



**March 20, 2014**

**Testimony of Roger Johnson, President, National Farmers Union  
To the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee  
Regarding Fiscal Year 2015 Funding for Agricultural Programs  
Contact: Mike Stranz, Senior Government Relations Representative ([mstranz@nfudc.org](mailto:mstranz@nfudc.org))**

On behalf of the family farmer and rancher members of National Farmers Union (NFU), thank you for the opportunity to present funding requests for Fiscal Year 2015. As a general farm organization, NFU has a broad array of interests in the agricultural appropriations process. This letter enumerates a few of the highest priorities for our members.

Additionally, the recent passage of the 2014 Farm Bill deserves the attention of the subcommittee. We ask that programs that were granted discretionary funding through the farm bill receive their full appropriations, and that the subcommittee not reduce other program funding through changes in mandatory programs.

**AGENCY: USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)  
REQUEST: No legislative riders or targeted funding reductions to limit or restrict the enforcement, legal defense or study of Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL).**

The 2008 Farm Bill requires retailers to notify customers through labeling of the source of nearly all muscle cuts and ground meat, along with fish, fruits, vegetables, nuts and a variety of other generally unprocessed products. As of 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enacted rules that require the labeling of production steps – for example, “Born, Raised, and Harvested in the U.S.” – as directed by a World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute. Another WTO proceeding is currently under way to review the new COOL regulations’ compliance with

trade laws, and a lawsuit is pending in U.S. court regarding implementation of the new labels. Additionally, the 2014 Farm Bill requires a study on the economic impact of COOL.

NFU opposes any funding cuts or legislative riders that would circumvent enforcement, implementation, legal defense or study of COOL. Studies have found that more than 90 percent of consumers support COOL. Any threats of retaliation from Canada and Mexico are extremely premature, as WTO appeals are slow moving and typically last for years.

**AGENCY: USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA)**  
**REQUEST: No legislative riders to limit or restrict the USDA's rulemaking and enforcement authority under the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921.**

Because of appropriations riders in the last three years, USDA has not been allowed to write rules that would provide greater fairness for livestock sellers and poultry growers in the agriculture marketplace, as directed by the 2008 Farm Bill. This includes prohibiting deceptive or fraudulent buying practices and permitting farmers and ranchers to seek protection under the Packers and Stockyards Act if they have been harmed by unfair trade practices.

While the last three legislative riders on GIPSA have varied, they each have significantly undermined important protections for livestock and poultry ranchers and growers. These provisions must not be prevented; thus, NFU strongly urges the Subcommittee to reject any legislative riders that would undermine GIPSA's authority and ignore congressional intent.

**AGENCY: Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)**  
**REQUEST: Report language on public cultivar development.**

The 2008 Farm Bill created the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), which called for AFRI to make "conventional" plant and animal breeding a priority for research grants. Implementation of these directives has been slow. NFU asks that the FY 2015 appropriations bill

include report language that reiterates the need to prioritize funding for classical plant and animal breeding within the AFRI process.

**AGENCY: Agriculture Research Service (ARS) – Genetic Improvement and Translational Breeding Initiative**

**REQUEST: \$25.9 million with report language directing funds to the development and release of regionally adapted, public cultivars.**

The administration's FY 2015 budget requests \$25.9 million for a new Genetic Improvement and Translational Breeding Initiative to be administered by ARS. Given the huge private and public investment in genomics and the lack of funding for classical breeding for public cultivar development, clear language ought to be included to direct ARS to focus all of the funding provided for this initiative on the development and release of regionally adapted, publicly held, cultivars to benefit farmers and ranchers across the country.

**AGENCY: USDA Rural Development**

**REQUEST: Fully fund farm bill energy title programs at discretionary funding levels and do not reduce program funding through changes in mandatory programs. Also, allow 2014 Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) funds to carry over into 2015 if they are not expended.**

The 2014 Farm Bill makes substantial investments in existing energy programs such as the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), and Biorefinery Assistance Program (BAP). NFU asks that the subcommittee not reduce any of the funds allocated to these programs. In addition, because USDA may not expend all funds for BCAP in 2014, NFU asks that language be inserted allowing for unexpended 2014 BCAP funds to be carried over into 2015.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.