

APLU BAA 2023 Farm Bill: Title VII Policy Recommendations

The APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly assembled the following policy recommendations for amending Title VII, the Research Title, of the upcoming Farm Bill. The recommendations reflect the opportunities and challenges our community of researchers, extension specialists, and educators already traverse or see on the horizon. The proposed changes will enable programs to flourish and address critical areas of need.

The recommendations are divided into five categories: research, education, extension, infrastructure, and cross-cutting programs. Each listed program includes a description that highlights its importance to the agricultural community along with the recommended update, and if a recommendation includes more than a reauthorization, a further justification is provided.

Please see the accompanying document [leg text document name] for corresponding legislative text.

RESEARCH

Capacity Building Grants for 1890 Institutions

These grants enable education, research, and extension at 1890s institutions, increasing the value of these institutions to partnerships with other universities and colleges, federal agencies, and industry, and thereby increasing the diversity of the food and agriculture sciences workforce.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

Centers of Excellence at 1890 Institutions

The 1890 COEs were originally established in 2015 for the 125th Anniversary of the Second Morrill Act of 1890, which established the 1890 institutions. The COEs are hosted by 1890 institutions and aim to benefit underserved farming communities by identifying and addressing critical needs and thereby increasing the diversity of the science, technology, engineering, agriculture, and mathematics pipeline.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the Capacity Building Grants for 1890 Institutions.*

Agricultural Research at 1890 Land-Grant Colleges, Including Tuskegee University

The Evans-Allen program provides capacity funding for food and agriculture research at the Historically Black 1890 institutions, and research supported by these funds has spurred scientific breakthroughs that benefit agriculture across the nation while enriching the educational development of the 1890 institutions' underserved student body.

Recommendations: *Increase the Evans-Allen benchmark from 30 to 40 percent of Hatch funding; allow Evans-Allen funds to be used for graduate student tuition; and distinguish the agriculture research director from other roles on campus.*

Justification: Funding for this program benchmarked to the Hatch program, which supports similar research funding at the 1862 institutions. The current Farm Bill sets a low benchmark for

Evans-Allen funding at 30 percent of Hatch funding. This benchmark is meant to ensure funds for the 1890 institutions do not fall too far below their 1862 peers. But current FY 22 appropriations for Evans-Allen exceeds the 30 percent mark, and a new, more aspirational benchmark of 40 percent should be set.

Research proposals include all the costs of doing research, such as equipment, supplies, and salaries. Graduate students are key players in the research process, often both designing and conducting research projects while taking classes and supporting undergraduate education. Graduate students earn a small stipend for this work, but it is not sufficient to pay for cost of living and tuition. Evans-Allen funds should be allowed to support graduate student tuition.

Clarifying the role of the agriculture research director, as distinguished from other campus research directors, enables the alignment of this role as the statutorily responsible party with the modern execution of the program, and it is consistent with the Experiment Station directors' role in being accountable for the program's success.

Hatch Act

The Hatch Act of 1887 supports the capacity of 1862 land-grant universities to perform agriculture research in university departments and at state agricultural experiment stations. This funding has direct bearing on the very foundation of the U.S. agriculture industry and rural prosperity.

Recommendations: To update and modernize the Hatch language to be in alignment with the Smith-Lever Act reference to State Extension directors and to align the statutorily responsible party with the modern execution of the program and with the Experiment Station directors' role in being accountable for its success, and, secondly, to allow Hatch funds to be used for graduate student tuition.

Justification: The purpose of the first recommendation is to update and modernize the Hatch language to be in alignment with the Smith-Lever Act reference to State Extension directors.

Reference:

Smith-Lever Act: "The Secretary shall use project proposals and plans of work submitted by the State Extension directors as a basis for determining the allocation of funds appropriated pursuant to this section." Smith-Lever Act,
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-10296/pdf/COMPS-10296.pdf>

Additionally, the update aligns the statutorily responsible party with the modern execution of the program and with the Experiment Station directors' role in being accountable for its success. Secondly, as described in the Evans-Allen justification, Hatch funds should be allowed to support graduate student tuition, which is a necessary cost associated with the participation of graduate students in academic research.

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative

AFRI is USDA's premier competitive grants program for food and agriculture research, education, and extension. AFRI grants address a host of national challenges, from addressing water scarcity to stimulating rural economies and training the next generation of agriculture scientists.

Recommendation: Reauthorize AFRI at its current level of \$700 million, and change new investigator criteria.

Justification: AFRI's Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act is geared towards new investigators. Currently, new investigators are defined as those who "do not have an extensive research publication record" and who, further, are "within 5 years of the beginning of the initial career track position." This does not exclude scientists who have worked outside of academia for many years but then, for example, take on an academic appointment. Language should be added that specifies the applicants should be within 12 years of their terminal degree, with an allowance for medical leave or other extenuating circumstances, and do not already have extensive publication records.

Specialty Crop Research Initiative

SCRI represents a commitment to increasing access to healthy fruits and vegetables through research that makes these challenging crops easier and less expensive to grow.

Recommendation: Reauthorize and remove the matching requirement.

Sun Grant Program

The Sun Grant Program develops, distributes, and implements biobased energy technologies to the benefit of rural economic development and national energy security. It aims to enhance bioenergy and biomass research and development through partnerships among USDA, other federal agencies, and land-grant institutions.

Recommendation: Reauthorize the program.

Research Grants for 1994 Institutions

The Tribal College Research Grant Program was originally designed to help 1994 land-grant institutions to build research capacity. Collaborations are required, for example with 1862 or 1890 land-grant institutions, the Agricultural Research Service, or a non-land-grant college of agriculture.

Recommendation: Reauthorize, remove partnership requirement, and allow for construction and facilities upgrades as eligible costs.

Justification: This program is highly valued by 1994 institutions as a vital source of research funding, but requiring partnerships to afford students access to modern facilities and cutting-edge research at other institutions has the unintended effects of preventing Tribal Colleges from building their own capacity and pushing students towards research that may not be locally applicable. 1994 institutions stand ready to build their own research programs and capacity through the elimination of the partnership requirement and the allowance for construction and facilities upgrades.

EDUCATION

Scholarships for Students at 1890 Institutions

This vital program provides scholarships for undergraduate students at 1890s institutions, which helps these schools recruit, retain, and train the students that supply the backbone of diversity in the food and agricultural sciences and related fields.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

New Beginnings for Tribal Students

This program makes competitive grants to land-grant colleges and universities to provide support for Tribal students, for example for recruiting, tuition, counseling, academic advising, and other targeted services that aim to increase retention and the graduation rate.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize and remove the matching requirement.*

Payments to 1994 Institutions (Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grants Program)

This program prepares students for agricultural and related careers by engaging with students through their Tribal backgrounds and identities, creating a dynamic and responsive educational environment that supports students' roles in Tribal leadership and traditional knowledge.

Recommendations: *Reauthorize, remove partnership requirement, and allow for construction and facilities upgrades as eligible costs.*

Justification: Requiring partnerships with non-Tribal universities stymies Tribal colleges' efforts to build their own capacity and pushes students away from educational environments that more effectively meet their cultural needs. By contrast, allowing for construction and facility upgrades gives 1994 institutions the ability to give their students access to modern facilities and cutting-edge research in a culturally responsive environment.

Grants and Fellowships for Food and Agriculture Sciences Education

This program is designed to promote and enhance college and university teaching programs in agriculture, natural resources, forestry, veterinary medicine, home economics, and other areas with ties to the food and agricultural system and rural, community, and business development. It includes a collection of deeply regarded programs, such as the Multicultural Scholars program, Graduate Fellowship and Institution Challenge Grants, Education Grants for 1890 Institutions, and the very well-received K-12 educational program, Ag in the Classroom.

Recommendations: *Reauthorize and double the authorization of this program to \$80 million.*

Justification: This authorization enables essential programs that underscore a university's ability to attract and retain excellent students in the agricultural and natural resources workforce pipeline. Its current authorized level represents only a fraction of what is needed – the original authorization, enacting in fiscal years 1990 through 2013, was \$20 million higher than its current level of \$40 million, and current appropriations favor the programs this authorization supports.

Distance Education and Resident Instruction Grants Program for Insular Area Institutions of Higher Education

The grants supported by this program increase the number and diversity of students entering the agricultural sciences and related fields by enhancing the teaching programs at insular area institutions. Grants build the insular institutions' capacity to meet their students' unique needs through teaching and curriculum development and the support of distance education technology.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

EXTENSION

Smith-Lever Sections 3(b) and 3(c)

The Smith-Lever Act authorizes the Cooperative Extension System, and Smith-Lever funding, which requires a dollar-for-dollar match, supports agricultural extension at the 1862 land-grant institutions. Extension provides a critical link between the research performed at public land-grant institutions and its implementation in local communities.

Recommendation: *Protect the program as it is currently written.*

Smith-Lever Section 3(d)

This section of the Smith-Lever Act authorizes several programs related to the Cooperative Extension System's work including the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), a targeted and essential nutrition education program for low-income populations that is proven to improve diets, increase safe food handling practices, and help make limited food dollars go farther. Other programs supported by this section include Farm Safety and Youth Farm Safety Education Programs; New Technologies for Agricultural Extension; Children, Youth, and Families at Risk; and the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program. Together, all of the Smith-Lever 3(d) programs enable extension systems across the country to provide a variety of reliable services to local communities.

Recommendation: *Protect the program as it is currently written.*

Extension at 1890 Land-Grant Colleges, Including Tuskegee University

This program supports agricultural and forestry extension at 1890 land-grant universities, which responds to the unique needs of minority farmers and landowners, who are often families working small to medium-sized farms and who have limited social and economic resources. Grants fund practical, science-based opportunities like workshops and educational programs on building capital and adopting new technologies.

Recommendation: *Increase the 1890s benchmark from 20 percent of Smith-Lever to 40 percent.*

Justification: The 2018 Farm Bill sets a benchmark for 1890s Extension, proposing that it should not be appropriated less than 20 percent of Smith-Lever (1862 Extension) funding. FY 2022 appropriations, however, has 1890s Extension at just over 20 percent. It is now time to raise aspirations for this underfunded program and bring it slightly closer to Smith-Lever levels.

Extension Services at 1994 Institutions

This program allows 1994 land-grant institutions (Tribal Colleges) to create extension offices on reservations in their communities, targeting local needs like culturally sensitive youth programs, financial literacy, and science-based agricultural programs.

Recommendation: *Allow this program to fund facilities and construction and for funds to remain available until expended.*

Justification: Modern facilities will enhance the capacity of this essential and well-regarded program to host local and community extension interactions.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program

Considering the rising average age of U.S. farmers and ranchers, and their steady decline in numbers, this program provides valuable assistance to the next generation of farmers and ranchers, who may not have access to the technical assistance or mentorship that comes from growing up in a farming family or community.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize and remove the matching requirement.*

Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978

This Act supports extension activities that assist forest and rangeland landowners and managers in making science-based resource management decisions that protect natural resources like water, soil, and areas important for recreation.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Research Facilities Act

It is close to impossible to conduct 21st century research in mid-20th century facilities. Researchers are attempting to address national needs and challenges using outdated equipment in crumbling greenhouses. Competitive funding through this Act would allow land-grant institutions begin to address an \$11.5 billion backlog of deferred maintenance, modernizing research facilities and attracting top-level talent to address some of the most important and intractable challenges of our time.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

Grants to Upgrade Agricultural and Food Sciences Facilities at 1890 Land-Grant Colleges, Including Tuskegee University

This 1890 Facilities Grants Program supports the acquisition and improvement of agricultural and food sciences facilities and equipment, enabling 1890s institutions to keep pace with agricultural research and education and develop a diverse agricultural workforce pipeline.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

Grants to Upgrade Agriculture and Food Sciences Facilities and Equipment at Insular Area Land-Grant Institutions

Grants through this fund assist insular institutions in acquiring and repairing their facilities and equipment to support tropical and subtropical agricultural research.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMS

Endowment for 1994 Institutions

Unlike 1862 and 1890 institutions, 1994 institutions do not have established capacity grant programs. Instead, funding for capacity grants, which support both research and extension, flows from interest generated from federal endowments. Funds total about \$5 million annually for the 35 qualifying institutions.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the Endowment for 1994 Institutions.*

Urban, Indoor, and Other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education, and Extension Initiative

This competitive grants program supports research, education, and extension that solve challenges related to the development of urban, indoor, and emerging agriculture from local to national and all along the supply chain.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

Capacity Building Grants for Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture

This program strengthens the capacity of NLGCA institutions to conduct research, education, and extension in the agriculture, food, natural resources, and human sciences, thereby increasing the number, quality, and diversity of graduates entering the food and agricultural workforce.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program.*

International Agriculture Partnerships and Grants Program

The Partnerships to Build Capacity in International Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching program aims to strengthen international partnerships through collaboration, the exchange of research materials and results, and partnerships to promote teaching and extension. This program is authorized at \$10 million. Separately, the Competitive Grants for International Agricultural Science and Education program, authorized at \$5 million, uses similar tools to strengthen U.S. economic competitiveness and promote international market development.

Recommendation: *Combine these two programs into one authority under the NIFA Center for International Programs and reauthorize them, together, for a total of \$20 million.*

Justification: Together, these two programs would support a strong cohort of internationally-minded researchers who wish to strengthen U.S. agricultural competitiveness by leveraging international partnerships. Neither of these programs, however, has received congressional appropriations. Authorizing a single home for these programs in NIFA's Center for International Programs would empower advocacy efforts on behalf of the Center, which already facilitates connections between NIFA-funded scientists at U.S. institutions with researchers around the world to address challenges of mutual interest.

Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database Program

When food animals fall ill, livestock producers rely on drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to return sick animals to health. Because these animals are intended to enter the food chain, strict timelines, established by FDA, must be followed to avoid drug residues in animal products intended for consumption. NIFA administers the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database Program, which supplies funds for the development and maintenance of the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD), an essential resource for livestock producers, feed producers, and veterinarians that also serves to promote consumer confidence.

Recommendation: *Reauthorize the program and increase the authorization from \$2.5 million to \$5 million.*

Justification: This program has been fully funded for the last four years, but the costs to house and maintain the databank have increased precipitously. Increasing the authorization will enable continued advocacy of this successful program for funding that matches the databank's cost.

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