



CONSORTIUM *of* SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

Analysis of the House and Senate FY 2018 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bills | July 25, 2017

On July 20, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its fiscal year (FY) 2018 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill (S. 1603); it had been marked up in subcommittee on July 18. The House Appropriations Committee passed its version of the bill (H.R. 3268) the week before on July 12. This bill contains funding for the two U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) statistical agencies, the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), as well as the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), which funds competitive research projects.

At a Glance...

- **The House proposal for ERS—a \$10 million cut from FY 2017—sticks fairly close to the President’s request. The Senate bill would flat-fund the agency at \$86.8 million.**
- **Both chambers would provide increases to NASS, which will require additional funding in order to conduct the Census of Agriculture in FY 2018.** The House bill would provide NASS with \$183.8 million, slightly below the Administration’s request. The Senate bill would provide NASS with \$191.7 million, an increase of 12 percent above the FY 2017 level.
- **The House bill would provide \$1.3 billion for NIFA, which is 1.6 percent below FY 2017. The Senate bill includes \$1.4 billion, an increase of 0.8 percent.** Both chambers propose flat funding of \$375 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, rejecting the Administration’s proposed 6.8 percent cut.

The next step for both bills is consideration by the full chamber. In the House, the leadership is planning to focus on a “security mini-bus” appropriations bill that includes the Defense, Energy-Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction-VA appropriations bills. House leaders hope to consider the package during the last week of July before the chamber leaves for the August recess, likely leaving the rest of the appropriations bills—Agriculture included—until after Labor Day. Details on the Senate leadership’s plans for floor consideration are murkier. However, it seems unlikely that the Agriculture bill would see a vote before September.

Summarized below are the House and Senate Appropriations Committees’ proposals for the Economic Research Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service, and National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

The bills, Committees’ full reports, and webcasts of the markups can be found on the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Committees’ websites.

COSSA’s analysis of the President’s FY 2018 budget request for the agencies covered under the Agriculture bill is available [here](#).

Economic Research Service & National Agricultural Statistics Service

Overall, the Senate bill would provide more money to USDA's two statistical agencies, while the House bill sticks relatively closely to the cuts proposed by the Trump Administration. The House's proposal for the Economic Research Service (ERS)—a \$10 million cut from FY 2017—is within \$100,000 of the President's request. The Senate bill would flat-fund the agency at \$86.8 million. Both chambers would provide increases to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to ensure it has the necessary funds to conduct the Census of Agriculture in FY 2018. The House bill would provide NASS with \$183.8 million, slightly below the Administration's request. The Senate bill would provide NASS with \$191.7 million, an increase of 12 percent above the FY 2017 level.

Language in both the House and Senate Committee reports direct ERS to conduct a study on the economic benefits of increasing breastfeeding rates. The House report also includes language to encourage ERS to support evidence-based policymaking:

“Evidence-Based Policymaking.—As part of the bipartisan effort to improve government capacity for evidence-based policymaking, the Committee encourages ERS to explore ways to assist rural communities in using data and evidence to address local challenges. In particular, ERS should examine ways in which local governments in rural communities could access the research and data expertise of public land-grant universities to help communities address local needs and priorities.”

The Senate report also directs ERS to “conduct research into the viability of creating collection networks and potential markets” for low density polyethylene (used as an agricultural aid). It directs both ERS and NASS to continue its efforts to collect and analyze data related to organic agriculture.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

The Senate bill proposes the higher allocation for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) at \$1.37 billion, an increase of \$10.3 million above FY 2017 and \$120.5 million (9.6 percent) above the Administration's request. The House's proposal of \$1.34 billion is \$31.9 million below the Senate's, though still \$88.5 million more than the amount in the Administration's budget. Both chambers propose flat funding for NIFA's competitive grants program, the Agricultural and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), at \$375 million, maintaining the \$25 million increase appropriators had enacted for FY 2017. The Administration had proposed a \$25.7 million cut for AFRI.

The House Committee report includes a request that more detailed information on AFRI be included in the Administration's FY 2019 budget request, including “greater detail on the levels proposed to be allocated to and the expected publication date, scope, and allocation level for each request for awards to be published under each priority area” in the 2014 farm bill.

The Senate Committee report cites what it calls AFRI's “lack of progress” in prioritizing research on conventional plant and animal breeding, and directs AFRI to make “regionally adapted, publicly held cultivar development a distinct funding priority within AFRI for fiscal year 2018.” The report does not specify what areas of AFRI's research should be de-emphasized in order to focus on these activities.

<i>(in millions)</i>	FY 2017 Enacted	FY 2018 Request	FY 2018 House	House vs. FY 2017	FY 2018 Senate	Senate vs. FY 2017	House vs. Senate
Economic Research Service	86.8	76.7	76.8	-11.5%	86.8	0.0%	-11.5%
National Agricultural Statistics Service	171.2	185.7	183.8	7.3%	191.7	12.0%	-4.1%
Census of Agriculture	42.2	63.9	65.4	54.9%	63.4	50.1%	3.2%
National Institute of Food and Agriculture	1362.9	1252.8	1341.3	-1.6%	1373.2	0.8%	-2.3%
Agricultural and Food Research Initiative	375.0	349.3	375.0	0.0%	375.0	0.0%	0.0%
Hatch Act	243.7	243.2	243.7	0.0%	243.7	0.0%	0.0%

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