



Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Kingston, and Members of the Subcommittee:

The Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics (C-FARE) and the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 appropriation for the United States Department of Agriculture. C-FARE is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to strengthening the presence of the agricultural, natural resources, and applied economics profession to matters of science policy and federal budget determination, and we represent approximately 3,500 economists nationwide. COSSA is an advocacy organization for the social and behavioral sciences supported by more than 110 professional associations, scientific societies, universities, and research centers and institutes.

Our organizations understand the challenges the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies, face given the proposed tight FY 2009 agriculture budget. We also recognize that the Agriculture Appropriations bill has many valuable and necessary components, and we applaud the past efforts of the Subcommittee to fund mission-critical research. Below are listed our organization's funding priorities for the FY 2009 agriculture budget.

**USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)**  
**National Research Initiative**

C-FARE and COSSA endorse funding for the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (NRI) at the President's proposed level of \$257 million. Included in this amount is an increase of \$19 million for the Department's bioenergy and biobased fuels research initiative. The NRI encourages high quality research that is conducted through a peer reviewed format. In particular, the research issues addressed by Markets and Trade and Rural Development are diverse and multi-faceted. Social Science research also enhances ideas and technologies from other fields of science and research which adds value to their role in the NRI. Funding the competitive program at the requested level also allows our scientists to more closely study such important societal issues as biofuels' impacts on rural communities, food security and insecurity, international trade issues, and other areas which touch our nation's food, fiber and fuel system.

C-FARE and COSSA request that any new funds appropriated for the NRI, as requested by the administration, allow the Secretary the discretion to apply up to 30 percent towards carrying out the NRI integrated research, extension and education competitive grants program.

Social Science research is highly valued by USDA and much of what our scientists offer can help meet each strategic goal of CSREES. For example, social science research meets CSREES strategic goal number 1, “Enhance International Competitiveness of American Agriculture” by providing science-based information, knowledge, and education to help farmers and ranchers understand risk management, and the long-term impacts of trade barriers.

Research by our members also meets CSREES strategic goal number 2, “Enhance the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Rural and Farm Economies,” and strategic goal number 3, “Support Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural America” by providing information to help inform decisions affecting the quality of life in an increasingly complex and differentiated rural America.

Therefore, we request that the Committee encourage CSREES to fund the social science research components of the NRI at a level sufficient to allowing scientists to address these unmet research needs. Within the last few years, USDA changed funding for these core congressionally-mandated programs to every other year, rather than on a yearly basis. We see the value of CSREES offering these research programs on a continual basis rather than during alternating years.

#### **USDA Economic Research Service (ERS)**

##### **Market Analysis and Outlook**

As you are aware, the Economic Research Service performs valuable research, data collection, and analysis to inform policymakers about Rural America. Farmers, rural residents, and members of your Subcommittee have relied upon the research and data compiled by ERS. C-FARE and COSSA support the President’s proposed FY 2009 funding level for the ERS. The President’s FY 2009 budget proposes a \$3.5 million increase to strengthen the market analysis and outlook program to ensure the continuity and quality of current market analysis and enhance coverage of increasingly complex global markets for an expanding array of agricultural products. This information is important for our scientists as well as for decision makers, particularly to estimate the impacts of farm policy changes.

##### **Bioenergy Research and Modeling**

The push for alternative fuels from farm products can also play an important role in revitalizing Rural America. However, like all potential changes, this one will have consequences both intended and unintended on our rural counties. We therefore support the President’s proposed \$400,000 enhancement to strengthen ERS’ ability to analyze the regional impacts of bioenergy production and evaluate issues related to transportation networks, feedstock storage, marketing channels, and shifts in commodity production. This will help understand the economics of bioenergy production, the demand for by-products, the likely future adjustments in the crop and livestock sectors, and the understanding of the pressures on the rural infrastructure that will come with this new exciting development.

## USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

C-FARE and COSSA recommend supporting funding of agricultural estimates, Census of Agriculture, and pay costs at USDA's NASS at a level of \$153 million for NASS. The NASS budget reflects program initiatives for both the Census of Agriculture and Bioenergy Statistics. The census data are relied upon to measure trends and new developments in the agricultural sector. This increase supports the normal increase in activity levels due to the cyclical nature of the five-year Census program. The agricultural estimation program for bioenergy statistics includes an increase of \$1.8 million to establish a data series on key elements of bioenergy production and utilization.

### Conclusion

America requires new and expanded agricultural research to protect our nation's forests, water supplies, food processing and distribution network, and rural communities and insure the future security, safety and sustainability of our food, fuel and fiber system. In order to address these challenges and maintain our position in an increasingly competitive world, we must continue to support research programs such as the NRI and formula funding, and information systems such as those provided by ERS.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our recommendations. As you know, past investments in agricultural research have yielded many breakthroughs in American agricultural productivity and rural development. If you have any questions or concerns regarding our priorities please do not hesitate to contact us.

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**C-FARE Disclosure of Government Contracts and Grants  
2007**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Background</b>
USDA ERS	2007	\$25,000 to help support C-FARE's Educational Outreach Activities by helping provide funding for C-FARE's intern briefings, and other educational seminars.
USDA NASS	2007	\$115,000 to support an external review of the USDA Census of Agriculture and to provide travel for the panel members.
USDA GIPSA	2007	\$2,500 to support C-FARE's Educational Outreach Activities by providing support for intern briefings and other educational seminars.

COSSA receives no government funds.