



COMMITTEE *on* APPROPRIATIONS

VICE CHAIRMAN PATRICK LEAHY

For Immediate Release:
December 21, 2020

Contact:
Jay Tilton: (202) 224-2667

SUMMARY

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES FISCAL YEAR 2021 APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Washington, D.C. – The fiscal year 2021 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies bill provides discretionary funding of \$23.395 billion, which is \$217 million more than fiscal year 2020 and \$3.7 billion more than the budget request.

The agencies and programs funded by the Agriculture bill, affect the lives of every American every day. From the nation’s farmers and ranchers to school children to communities in rural America, this bill ensures the nation has the safest food supply in the world. It protects the most vulnerable citizens by providing a safety net through several important nutrition programs. The bill invests in rural America through programs that provide safe drinking water, affordable housing, and funding to assist small businesses. The bill addresses hunger around the world by funding vital international food assistance programs. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is on the front lines ensuring the nation’s food and drug supplies remain safe. Through sound science, this bill invests in FDA’s vaccine approval process, which is important now more than ever.

Key Points & Highlights

Agriculture Research

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is USDA’s premiere, in-house research agency and continues to be on the cutting edge, focused on agricultural priorities from food safety, livestock production, crop production, and the effects a changing climate has on the nation’s natural resources. The bill provides \$1.492 billion for ARS, Salaries and Expenses, an increase of \$77 million more than fiscal year 2020. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) works closely with the nations universities to advance research, extension, and higher education in the food and agricultural sciences. The research conducted by NIFA and partners benefits all Americans. NIFA is funded at \$1.57 billion, an increase of \$43 million. Included in this funding is \$435 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, \$10 million more than fiscal year 2020.

Farm Service Agency

Farmers and ranchers are the backbone of the nation's agriculture system. To meet the growing demand for farm loans, the bill includes increases for both farm operating and farm ownership loans. Within the Farm Service Agency, \$15 million is included for hiring of farm loan officers, county office trainees, and county office staff to address the severe staffing shortage across the country. This will allow producers to have their loans processed in a more timely manner.

Rural Development

The programs funded within Rural Development serve as a lifeline for many communities in rural America through housing, community facilities, infrastructure and electric programs, and small business programs. The Rural Housing Service gives families and individuals the opportunity to own their own homes and provides assistance to the elderly, disabled, and low income families. Rental Assistance is increased by \$35 million for total funding of \$1.41 billion. This program is as important as ever during the current economic downturn and the increase provided in this bill will ensure low-income families are not rent burdened. The bill also provides \$40 million for Rural Housing Vouchers. This is expected to support 9,107 vouchers, with an average monthly cost of \$366 per voucher.

Many communities in rural America lack basic infrastructure such as water and sewer systems and access to clean drinking water. The bill provides \$463 million for water and waste grants, an increase of \$20 million more than fiscal year 2020. This funding is expected to fund 700 grants to ensure communities have reliable drinking water systems, and sanitary and solid waste disposal.

The ReConnect broadband program is funded at \$635 million. The program will expand access to high-speed broadband to remote unserved and under-served rural areas. This is especially important as our country faces an unprecedented health and economic crisis when many families rely on broadband for work and school.

Nutrition

The nutrition programs funded in this bill will assist the most vulnerable populations. As the economy continues to falter, these programs serve as a safety net for many families across the country. The largest program, SNAP, is funded at \$114 billion, which is \$46 billion more than fiscal year 2020. The bill provides \$25.118 billion for Child Nutrition Programs including \$30 million for school meal equipment grants and \$42 million for the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program. The bill also allows for expansion of Summer EBT to new states. This program has proven to help elevate hunger for children during the summer months when school is not in session.

The WIC program receives \$6 billion in discretionary funding. Included in this amount is \$90 million for breastfeeding peer counselors and \$14 million for infrastructure.

The bill provides \$325 million for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, an \$80 million increase more than fiscal year 2020. This funding will ensure seniors who rely on this important program will continue to receive additional food each month.

International Food Aid

The bill rejects the budget proposal that would have eliminated important international food aid programs. The PL 480 Title II program is funded at \$1.740 billion, an increase of \$15 million more than fiscal year 2020. The world continues to see increased hunger and food insecurity. This additional funding is vital to address growing humanitarian disasters worldwide.

The McGovern-Dole program is funded at \$230 million, an increase of \$10 million more than fiscal year 2020. This program allows children across the world to attend school. It has proven to reduce hunger and improve literacy, especially among girls. The program also provides funding for local and regional food purchases, so farmers can have this safety net for their own livelihoods.

Food and Drug Administration

The bill provides \$3.215 billion in discretionary funding for the FDA. Overall, total funding for FDA, including user fee revenues, is \$5.89 billion. Increases are provided for medical product safety, food safety, and crosscutting activities. FDA is at the forefront of innovation to protect the public health and safety of all Americans. The food supply is complex and rapidly changing. The bill ensures FDA has the needed resources to maintain the safest food supply in the world. FDA is also responsible for ensuring the drugs Americans take are safe and effective. Vaccine development is also an important activity of the FDA, and this bill provides increases to make sure all vaccines are based on science and are safe. This is more important than ever as the agency works through the vaccine approval process related to COVID-19.

Disaster Funding

The bill repurposes unobligated funds from USDA to ensure the department can provide additional disaster payments to producers who incurred losses during 2018 and 2019. While many farmers and ranchers across the country continue to struggle, these additional funds will serve as a safety net to help producers weather the economic downturn.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

APHIS and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) work together to carry out the Agricultural Quarantine Inspection (AQI) program to intercept foreign animals, plant pests, and diseases (such as African swine fever, foot and mouth disease, and exotic fruit flies) before they can enter the country. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, APHIS has depleted its reserve funding and continues to receive minimal user fee collections. The agreement provides \$635 million in emergency funding to allow APHIS to continue inspection of passenger airlines and cargo ships to ensure invasive species and diseases are not released into the country, which could severely damage many sectors of the agriculture economy.