

April 24, 2015

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
U.S. House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Moran
U.S. Senate
361A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Farr
U.S. House of Representatives
1126 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Aderholt, Chairman Moran, Senator Merkley, and Representative Farr:

We, the undersigned, wish to express our support for increases in the President's FY 2016 budget for honey bee research activities. These include a \$7 million increase to the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) budget for the Pollinator Health Initiative and \$500 thousand increase for the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to further analyze honey bee colony losses and pollination costs for the Pollinator Health Initiative. We also support the National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) coordinating its efforts for long-term protection of pollinator health.

For over a decade, beekeepers have been suffering from higher than typical overwintering losses. These losses and the unpredictability of their severity have threatened the sustainability of this important segment of agriculture. That is why all sectors of agriculture, including row crop, specialty crop, beekeepers, and related agricultural industries have come together to express support for the allocation of these funds and exhibit our shared interest in pursuing this research so that we may all base our decisions on sound science.

The President's budget calls for a broad approach to better understanding the factors that are making it so difficult for beekeepers, stating, "efforts include improving bee nutrition, developing strategies for creating bee-friendly habitats on Conservation Reserve Program and other non-agricultural lands, improving means for controlling the varroa mite and other bee pests and pathogens, and understanding the effects of pesticides on pollinators." We strongly support this holistic approach.

The agriculture community wishes to be informed on all of the opportunities and hurdles that will lead to better honey bee colony health so that decisions regarding honey bee colony management, federal lands utilization, and crop protection practices can be made in the most efficient and effective manner. We are confident that with these funds USDA-ARS will pursue this work, free from preconceived notions or agenda, to provide credible scientific evidence, and guide the agriculture community to common sense solutions.

We greatly appreciate your attention to this important issue and, respectfully, request that these comments be accepted despite their submission so close to the start of the formal deliberative process. The issues surrounding pollinator health are important to the agriculture community and we ask your assistance in funding USDA-ARS to fully pursue its Pollinator Health Initiative so that we may continue to be armed with sound scientific evidence to guide solutions.

Sincerely,

American Agri-Women
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Honey Producers Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Society of Agronomy
American Soybean Association
AmericanHort
BASF
Bayer
California Specialty Crops Council
Crop Science Society of America
CropLife America
Dow AgroSciences
DuPont
FMC Corporation
Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
Independent Professional Seed Association
Land Improvement Contractors of America
Land O'Lakes
Monsanto
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Black Growers Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Pest Management Association
National Potato Council
Northeast Association for Agricultural Stewardship
Pollinator Partnership
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Society for Range Management
Society of American Florists
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America
State Agriculture and Rural Leaders
Syngenta
United Fresh Produce Association
U.S. Apple Association
Valent U.S.A. Corporation
Western Growers