

The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008

Title VII – Agricultural Research and Extension

The farm bill presents the best opportunity to improve current programs and establish new ones to reinvigorate the nation's agricultural research system. The legislation authorizes and strengthens agricultural research, extension, and education programs which are the foundation for the success of the U.S. agriculture sector and farming and rural communities, and for the nutritional well-being of all consumers of U.S. food products.

- **CREATES A NEW NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (NIFA):** The bill creates a new institute, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to strengthen competitively-awarded agricultural research funding and focus on the infrastructure needs of the land-grant university system in order to deliver research results to the public. All of the authorities under the existing Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) are transferred to NIFA. The newly-established NIFA gives USDA's grant-making research agency additional visibility, independence, and scientific credibility.
- **COORDINATES AND FOCUSES USDA RESEARCH AND EXTENSION:** The bill creates a new office, the Research, Education, and Extension Office, to coordinate programs and activities across the various research agencies at USDA. This central office at USDA will focus the activities of the research agencies to enhance multi-agency collaboration and effectiveness and to streamline administration of agricultural research, extension, and education programs.
- **BUILDS NEW FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:** The bill builds support for the nation's agricultural research, extension, and education system through newly authorized programs, such as a grant program for research and development of biomass feedstocks, a fellowship program to foster partnerships between U.S. land-grant scientists and scientists in developing countries, an authorization of \$20,000,000 for research on pollinator health and Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), and the establishment of an endowment to grow agricultural research and extension programs at Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities. The bill also increases authorized funding for minority-serving land-grant institutions.
- **STRENGTHENS ORGANIC AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION:** The bill provides \$78 million in mandatory funds for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative, which facilitates research on the unique challenges of organic production and enhances the ability of organic producers and processors to grow and market organic food, feed, and fiber.
- **BOOSTS SPECIALTY CROP RESEARCH:** The bill provides \$230 million in mandatory funds for a new grant program, the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, which will help meet the needs of producers and processors of specialty crops through research involving topics such as mechanization, plant breeding, genetics, genomics, pests and diseases, and food safety.
- **PROVIDES FUNDS FOR BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER EDUCATION PROGRAM:** The bill provides \$75 million in mandatory funds for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which will fund initiatives to assist beginning farmers and ranchers to succeed to their operations. Through this program, beginning farmers and ranchers will be able to receive education and training in a variety of areas, including financial management, risk management, marketing, whole farm planning, and farming practices.