

AFRI Q&A for FY2017 Budget

Details on the President's FY 2017 AFRI Budget Request

1) What is AFRI?

[AFRI \(the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative\)](http://nifa.usda.gov/program/agriculture-and-food-research-initiative-afri) is the largest peer-reviewed, agricultural competitive grants program in the United States (<http://nifa.usda.gov/program/agriculture-and-food-research-initiative-afri>). The 2008 Farm Bill established AFRI as one of the programs that the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture \(USDA NIFA\)](#) administers. NIFA is one of 17 agencies that comprise the USDA, and it is the primary granting agency of the USDA. AFRI is one of NIFA's principal tools for fulfilling its mission of investing in agricultural research, education and extension projects that develop practical solutions to critical societal challenges. A hallmark of NIFA's mission is extension, which translates and delivers science-based information to the public to solve agricultural challenges and improve the lives of people.

2) How much funding is included in the President's FY 2017 budget for AFRI?

The President's FY 2017 budget request for AFRI consists of two parts. The first part requests \$375 million in discretionary funding, which is \$25 million more than the level appropriated by Congress in FY 2016. The second part proposes new legislation for \$325 million in mandatory funding as part of a government-wide proposal to increase funding for research and development. Together, these parts comprise a bold initiative to fund AFRI at its fully authorized level of \$700 million.

3) What are current and past funding levels of AFRI?

AFRI has \$350 million in funding for FY 2016. Past funding levels are as follows:

- FY 2015: \$325,000,000
- FY 2014: \$316,409,000
- FY 2013: \$275,568,906
- FY 2012: \$264,470,000
- FY 2011: \$264,470,000
- FY 2010: \$262,482,000
- FY 2009: \$201,504,000

4) What areas of agricultural science does AFRI fund?

NIFA supports basic and applied research, education and extension projects in the Farm Bill's six AFRI priority areas:

- Plant health and production and plant products;
- Animal health and production and animal products;
- Food safety, nutrition, and health;
- Bioenergy, natural resources, and environment;

- Agriculture systems and technology; and
- Agriculture economics and rural communities.

Basic research delivers the knowledge to advance applied research and conceptual breakthroughs in fields relevant to agriculture, and applied projects address specific problems, needs, or opportunities.

5) Which programs and Presidential Initiatives will AFRI support in FY 2017?

AFRI funding supports basic research in the six Farm Bill priority areas (described previously) as well as basic and applied research in each of the following [high-priority agricultural challenge areas](#): water for food production systems; food safety; climate variability and change; childhood obesity prevention; and sustainable bioenergy.

The FY 2017 President's budget includes an increase of \$25 million above the FY 2016 level in discretionary funding to support clean energy research. AFRI will also support Presidential Initiatives through approximately \$10 million for pollinator health research and approximately \$13 million for combatting antimicrobial resistance. Funding will also support the [Critical Agricultural Research and Extension program](#), which enables the development of the tools and technologies that producers can deploy in their production systems and the [Exploratory Research Program](#), which stimulates innovative ideas that will accelerate the advancement of agricultural science and position U.S. Agriculture at the global forefront.

6) How will NIFA invest the \$325 million in mandatory funding?

AFRI mandatory funds will invest in "systems approaches" that comprehensively identify solutions to complex agricultural challenges. These investments will develop the knowledge, technologies, and practices needed to sustainably increase agricultural production and promote nutritional security despite a variable climate and diminishing land and water resources. This investment also includes enhanced opportunities for new investigators and grant programs that will train the next generation of scientists and a workforce who will be engaged in addressing current and future agricultural system challenges.

7) How do Congressional appropriations differ for discretionary and mandatory budget requests, and how does this affect AFRI?

The 2008 Farm Bill is the legislation that authorized discretionary funding for AFRI of up to \$700 million. Each year, the President puts forward a discretionary budget request including discretionary funds for AFRI.

In the FY 2017 budget, \$375 million is requested for AFRI. Congressional Appropriations Committees then decide how much funding AFRI will receive and both Houses then pass the annual appropriations bill that provides the financial resources to execute the program. Discretionary funding for AFRI is appropriated to NIFA in the annual Agriculture Appropriations Act.

The President's FY 2017 budget additionally proposes legislation for mandatory funding totaling \$325 million. The proposed would both authorize and appropriate an additional \$325 million in mandatory funds to AFRI.

Additional information on AFRI

8) What grant and project types does AFRI fund?

AFRI funds agricultural research, education, or extension projects (single function projects) or projects that integrate at least two of these three science components of the agricultural knowledge system.

AFRI funds several different grant types including Standard Grants, Coordinated Agriculture Projects (CAP) Grants, New Investigator Grants, Seed Grants, Equipment Grants, and Sabbatical. Standard Grants are the most common grant type and are most commonly single function research projects awarded to individual investigators or small teams of investigators. CAP grants support large-scale, integrated, multidisciplinary, multi-million dollar projects to promote collaboration, open communication, and exchange of information among individuals, institutions, states, and regions. These projects engage in integrated research, education, and/or extension activities to solve critical challenges facing agriculture such as water and food security, food safety, childhood obesity, and climate change. Multidisciplinary projects engage multiple fields of study in jointly addressing complex problems.

A detailed description of the grant and project types supported by AFRI is available at <http://nifa.usda.gov/afri-request-applications>.

9) Who is eligible for AFRI funding?

Any entity within the U.S. (including individual U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents) is eligible for AFRI's single function programs. For AFRI's integrated programs, however, eligibility is currently limited by statute to 4-year degree-granting institutions within the U.S. and state agricultural experiment stations.

10) Do funding opportunities exist for graduate students and postdoctoral researchers?

AFRI's [Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human Sciences Education and Literacy Initiative \(ELI\)](#) provides fellowships to undergraduate, predoctoral, and postdoctoral students in the agricultural sciences. Eligible U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents can apply for predoctoral and postdoctoral fellowships. Additionally, all AFRI programs support education opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students through participation in the project teams.

11) How are AFRI awards determined?

As a competitive [grants program](#), all AFRI proposals are received and evaluated through a [peer review process](#). NIFA solicits outside experts to serve on AFRI peer review panels. AFRI ensures the widest participation of qualified individuals in peer review by balancing the membership of panels carefully to reflect diversity in geographical region, type of institution, type of position, gender, and minority status, etc., so that the reviewers accurately reflect the pool of applicants.