



Consortium of Social Science Associations

## Analysis of the FY 2015 House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Bills and Implications for Social and Behavioral Science

June 16, 2014

The fiscal year (FY) 2015 Agriculture appropriations bills for both the House and Senate have passed through their respective committees. The Senate bill (S. 2389) was marked up by the Agriculture Subcommittee on May 20 and passed through the full Appropriations Committee on May 22. It is expected that the bill will be brought to the floor as part of a three-bill minibus, along with Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) and Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as early as this week. The House version of the bill (H.R. 4800) passed through the Agriculture Subcommittee on May 20 and was voted through the full Appropriations Committee on May 29. Consideration of the bill on the House floor began on June 11. Although debate was originally expected to resume on June 17, it has now been put on hold, possibly due to the [upheaval in the Republican leadership](#).

### The Bill in the Senate

The Senate version of the bill would provide \$325 million for the Agricultural and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), part of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the amount requested by the Administration. This would represent a 2.7 percent increase from FY 2014. Also included is \$243.7 million in funding under the Hatch Act program, which funds research conducted by State Agricultural Experiment Stations. This is the amount requested in the President's budget, and the same as in FY 2014.

The Economic Research Service (ERS) would receive \$85.4 million, more than \$7 million above the FY 2014 enacted level and 2.7 percent more than the amount in the Administration's request. The Senate bill would provide \$178.2 million to the National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS), including \$48 million for the Census of Agriculture. This would be a 10.4 percent increase from FY 2014, but is \$800,000 less than the Administration requests.

An amendment from Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-WA), one of several amendments passed by the full Senate Appropriations Committee *en bloc*, tasks NASS with conducting a comprehensive Organic Production Survey as a follow-on to the 2012 Census of Agriculture (as it had done following the 2007 Census).

### The House Version

The House bill would allocate the same amount of funding as the Senate Bill to AFRI and Hatch Act programs under NIFA (\$325 million and \$243.7 million respectively). Language in the committee report asks that the Administration's budget request for FY 2016 include detailed information on AFRI grant

awards, including the “levels proposed to be allocated to and the expected publication date, scope, and allocation level for each request for awards to be published” under priority areas laid out by the *Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act*.

The House bill would provide ERS with \$85.8 million, \$400,000 more than the Senate, and nearly 10 percent above the level enacted in FY 2014. NASS would receive \$169.4 million, \$47.8 million of which would go to the Census of Agriculture. The House amount is 10.4 percent below the amount provided in the Senate bill and 5.4 percent below the Administration’s request. However, the allocation is still 5 percent above the FY 2014 level.

On June 10, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a [Statement of Administration Policy](#) taking issue with a number of controversial provisions in the House bill, primarily those dealing with school nutrition standards and supplemental nutrition assistance programs. The statement also expressed concern that the bill does not include funding for the three research innovation institutes under NIFA requested in the Administration’s budget (funding for these institutes is also absent in the Senate bill). According to the statement, “If the President were presented with H.R. 4800, his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.”

During debate of the bill on the House floor, Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN) introduced an amendment, which passed by voice vote, to transfer \$3 million from ERS to child nutrition programs. Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA) introduced an amendment that would further reduce funding for the ERS by \$7.7 million, taking issue with additional mandatory funding ERS receives and casting ERS’ work as duplicative of activities conducted by NASS. Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA) defended ERS, arguing that comparing the work done by ERS and NASS would be like a physician “comparing an MRI to a thermometer. They both are diagnostic tools but they don’t do the same things.” Farr continued, “If you squeeze and trim these economic data collectors, you are really hurting the underlying economy of agriculture in the United States.” Broun’s amendment failed 130-290.

<i>(in millions)</i>	<b>FY 2014 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2015 Request</b>	<b>FY 2015 House</b>	<b>House vs. FY 2014</b>	<b>House vs. Request</b>	<b>FY 2015 Senate</b>	<b>Senate vs. FY 2014</b>	<b>Senate vs. Request</b>	<b>House vs. Senate</b>
<b>National Institute of Food and Agriculture</b>									
Hatch Act	243.7	243.7	243.7	0.00%	0.00%	243.7	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Agricultural Food and Research Initiative	316.4	325.0	325.0	2.72%	0.00%	325.0	2.72%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Economic Research Service</b>	<b>78.1</b>	<b>83.4</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>9.92%</b>	<b>2.82%</b>	<b>85.4</b>	<b>9.41%</b>	<b>2.34%</b>	<b>0.47%</b>
<b>National Agricultural Statistical Service</b>	<b>161.4</b>	<b>179.0</b>	<b>169.4</b>	<b>4.99%</b>	<b>-5.36%</b>	<b>178.2</b>	<b>10.44%</b>	<b>-0.45%</b>	<b>-4.94%</b>

*Note: Amounts above do not reflect amendments.*

