AAU SUPPORTS $325 MILLION FOR AFRI IN FY13

Agriculture (USDA) is the premier agricultural competitive grants program in the United States. AFRI takes research and innovation beyond the development phase and into implementation through its competitively funded education and extension programs. AAU supports funding AFRI at the Administration’s FY 2013 request of $325 million.

Established in the 2008 Farm Bill and authorized at $700 million, AFRI supports basic and applied research in the agricultural sciences and provides training funds to recruit and retain the next generation of agricultural innovators. AFRI is administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and funds research in the following areas:

- plant health and production and plant products;
- animal health and production and animal products;
- food safety, nutrition, and health;
- renewable energy, natural resources, and environment;
- agriculture systems and technology; and
- agriculture economics and rural communities.

As a competitive grants program, AFRI supports the highest quality science to address some of our nation’s most pressing challenges: demands for cutting-edge biofuels; the need for a safe, sustainable, and nutritious food supply; global food security; and the understanding of global climate change. AFRI is the only competitive federal research program that addresses the unique needs of rural communities, including ways to revitalize rural economies. More than 50 percent of the AFRI budget supports fundamental or basic research, providing the scientific understanding that underpins advances in agricultural and other life sciences.

Examples of ongoing AFRI Projects:

- Using nanotechnology to prevent the microorganisms responsible for foodborne illnesses from attaching to food processing equipment and food surfaces.
- Developing molecular approaches to prevent, control, and eradicate avian and swine influenza in poultry and livestock as part of a strategy to mitigate the risk of a pandemic flu outbreak.
- Using genomic information to improve production and breeding traits in U.S. beef and dairy cattle herds.
- Generating innovative technologies to convert energy crops to oil more efficiently and reduce waste.
- Testing multi-state, extension interventions to address childhood obesity in low-income, rural populations.

A 2007 report from USDA’s Economic Research Service found that agricultural research provides a return on investment to the U.S. economy of $20 or more for every dollar invested. (http://www.ers.usda.gov/publication/us/ch10/ch10.pdf)