more funding requests than can be accommodated as consumer demand for organic products outpaces domestic production. Without continued funding of ORG as an organic-specific research grant program, this gap will only increase. The program should be funded at \$10 million in FY2021, to ensure that U.S. farmers and ranchers have the information and technology necessary to meet the high demand for organic products in the marketplace.

2. Programmatic Funding Request – Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

Appropriations Bill: Agriculture
Specific agency: National Institute of Food and Agriculture
Appropriations account: Research and Education
Program: **Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education**
Amount requested for FY 2021 Appropriations: **at least \$50 million**
Amount requested in the President's FY 2021 Budget: \$37 million
Amount provided in FY 2020: \$37 million

Explanation justifying the request, describing how funding will be used, and relevance to California:

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has a clear and consistent focus on sustainability and farmer-driven research. For over 30 years, SARE has been at the forefront of research and extension activities for farming systems based on profitable and environmentally sound practices developed with farmer and business input. In California SARE has awarded 194 grants since 1988, totaling over \$11.4 million. Despite SARE's popularity in California and demonstrated administrative efficiency, after more than 30 years of proven on-the-ground results, the program has yet to reach its full authorized amount of \$60 million. As a result, USDA can only fund *roughly ten percent out of all eligible research and education pre-proposals* submitted to the program each year. We urge Congress to provide at least \$50 million through SARE in FY 2021.

3. Programmatic Funding Request – Conservation Technical Assistance & Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Appropriations Bill: Agriculture

Specific agency: Natural Resource Conservation Service

Appropriations account: Conservation Operations

Program: Conservation Technical Assistance & Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Amount requested for FY 2021 Appropriations: **At least \$759.2 million, including \$10 million dedicated to GLCI**

Amount requested in the President's FY 2020 Budget: \$729.0 million + \$0.0 for GLCI

Amount Provided in FY 2020: \$735.76 million

Explanation justifying the request, describing how funding will be used, and relevance to California:

CTA (a subset of Conservation Operations) is the backbone of USDA's conservation programs. Through CTA, NRCS field staff work with farmers to develop and implement conservation plans to conserve resources on their farms and fulfill conservation compliance requirements— including here in California. This funding is critical in order to help producers develop site-specific plans to conserve water, prepare for extreme weather, and address natural resource concerns on their land. CTA funding can also support NRCS efforts to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers interested in proving their grazing operations. In order to ensure that CTA has the necessary resources to help producers while also invigorating the national Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, CTA should be provided \$759.2 million with \$10 million being dedicated to reinvigorating the GLCI.

4. Request to Include General Provision – Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture Reorganization

Appropriations Bill: Agriculture

Specific agency: Economic Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Appropriations account: N/A

Program: N/A

Amount requested for FY 2021 Appropriations: **\$1.0 million**

Amount requested in the President's FY 2021 Budget: N/A

Amount provided in FY 2020: n/a

Explanation justifying the request, describing how funding will be used, and relevance to California:

In 2018, USDA announced the proposed relocation of the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), as well as the realignment of ERS out of the research mission area of USDA and placed instead within the Office of the Secretary under the direction of the Chief Economist. The relocation has had serious impacts on agency staff capacity, and a loss of the most skilled and senior staff. The appropriations process is the opportunity to mitigate some of the worst impacts of this relocation, and provide oversight of the agencies' functions, services - including award management - and hiring of key staff. In order to provide oversight of the agencies' functions, services - including award management - and hiring of key staff we urge Congress to include a General Provision that would read as follows:

“The committee directs \$1,000,000 for the Secretary to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine not later than XXX to conduct a review of science at the Department that evaluates the current status of research, education, and extension activities of the Research, Education, and Economics mission area agencies operating under coordination of the Office of the Chief Scientist, assesses the Department's ability to effectively meet national priorities, and provides a report within 18 months with recommendations for rebuilding science capacity at the USDA including future opportunities and directions.”