Testimony of

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On

Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Submitted to the

Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

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The Entomological Society of America (ESA) respectfully submits this statement for the official record in support of funding for agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). ESA requests a robust fiscal year (FY) 2015 appropriation for USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), including at least $360 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). The Society also supports increased investment in the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and requests that the ARS Crop Protection Research budget is maintained at a level at least equal to the FY 2014 amount of $189 million to preserve valuable pest management research programs in FY 2015. Finally, ESA supports proposals in the President’s FY 2015 budget request to fund additional research on pollinators through USDA contributions to a multi-agency Pollinator Health Initiative and a $75 million investment for the establishment of USDA Innovation Institutes, which would include one on pollinator health research.
Advances in the agricultural sciences, including the field of entomology, help to address some of our most pressing societal needs related to food security and safety and environmental and human health. Through improved understanding of insect pests and the development of biological approaches to pest management, entomology plays a critical role in the protection of crops from infestation and disease. In addition, entomology contributes to our knowledge of pollinator biology and the factors affecting pollinator health and populations, helping to ensure safe, reliable crop production that meets the needs of a growing world population.

As NIFA’s premier competitive research program, AFRI funds a wide range of agricultural research, education, and extension projects at universities and research institutions nationwide. In addition, AFRI’s Fellowship Program supports the trainees that will become the next generation workforce of agricultural and food scientists. Although ESA appreciates the Subcommittee’s efforts to increase the AFRI budget since the program’s establishment, AFRI appropriations remain significantly below the $700 million level recently reauthorized in the 2014 Farm Bill. To maximize its limited resources, AFRI supports projects that address key societal challenges and build foundational knowledge in high-priority areas of the food and agricultural sciences, such as food safety and food security. For example, researchers funded by AFRI are currently devising new strategies to study and manage the transmission of tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV) by thrips, small insects that can also cause direct damage to crops through feeding. The development of new scientific tools to control the thrips-mediated spread of TSWV, which affects crops such as tomatoes, peanuts, and peppers, could help reduce an estimated $1 billion in worldwide crop losses caused by the virus each
year.\(^1\) In addition to AFRI, other NIFA grants support programs to study and implement scientifically based approaches to reduced-risk integrated pest management (IPM), which has implications for human health, the environment, and the economy.

As USDA’s intramural research agency, ARS funds research of broad consequence to our nation’s agriculture enterprise, including in the areas of crop and livestock production and protection, human nutrition, food safety, and environmental stewardship. The ARS Crop Protection research program builds knowledge and develops approaches that are made available to crop producers, enabling better control of pest and disease outbreaks as they occur. For example, the Area-wide Management of Agricultural Pests project within the ARS Crop Protection Program supports the demonstration and facilitation of adoptable Area-wide IPM approaches targeted against organisms as diverse as cheatgrass, fire ants, Hawaiian fruit flies, and the Asian tiger mosquito. **ESA opposes the proposed cuts to ARS included in the President’s FY 2015 budget request, particularly those reductions targeted to the Crop Protection research portfolio such as the Area-wide IPM approach that has proven very successful and has brought diverse teams of scientists and stakeholders together to implement solutions to complex pest management problems.**

**ESA is in favor of increased funding for research on pollinator populations.** These insects play a vital role in our nation’s agriculture industry; for example, bees pollinate more than 90 crops in the United States. To ensure a healthy bee population, more research is needed to fully understand the complexities of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) and to examine the diverse

\(^1\) AFRI Competitive Grant: “Advancing Innovative Technologies and Integrated Strategies for Sustainable Management of Thrips-Transmitted Tospoviruses”
factors that endanger bee health. **For this reason, ESA supports a proposal in the President’s FY 2015 budget request to establish a new USDA Innovation Institute on Pollination and Pollinator Health.** As one of three proposed multidisciplinary institutes focused on different scientific questions, funding of $25 million for each institute in FY 2015 would be further leveraged through the establishment of public-private partnerships. **ESA also supports funding for USDA to participate in a proposed multi-agency initiative to investigate pollinator health and develop implementation plans to prevent pollinator population decline.**

ESA, headquartered in Annapolis, Maryland, is the largest organization in the world serving the professional and scientific needs of entomologists and individuals in related disciplines. Founded in 1889, ESA has nearly 7,000 members affiliated with educational institutions, health agencies, private industry, and government. Members are researchers, teachers, extension service personnel, administrators, marketing representatives, research technicians, consultants, students, pest management professionals, and hobbyists.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer the Entomological Society of America’s support for USDA research programs. For more information about the Entomological Society of America, please see [http://www.entsoc.org/](http://www.entsoc.org/).