

NEWS

House Appropriations Committee

Chairman Hal Rogers

Website address: <http://appropriations.house.gov/>

For Immediate Release: May 19, 2014

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Appropriations Committee Releases the Fiscal Year 2015 Agriculture Appropriations Bill

Bill targets funds to programs that support American farmers and ranchers, rural communities, nutrition programs, and food and drug safety

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House Appropriations Committee today released the fiscal year 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which will be considered in subcommittee tomorrow. The proposed legislation funds important agricultural and food programs and services, including food and medical product safety, animal and plant health programs, rural development and farm services, marketplace oversight, and nutrition programs.

The bill totals \$20.9 billion in discretionary funding, which is equal to the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Including both discretionary and mandatory funding for various nutrition programs, the overall bill totals \$142.5 billion.

“America’s farmers and ranchers do their part to put food on our tables, and this bill is Congress’s part to ensure the safety, productivity, and success of our agricultural industries,” House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers said. “In addition, this bill supports a variety of nutrition programs to help address one of our biggest national challenges – making sure that our most vulnerable, including children, do not go hungry.”

"This bill honors our commitment to rural America and demonstrates to our farmers that they are not forgotten in Washington. From funding rural infrastructure development to implementing programs within the new Farm Bill, this year's appropriation seeks to address the needs of rural America while holding the line on government spending and regulatory over-reach," Subcommittee Chairman Robert Aderholt said.

Bill Highlights:

The legislation focuses investments in programs that support U.S. agriculture, boost rural communities, maintain food and drug safety, and provide nutrition for children, families, and seniors. In total, the bill provides \$142.5 billion in both discretionary and mandatory funding – \$1.5 billion below the President's request and \$3 billion below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Discretionary funding alone in the bill is \$20.9 billion, the same as the fiscal year 2014 enacted level.

Agricultural Research – The bill provides \$2.65 billion for agriculture research programs, including the Agricultural Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This is approximately equal to the fiscal year 2014 enacted funding level. This funding will support research to help mitigate and stop devastating crop diseases, and improve food safety and water quality. The funding will also support responsible investments in the nation's land-grant colleges and universities.

Animal and Plant Health – The legislation includes \$870.7 million – \$45.8 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level – for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. This funding will provide support for programs to help control or eradicate plant and animal pests and diseases that can be crippling to U.S. producers and entire agricultural industries, and includes increases to fight citrus greening and an epidemic porcine virus.

Conservation Programs – The bill provides \$869 million – \$43 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level – to help farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners conserve and protect their land. This includes \$25 million – an increase of \$13 million – in infrastructure rehabilitation funding to help small communities meet current safety standards for watershed projects.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) – The legislation provides \$1.5 billion for FSA, which is \$27 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. This funding will support the various farm, conservation, loan, and emergency programs, and will help American farmers and ranchers with the implementation of the recently enacted farm bill.

Rural Development – The bill provides a total of \$2.6 billion for rural development programs, which is \$178 million above the fiscal year 2015 requested level. These programs help create an environment for economic growth by supporting basic rural infrastructure, providing loans to increase opportunities for rural businesses and industries, and helping balance the playing field in local rural housing markets. The

bill also establishes a new Chief Risk Officer to oversee and be accountable for the \$200 billion rural development loan portfolio.

- **Business and Industry Loans** – The legislation includes \$45 million – \$22 million below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level – for the rural business and industry loan program. This funding will support \$881 million in loans to help small businesses in rural areas, many of which face unique challenges due to local economic conditions.
- **Rural Infrastructure** – The legislation includes responsible investments in infrastructure needs to help rural areas of the country access basic utilities. This includes \$1.3 billion – an increase of \$85 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level – for rural water and waste program loans, and \$606 million for grants, an increase of \$145 million above current levels. In addition, \$6.2 billion is provided for rural electric and telephone infrastructure loans, the same level as fiscal year 2014.
- **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 fiscal year 2014 enacted level and the President’s request. In addition, the bill includes \$1 billion in direct loans – an increase of \$142 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level and \$682 million above the President’s request. These loans provide low-income rural families – many of whom would have few loan options for purchasing a home because of their geographical location – with home loan assistance. In addition, \$1.1 billion is provided for rental assistance for affordable rental housing for low-income families and the elderly in rural communities.

Food Safety and Inspection Service – The legislation includes \$1 billion for food safety and inspection programs – approximately the same as the 2014 enacted level. These mandatory inspection activities help ensure the safety and productivity of the country’s \$186 billion meat and poultry industry, and keep safe, healthy food on American tables. The funding provided will maintain more than 8,000 frontline inspection personnel for meat, poultry, and egg products at more than 6,400 facilities across the country.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – The FDA receives a total of almost \$2.6 billion in discretionary funding in the bill, an increase of \$23 million over the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Total funding for the FDA, including revenue from user fees, is \$4.5 billion, \$98 million above fiscal year 2014. Within this total, food safety activities are increased by \$25 million, and drug safety activities are increased by \$12 million.

Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) – Included in the bill is \$218 million for the CFTC, an increase of approximately \$3 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level and \$62 million below

the President's budget request. The increase is targeted to necessary information technology improvements.

International Food Programs – The legislation contains \$1.7 billion for overseas food aid. This includes a \$66 million increase above the President's request for "Food for Peace" grants, and a \$13 million increase over the request for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program. These programs seek to reduce chronic hunger and increase food security by providing American-grown food, transported by U.S. ships, to foreign countries in need of aid.

Food and Nutrition Programs – The legislation contains discretionary funding, as well as mandatory funding required by law, for food and nutrition programs within the Department of Agriculture. 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.

- **WIC** – The bill provides \$6.6 billion in discretionary funding for WIC, which is \$93 million below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level and \$200 million below the President's request. This program provides supplemental nutritional foods needed by approximately 8.5 million pregnant and nursing mothers, babies and young children each month. The bill reflects USDA's estimates of declining enrollments in the program, and will not prevent any eligible participant from receiving benefits. The legislation also includes \$25 million for states to transfer from paper vouchers to a more efficient electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system that will help identify waste or abuse within the program. Language is included to ensure that all varieties of fresh vegetables, including white potatoes, are eligible for purchase through the WIC program.
- **Child nutrition programs** – The bill provides for \$20.5 billion in required mandatory funding – which is outside the discretionary funding jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee – for child nutrition programs. This is \$1.2 billion above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. This funding will provide free or reduced-price school lunches and snacks for 30.4 million children who qualify for the program. Responding to the requests of local schools, the bill includes language requiring USDA to establish a process that will allow schools demonstrating an economic hardship to seek a temporary waiver from compliance with certain nutrition regulations during the 2014-15 school year.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** – The bill provides for \$82.3 billion in required mandatory spending – which is outside the discretionary funding jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee – for SNAP. This is \$81 million above last year's level and \$2 billion below the President's budget request. The total includes \$3 billion for the SNAP reserve fund, \$2 billion below the President's request, which is used to cover any unexpected participation increases. This program provides food assistance to more than 47 million Americans on average every month. In addition, strong oversight language is included to require the Secretary of Agriculture to report on actions to help weed out and eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in the program. This includes a directive to ban fraudulent retailers, and required

enforcement of a ban on certain recruitment activities and advertisements or outreach with foreign governments.

For the text of the subcommittee draft bill please visit:

<http://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bills-113hr-sc-ap-fy2015-agriculture-subcommitteeedraft.pdf>

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