

Respectfully prepared for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies regarding FY 19 appropriation for USDA ERS and NASS submitted by George Hoffman on behalf of the undersigned members of the [Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis](#).

Submitted March 30, 2018 (updated April 11, 2018)

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Support for USDA-REE-ERS and NASS FY19 Funding

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

The undersigned groups, which include various members of the Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis, strongly support federal investment to advance agricultural statistics and research in the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). **We support funding for these agencies in fiscal year 2019 (FY19) at levels that are *at least* \$90 M for ERS and \$180 M for NASS.**

The USDA produces valuable data that directly informs decisions by food and agricultural market participants, agricultural input and food businesses, banks and other credit institutions and those who make food, farm, economic development and trade policy. American agriculture, rural America and food- and resource-based industries depend on the reliable

production of timely, accurate and objective food, agricultural, rural economic and resource statistics and market information. Additionally, the statistics and analysis made possible by these agencies provide a greater understanding of farm household dynamics, advance evidence-based policy approaches and give insight into the health of the farm economy.

The mission of ERS is to inform and enhance public and private decision making on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment and rural development. To accomplish this mission, ERS manages a comprehensive program of economic research and analysis (including development of economic and statistical indicators). The undersigned members of the Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis are very concerned with the FY 19 President's budget proposal that outlines an allocation for ERS functions at \$45 M with \$10 M of the suggested allocation going to cover the costs of a reduced economic workforce. This budget proposal suggests severely curtailing the ERS' research function, data and statistical resources, and staff. The current proposal would eliminate all the food safety, conservation, and rural development research and information that ERS manages. It would also decrease the capacity for ERS to adequately maintain its remaining data products because of the loss of high-quality researchers, technicians, and analysts. Additionally, the budget summary, its related congressional explanatory notes for USDA, and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) statistical appendix denote that by 2020, the USDA plans on consolidating ERS and NASS into one agency under the Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area. The ERS is a primary source of economic information and research in USDA. ERS' economic research, statistics, and analysis improves policy effectiveness. NASS does not undertake the economic research or analysis that ERS does; it is home to important statistics research, statistical information, and analysis. The ERS serves as the world's premier source of agricultural economic research and

information. Its global preeminence mirrors the strength of the United States agricultural and food sector. **We urge you to maintain it and ERS funding at a level of at least \$90 M for FY 19.**

NASS is committed to providing timely, accurate and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture. The agency conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares reports and information to communicate the survey results. Production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, farm finances, chemical use, and changes in the demographics of U.S. producers are only a few examples of the information gathered. NASS reports the facts on American agriculture, facts needed by people working in and depending upon U.S. agriculture. A primary concern of NASS is to “safeguard the privacy of farmers, ranchers, and other data providers, with a guarantee that confidentiality and data security continue to be our top priorities.” In the President’s FY 19 budget proposal, the NASS would see a 7.4% cut in its Agricultural Estimates programs compared with enacted FY 17 funding, some consolidation of programs, and a slight increase in budget for the Census of Agriculture. **We urge you to reject these cuts and keep the integrity of the United States’ agricultural statistics resource viable by providing support for the NASS at \$180 M for FY 19.**

USDA’s data products, economic and statistical research, and analytical programs provide the U.S. with an important edge against increasingly fierce global agricultural competition as well as to serve as a reflection of our strength as a nation. These research, statistics, and interagency efforts benefit the entire supply chain, starting at the farm gate and enhancing decisions throughout national and international food, feed, fiber and fuel economies. Public data products and projections serve to improve the accuracy of the expectations of market participants, reducing market pricing errors. The U.S. agricultural data information and analysis

system is second to none, worldwide. Today, NASS is experiencing increased demand for its statistical products and reports. Similarly, ERS is experiencing significant requests for its research, data products and services. To continue to build future trade and finance capacity in an increasingly competitive marketplace, the U.S. must invest in and leverage all its strengths, including the food and agricultural data and information system.

We encourage you to support these agencies so that they can continue to provide essential information to farm and agribusiness, government agricultural program, and food policy decision makers. If you have any specific questions with regard to agricultural data products related to your state, please contact ([agricultural.statistics@gmail.com](mailto:agricultural.statistics@gmail.com)).

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this information.

Sincerely,

Agribusiness Intelligence|Informa  
Agricultural and Applied Economics Association  
Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Farmland Trust  
American Malting Barley Association  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Animal Science  
American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers  
American Statistical Association  
Association of Population Centers  
California State University, Fresno - Department of Agricultural Business  
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Iowa State University)  
College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, University of Missouri  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics  
Crop Science Society of America  
CropLife America  
Deere & Company  
Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Department of Economics, Iowa State University

Dept. of Agricultural & Consumer Economics, University of Illinois  
FASS  
Global Cold Chain Alliance  
Hop Growers of America  
International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses  
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals - Multi-State Initiative  
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Improvement Committee  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research  
National Farmers Union  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National WIC Association  
North American Regional Science Council  
Organic Farming Research Foundation  
Population Association of America  
Public Lands Council  
Restaurant Services, Inc.  
Soil Science Society of America  
The Fertilizer Institute  
The Global Harvest Initiative  
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee  
Weed Science Society of America  
Williams & Lu Global Agribusiness Partners  
World Perspectives, Inc.

Joseph Glauber, IFPRI  
Katherine Smith Evans, Administrator, Economic Research Service, USDA- Retired  
Cynthia Clark, Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA - Retired  
Joel Karlin, Economist at Western Milling

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry