



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

Thad Cochran of Mississippi, Chairman

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 16, 2015

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FY2016 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL GETS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Agriculture Research, Rural America, Conservation & Nutrition Programs Promoted in Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Committee on Appropriations today approved its eleventh FY2016 funding bill, giving bipartisan support to a \$148.3 billion agricultural and rural development measure that also invests in food safety, public health and nutrition programs.

The committee approved the [FY2016 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill](#) on a bipartisan 28-2 vote. With this action, the Senate now has an opportunity to debate 11 of the 12 appropriations bills required of Congress annually. This measure supports U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agriculture, rural communities and cooperative conservation programs. It invests in food and drug safety, and provides essential nutrition assistance for children, families and seniors.

The Senate bill contains \$143.8 billion in discretionary and mandatory funding, \$24 billion below the President's budget request and \$3.7 billion below the FY2015 enacted level. The discretionary funding portion of the bill totals \$20.51 billion, \$65 million below the FY2015 enacted level. Required mandatory spending in the bill, which is outside the discretionary funding jurisdiction of the Senate Appropriations Committee, totals \$123.3 billion.

“The purview of this bill includes many important programs that directly influence U.S. agriculture, public health and the quality of life in rural America. The bill adheres to our budget constraints, yet funds federal initiatives to improve agriculture production and research and to support rural economies,” said **Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-Miss.)**. “I thank Senators Moran and Merkley for their hard work to prepare this bill for Senate consideration and hope that all Senators will have the opportunity to debate on and advocate for programs important to their constituents.”

“The investments made in this bill reaffirm our commitment to advancing production agriculture and public health innovations, and provide our rural communities with the ability to compete – both here and abroad,” said **U.S. Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan.)**, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. “Through a balanced approach to fiscal responsibility and continued investment in rural America, we are prioritizing agriculture research and extension activities, promoting rural development efforts, supporting food safety and public health initiatives, and encouraging the development of new medicines and medical devices. Additionally, we are reining in the Obama administration's regulatory overreach by limiting the scope of the dietary guidelines and delaying the implementation of overly broad menu labeling rules.”

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Highlights of the FY2016 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill:

Agricultural Research – The bill provides a total of \$2.7 billion to support agricultural research conducted by the Agricultural Research Service and land grant and non-land grant universities. This amount includes \$325 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, \$244 million for Hatch Act formula funding for research at state agriculture experiment stations, and \$402 million for Smith-Lever programs to support overall extension service activities.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) – The legislation includes \$876 million for APHIS, \$20 million above the President’s budget request and \$5 million above the FY2015 enacted level. Overall funding will continue programs to control or eradicate plant and animal pests and diseases that threaten U.S. agriculture production. The increase will help address wildlife damage management issues, establish prevention and early animal disease response methods, provide equipment upgrades for forest product import verification, and improve pre-departure inspections of agriculture imports.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – The bill provides \$855 million, \$8.8 million above the FY2015 enacted level and \$24 million over the budget request, to help farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners conserve and protect their land. The bill rejects the President’s budget proposal to reduce conservation technical assistance to landowners and producers.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) – The bill provides \$1.49 billion for FSA for various farm, conservation, and emergency loan programs that are important to the nation’s farmers and ranchers. It prohibits the closure of FSA county offices, and provides resources to continue implementation of the 2014 farm bill.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) – The legislation includes \$1.014 billion, approximately the same as the 2015 enacted level, for food safety and inspection programs that work to ensure safe, healthy food for American families, while promoting the safety and productivity of the nation’s \$186 billion meat and poultry industry. The bill will support more than 8,000 frontline inspection personnel for meat, poultry, and egg products at more than 6,400 facilities in the United States.

Rural Development – The bill provides \$682.7 million for salaries and expenses for Rural Development, a \$4.5 million increase above the FY2015 enacted level. USDA rural development programs are designed to help foster economic growth in rural regions by supporting basic rural infrastructure, rural business and industry loans, and rural housing.

- **Business and Industry Loans** – The legislation supports a \$994.2 million grant and loan level for rural business and industry programs that promote small business growth in rural areas. The bill includes funding for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative to improve access to affordable, healthy foods in underserved areas.
- **Rural Infrastructure** – The bill includes \$1.25 billion for rural water and waste program loans, the same as the FY2015 enacted level, and \$496 million for grants and costs, an increase of \$13 million above FY2015 enacted levels. The measure provides \$7.5 billion for rural electric and telephone infrastructure loans.

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Rural Development continued

- **Rural Housing Loans and Rental Assistance** – The bill provides a total of \$24 billion in loan authority for the Single Family Housing guaranteed loan program, which is equal to the FY2015 enacted level and the President’s request. It includes \$900 million, the same as the FY2015 enacted level and the President’s request, for the direct loan program that provides low-income rural families with home loan assistance. In addition, \$1.2 billion, an increase of \$79 million above current levels, is included for the Rental Assistance program, which helps low-income families and the elderly in rural communities obtain affordable rental housing.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – The bill provides more than \$2.6 billion in discretionary funding for the FDA, \$40 million over the FY2015 enacted level. Overall, total FDA funding, including user fee revenues, is \$4.6 billion, which is \$116 million above FY2015. Within this total, a \$45 million increase is provided for food safety activities and a \$5 million increase is included for medical product safety activities. The Senate bill also includes a one-year delay for FDA implementation of a new menu labeling regulation.

Food and Nutrition Programs – The bill provides discretionary funding, as well as mandatory funding required by law, for food and nutrition programs within the USDA. This includes funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Child Nutrition programs. The bill also ensures that the Dietary Guidelines for Americans are solely nutritional and dietary in nature and based on a preponderance of scientific evidence.

- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** – The bill provides \$6.5 billion in discretionary funding for WIC, which is \$110 million below the FY2015 enacted level and the President’s request. The reduction is based on USDA estimates of declining WIC enrollments and will not prevent eligible participants from receiving benefits. To continue efforts to identify waste or abuse within the program, the bill includes \$55 million for management information systems and the transition from paper vouchers to a more efficient electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** – The bill includes \$81.6 billion in required mandatory spending, which is outside the discretionary funding jurisdiction of the Senate Appropriations Committee, for SNAP. Due to declining enrollments, this is \$175.5 million below last year’s level.
- **Child Nutrition Programs** – The bill provides for \$21.5 billion in required mandatory funding, which is outside the discretionary funding jurisdiction of the Senate Appropriations Committee, for child nutrition programs. This is \$224.2 million above the FY2015 enacted level. This funding will provide free or reduced-price school lunches and snacks for 30.3 million children who qualify for the program.

International Programs – The legislation contains \$1.46 billion for Food for Peace grants, which support the delivery of American-grown food, transported by U.S. ships, to foreign countries experiencing chronic hunger crises. The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program is given a \$10 million increase for the Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement at the Foreign Agriculture Service.