October 24, 2013

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas:

We appreciate your efforts to complete work on the 2013 Farm Bill and urge your support of provisions that ensure a strong food and agriculture research enterprise.

The AFRI Coalition is a coalition of scientific societies and science advocacy organizations with diverse research interests who support the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). More broadly, the Coalition supports efforts to solve current and future challenges facing agriculture by engaging a diversity of stakeholders within the agricultural research community, to develop new opportunities for American agriculture, and to bring innovations from laboratory or field to farmers and the marketplace.

Specifically, the undersigned members of the AFRI Coalition support the following positions on funding related provisions that impact AFRI:

**Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research**

We ask that Section 7601 of S. 954 remain in the final conference report. The provision establishes a Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research and provides an initial investment of $200 million in mandatory funding to match private funding. The Foundation would foster continued innovation in agricultural research by generating new sources of funding and providing a structure for public/private partnerships and investments.

**Matching Requirements for USDA Research Grants**

We ask that Section 7128 of H.R. 2642 be modified in the final conference report in order to extend the exemption for matching grants to all non-profit research institutions, including public and private institutions of higher education, independent research institutions, and NGOs, so that these institutions are not burdened with an unfair disadvantage.

If USDA, especially AFRI, is to be grown and regarded as a first-class federal science agency that is on par with National Science Foundation or the National Institutes of Health, then provisions such as this hinder that goal by erecting barriers for a select group of research institutions that no other federal science agency would erect. Federal research programs should support the best scientific research that advances national research priorities, regardless of which institution is performing that research.

**Budget Submission and Funding**
We request that the House recede to the Senate language (Section 7512) regarding annual USDA budget submission requirements for research programs. While the House and Senate provisions are nearly identical, we remain concerned that the House language prohibiting funding could negatively impact scientists engaged in critical food and agriculture research.

Thank you for your support of food and agriculture research. We look forward to working with you to complete work on the 2013 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

American Society of Agronomy
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Veterinary Medical Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Crop Science Society of America
The Entomological Society of America
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
National Association of Plant Breeders
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Weed Science Society
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science