



Research funding in 2021

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Despite all the disruption we saw in 2020, the annual federal funding process moved along in a fairly normal fashion. The Democrat-controlled House moved quickly through the process, completing its appropriations work over the summer. The Senate moved at a slower pace, releasing all 12 of its appropriations bills in November. As far as federal research programs were concerned, the House and Senate bills had similar funding levels, providing modest funding increases.

After several short-term continuing resolutions, the lame-duck Congress passed a combined omnibus appropriations bill and COVID-19 relief package, which was signed by President Trump on 28 December. Most research programs received small funding increases, but the final omnibus bill did not include the influx of supplemental funding that the research community had been advocating for to address COVID-related research disruptions. See an overview for food, agriculture, and natural resource research program funding in [Table 1](#) and full details [here](#):

Table 1. Food, agriculture, and natural resource research program funding for fiscal years (FY) 2020 and 2021

Program	FY2020	FY2021	Difference
ARS	\$ 1.414 billion	\$ 1.492 billion	+ \$77 million
NIFA	\$ 1.527 billion	\$1.570 billion	+ \$43 million
AFRI	\$425 million	\$435 million	+ \$10 million
NSF	\$8.278 billion	\$8.487 billion	+ \$208 million
DOE Office of Science	\$7.000 billion	\$7.026 billion	+ \$26 million
ARPA-E	\$425 million	\$427 million	+ \$2 million

While the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA) didn't receive funding, report language directs USDA to complete a strategic plan that outlines its vision for AGARDA, including how AGARDA can work in collaboration with ongoing research programs operating in ARS and NIFA. Congress once again rejected all lab closures and research terminations proposed by ARS. While the bill provides an increase in ARS salaries and expenses, it only provided \$36 million for buildings and facilities, significantly less than the \$193 million that account received in fiscal year (FY) 2021.

With the FY2021 spending bills finalized, the 117th Congress can begin the FY2022 funding process with a clean slate. Fiscal year 2021 was the final year of the Budget Control Act, which placed caps on discretionary spending. Even though FY2022 is outside of the budget caps, the massive spending over the past months for COVID relief will leave many in Congress wary of more large spending increases.

The annual funding process usually begins with the president’s budget request in early February. However, it’s customary for newly elected presidents to delay their requests, often until early spring. President Biden will likely follow a similar pattern although his administration might submit a budget outline early in the year with a more detailed request to follow later. With Democrats controlling both the House and Senate, Biden’s budget request takes on greater significance. Either way, Congress will first have to set a topline spending number that will inform the breadth and scope of any funding increases. Also, negotiations on another COVID relief package may occur soon after Biden takes office.

Look for more information about the FY2022 budget and action alerts for food, agriculture, and natural resource research programs in March and April. We will need YOUR engagement to make sure Congress knows the importance of these critical research programs!

On 2 Mar. 2020, 78 ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members met with 123 congressional offices to advocate for food, agriculture, and natural resource research funding. The funding increases for federal research programs shown in Table 1 are the result of nearly a year of advocacy efforts from members like you.

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