



THAD COCHRAN OF MISSISSIPPI, CHAIRMAN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 20, 2017

CONTACTS
Chris Gallegos (202) 224-1010 or 224-6414
Stephen Worley (202) 224-3751
Twitter: @SenThadCochran

FY2018 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL PASSED BY FULL COMMITTEE

Legislation Funds Ag Research, Rural Development, Food Safety & Nutrition Programs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Committee on Appropriations today approved the [FY2018 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill](#) with funding for programs that support American agriculture, conservation and nutrition programs.

The bill provides \$145.4 billion in discretionary and mandatory funding, \$4.85 billion above the President’s budget request and \$7.9 billion below the FY2017 enacted level. It contains \$20.525 billion in discretionary funding, \$352 million below the FY2017 enacted level, and includes \$124.9 billion in mandatory funding. It was approved 31-0.

This appropriations bill was written to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agriculture, rural development, conservation programs, and food and drug safety. It also provides essential nutrition assistance for children, families, and seniors.

“This bill funds many important programs that directly influence U.S. agriculture, public health, and the overall quality of life in rural America. It adequately supports federal initiatives to improve agriculture production, research and support for rural economies,” said **Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-Miss.)**. “I commend Senators Hoeven and Merkley for their bipartisan work on this bill. It deserves the support of the Senate.”

“Our farmers and ranchers do a tremendous job in spite of challenges from low commodity prices to natural disasters,” said **U.S Senator John Hoeven (R-N.D.)**, chairman of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. “We worked hard to put together a strong agriculture funding bill to support their efforts. This legislation maintains a robust safety net and rejects cuts to crop insurance and commodity programs, while also making strong investments in farm service programs, ag research and rural development to support our producers and rural communities.”

--MORE--

Bill Highlights:

Assistance for Cotton Producers – The bill includes a provision which seeks to address the ongoing economic challenges facing U.S. cotton producers, and the entire U.S. industry, by designating cotton as an “other oilseed” under Title I of the 2014 Farm Bill. This would allow cotton producers to participate in the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program, just like all other major U.S. commodity producers.

Agricultural Research – \$2.55 billion to support agricultural research conducted by the Agricultural Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This amount includes \$375 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, maintaining the increase provided in FY2017. Formula research funding for land-grant universities is maintained at FY2017 enacted levels. The bill also rejects proposed extramural research project terminations and laboratory closures included in the budget request.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) – \$953.2 million for APHIS, \$143.2 million above the budget request and \$7 million above the FY2017 enacted level. Overall funding will continue programs to control or eradicate plant and animal pests and diseases that threaten U.S. agriculture production. The bill maintains investments included in FY2017 for emergency preparedness/response for disease outbreaks and workforce development for the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility. Increases are provided to address wildlife damage management issues and tree pests.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – \$874.1 million, \$9.6 million above the FY2017 enacted level and \$108.1 million over the budget request, for conservation operations to help farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners conserve and protect their land. The bill also includes \$150 million for the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program to support needed investments in rural communities.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) – \$1.521 billion for FSA for various farm, conservation, and emergency loan programs important to the nation’s farmers and ranchers. It prohibits the closure of FSA county offices, and provides resources for personnel and physical security programs across county offices.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) – \$1.038 billion, \$6 million above the FY2017 enacted level and consistent with the budget request, for food safety and inspection programs that work to ensure safe, healthy food for American families. The bill promotes the safety and productivity of the nation’s \$186 billion meat and poultry industry by supporting more than 8,000 frontline inspection personnel for meat, poultry, and egg products at more than 6,400 facilities in the United States. The bill provides full funding for FSIS to implement Siluriformes fish and fish product inspection.

--MORE--

Rural Development – \$675.3 million for Rural Development salaries and expenses, the same level as FY2017.

- **Rural Housing Loans and Rental Assistance** – \$24 billion in loan authority for the Single Family Housing guaranteed loan program, equal to the FY2017 enacted level and the President’s request. It includes \$1 billion for the direct loan program, which provides low-income rural families with home loan assistance. In addition, \$1.345 billion is provided for rental assistance for affordable housing for low-income families and the elderly in rural communities to renew existing rental assistance contracts.
- **Business and Industry Loans** – The legislation supports \$1 billion in grants and loans 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 Utilities** – \$1.25 billion for rural water and waste program loans, the same as the FY2017 enacted level; \$394 million for water and waste grants, and \$18 million for the Circuit Rider program. The bill also provides \$6.94 billion for rural electric and telephone infrastructure loans and \$30 million for broadband grants.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – \$2.8 billion in discretionary funding for the FDA, \$1 million over the FY2017 enacted level. Overall, total FDA funding, including user fee revenues, is \$5.2 billion, which is \$491 million above FY2017. The bill does not support new user fees or the associated cuts to budget authority as proposed in the budget request. Food safety activities are fully supported, and the bill provides \$60 million as authorized in the 21st Century Cures Act.

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.

- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** – \$6.35 billion in discretionary funding for WIC, which is level with the FY2017 enacted level. This amount is based on USDA estimates of WIC enrollments and will not prevent eligible participants from receiving benefits.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** – \$73.612 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 \$4.868 billion below last year’s level.

--MORE--

- **Child Nutrition Programs** – \$24.243 billion in required mandatory funding, which is outside the discretionary funding jurisdiction of the Senate Appropriations Committee, for child nutrition programs. This funding will provide meals for an estimated 30.1 million participants, 22 million of which qualify for free or reduced-priced meals. In addition, \$53 million in discretionary program funds is also included for equipment grants and the Summer EBT Demonstration.

International Programs – \$1.6 billion for Food for Peace grants, which support the delivery of American-grown food to foreign countries experiencing chronic hunger crises. The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program is funded at \$206.62 million, and includes \$15 million for the Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement at the Foreign Agriculture Service.

###