THE FARM BILL & WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

An outline of WSU's priorities in the 2023 Farm Bill Reauthorization

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TITLE II – CONSERVATION

WSU supports maintaining the Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment.

WSU supports the Washington State Department of Agriculture in ensuring conservation programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) are reauthorized at robust numbers. In addition, we support the WSDA in thanking Congress for the increase in conservation funding through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This funding supports increased capacity around wildfire management and help with existing watershed infrastructure needs. WSU supports WSDA in encouraging encourage Congress to not use this supplemental funding to supplant the current baseline numbers supporting conservation.

The CRP is the nation's largest private-land conservation program, designed to provide financial and technical assistance to Washington state farmers and ranchers, giving them tools to conserve our natural resources. The 2018 Farm Bill expanded the program from 24 million acres in FY2019 to 27 million acres in FY2023. The next farm bill should continue to make additional investments in flexible, locally driven, and effective conservation programs to promote soil health, address water quality challenges, and assist farmers in dealing with regulatory pressures.

WSU also supports the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which works to combine locally led solutions with science and research to help landowners better steward the land. While NRCS is a program tailored specifically for use by American farmers, WSU utilizes our reach through extension to provide similar support for conservation. WSU works closely with our stakeholders on issues concerning land and water conservation. WSU is home to three major water centers: the Water Research Center, the Center for Environmental Research, Education, and Outreach (CEREO), and the Washington Stormwater Center (WSC). These centers conduct water research and provide outreach and educational programs to help local partners utilize their resources wisely.

Additionally, WSU has many programs that work on water and conservation issues, including strong programs located in county extension offices. For example, through the WSU Extension office in Thurston County, we educate communities on the CRP to help local farmers in south Puget Sound understand the importance of the regional economy and balancing conservation to protect our resources. Extension is a trusted source of information on the CRP to the communities of the south sound.

Other NRCS programs share common efforts with WSU Extension in providing technical assistance related to climate-smart farming and improved soil health, facilitating organic and urban agriculture production, and support for small farms and food systems. For example, WSU provides education and expertise for producers who might be supported by NRCS and other federal conservation programs. While WSU does not directly benefit from CRP or NRCS funding, support for our diverse group of stakeholders and their efforts to conserve land and water through these USDA programs of significance are critical.

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TITLE III – TRADE

WSU supports our stakeholders in ensuring that our agriculture economy is open to the world.

On average, foreign markets absorb about one-fifth of U.S. agricultural production, and in Washington State 52 percent of agriculture jobs are tied to trade. In 2021, U.S. food and agriculture exports totaled $177 billion with a trade surplus of $6 billion. While this is better news than the trade deficit experienced by the agriculture industry in 2019, the surplus in 2011 was $40.1 billion, highlighting export losses.[1] Increasing agriculture trade and demand for our products is key to maintaining American global competitiveness and keeping US Agriculture profitable.

WSU supports our agriculture stakeholders in supporting reauthorization of USDA programs around marketing and promotional activities overseas and providing the tools to facilitate U.S. experts with technical assistance to support trade of US commodities and addressing non-tariff trade barriers. The nature of the investment by foreign governments in their agriculture markets makes these programs imperative in ensuring that that Washington state and the nation able to provide the demand to our international partners. Without these programs the state's agriculture industry faces increased competitiveness with foreign investment.

Trade is a key component of Washington's agriculture industry and is vital to the sustainability of agriculture, nationwide. Producers across the state depend on open markets for their goods. Much like our national partners, Washington's farmers rely on the ability to export their goods which is dependent on our nation entering into good trade agreements. When done right, opening markets for our products breaks down the significant barriers U.S. agricultural exporters face overseas. This kind of environment encourages investment in products and research, rewards innovation, and fosters economic growth in rural Washington.

In 2021, farm exports directly from Washington State totaled $7.7 billion, and pass-through exports (farm commodities exported through Washington from other states) amounted to an additional $14.3 billion in 2021.[2] Washington State ranked second in the nation for fruit exports, third in the nation for vegetables, and fourth for wheat exports in 2021 highlighting just a few commodities dependent on trade.[3] Trade programs are vital to American economic competition, and the impacts to Washington's agriculture economy, farmers, ranchers, stakeholders, and research economy are real.

One trade program of particular importance to WSU's stakeholders is the Market Access Program. Funded at $200 million in the 2018 Farm Bill, WSU supports efforts by Washington's trade dependent commodities to double the amount available for this important program.

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[1] Congressional Research Service, "Farm Bill Primer: Trade and Export Promotion Programs", July 5, 2022
[2] Congressional Research Service, "Farm Bill Primer: Trade and Export Promotion Programs", July 5, 2022
[3] USDA Economic Research Service

TITLE IV - NUTRITION

Food and Nutrition Services, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Nutrition Education

WSU supports fully reauthorizing funding for SNAP-Ed directly through Extension programs.

Washington State University (WSU) supports fully reauthorizing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) program, which provides critical nutrition education for people who receive, or are eligible to receive, food stamp benefits in Washington state, impacting more than 380,000 people. The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) receives SNAP and SNAP-Ed funding from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). DSHS then partners with WSU and Washington State Department of Health to provide SNAP-Ed programs.

This program strengthens the public impact of the overall SNAP program by addressing ways to improve nutrition and prevent or reduce diet-related chronic disease and obesity among SNAP recipients. Food insecurity is a real issue for many residing in Washington state and reached new heights during the pandemic.

For more than three decades, WSU Extension (through its offices and experts in each of Washington's 39 counties) has partnered with the Washington State Department of Health and DSHS to implement nutrition education and obesity prevention programs in collaboration with community partner agencies. Many of our programs focus on youth education and integrate nutrition education into primary grades in the public-school system. WSU believes that investment in early education around healthier choices reduces health care issues later on, and health care costs attributable to obesity.

Through WSU Extension, our community leaders strengthen SNAP-Ed programming by connecting participants to other WSU programs including Master Gardeners, food preservation information, community-based agriculture and gardens, Master Composters, 4-H youth development, and more. In addition to WSU, SNAP-Ed works with partners across the state, including public health organizations and health districts, tribal governments, and NGO's supporting our communities.

WSU Extension targets these nutrition and health classes to meet youth and adults where they are, in schools, at adult education and job training sites, food banks, food pantries, public gardens, and affordable housing sites. In 2021, WSU reached more than 176,000 Washingtonians i, and WSU SNAP-Ed educators partnered with 18 schools across the state.

In FY 2023, the state of Washington received $14.3 in funding to support the program. WSU received more than $6.5 million in direct and indirect funding from regional administrating agencies to administer this program. As of March 2022, there were 262 SNAP-ED statewide sponsored programs reaching more than 388,000 people. [4]

This funding supports more than 65 SNAP-Ed faculty and staff at WSU. This small investment in Washington state provides critical nutrition education to low-income, at-risk, and rural populations.

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[4] https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/wasnap-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SNAPshot_FFY2022-State-MidYear.pdf

TITLE VI – RURAL DEVELOPMENT

WSU supports fully reauthorizing Title VI, Rural Development at robust numbers.

WSU supports the Rural Development title in reauthorizing the Farm Bill and the focus on substance use issues, telemedicine, workforce development, and broadband. In addition, within the Farm Bill, there are several programs that help promote local economic development in rural America including financing for rural small businesses, communities, and individuals. WSU agrees that this title creates and saves jobs, supports innovation, improves infrastructure, grows the economy of rural and underserved Washington state, and pays particular attention to vulnerable residents in these rural areas.

The COVID-19 crisis demonstrated that the nation's public and private sector telecommunications infrastructure is not adequate to facilitate critical online learning, remote working, and telemedicine in rural, tribal, and underserved urban areas. During the pandemic, in-person substance use programming was adapted for online delivery and thanks to community support virtual programming will continue. WSU encourages our Congressional delegation to continue prioritizing both broadband infrastructure and resources to help increase access to, adoption, and use of the internet in the reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

Rural broadband is critical to WSU and the communities we serve, not only to meet our own network needs but also to support distance learning offerings, our community-based medical school, and Extension community engagement, education, and economic development efforts in every county and corner of the state. In partnership with government agencies such as USDA, the Washington State Broadband Office, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, WSU assists with the training, research, and evaluation necessary to expand access to critical information technologies and applications.

For more than 25 years, WSU has helped organizations in the following areas, many of which have been recipients of USDA Rural Development funding:

- Telework, Telehealth, Education and Commuting
- Business Continuity/COOP
- Community and State-level Broadband Planning
- e-Commerce Training
- Workforce Development
- Community Technology Opportunities

WSU encourages congressional leaders to prioritize both broadband infrastructure and resources to help increase affordable access and beneficial use of the Internet in our rural and underserved communities. As we move towards more full recovery from the pandemic, we urge you to reauthorize Rural Development programs. These programs help promote local economic development in rural America, from connecting rural communities to broadband access to support increased access to healthcare, to providing much needed financing for rural small businesses, communities, and individuals across the state. Support of these programs will not only create and save jobs but will also foster innovation and the economy of rural Washington State and the country.

Within Title VI, there are programs WSU would like to highlight and support:

USDA: Rural Utilities Services (USDA RUS)

WSU supports reauthorization of USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) program.

USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) provides the background of infrastructure to rural and underserved communities across the country. This includes programs to support water and waste treatment, electric power, and a major priority for WSU— telecommunications services. Despite significant issues with reported availability and access, current broadband maps highlight the significant need for better access across rural America. Like the advances in telemedicine during COVID, rural broadband has become increasingly more important to Americans over the past several years. The RUS programs support our rural and underserved communities across Washington state with access to internet, health care, and economic development.

USDA- RUS: Telecom Programs:

Rural broadband is critical to WSU for its own network needs in supporting distance and virtual learning offerings, our community-based medical school, and Extension community engagement and education efforts. WSU supports increasing the authorized appropriation level for the Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Programs as well as supporting reauthorizing the ReConnect Loan and Grant Program at robust funding levels.

USDA's "Telecommunications Loan and Grant Programs" support WSU's goal to expand high-quality, high-speed Internet; as well as provide exceptional opportunities to further extend technical assistance and access to life-long learning through distance education in rural Washington. WSU's capacities, expertise, and collaborative networks complement ongoing investments by USDA RD and expand opportunities in rural counties. Together, WSU and partners like USDA RD can extend targeted educational programs, e-commerce solutions, precision agriculture, workforce training, and telemedicine advancements that will build rural infrastructure and create improved access to knowledge and skills while also supporting community development, advancing the agricultural and technology economies, and assisting in attracting healthcare professionals in providing quality health care to underserved communities.

For example, through the use of community specialists in Stevens County, WSU Extension has brought together Broadband Action Teams (BAT) to support county and community efforts with training, planning support, and resources – this successful program is now expanding to other parts of the state. Through the Stevens County Broadband Action Team meeting, the Libraries of Stevens County learned that Providence Health Care was trying to find ways to get technology into the hands of more patients but didn't know how to go about obtaining and loaning materials. That's where the library stepped in and procured thousands of dollars in CARES Act funding to purchase "check-outable" WIFI hotspot pucks and laptops for patrons to use. Providence Health Care identified Stevens County patients to participate in telemedicine appointments utilizing five telemedicine kits, including a hotspot puck and a laptop. In some cases, these patients could avoid a three-hour round-trip drive to a clinic or hospital and reduce the number of people in those clinics and hospitals during the pandemic, providing access to much needed health care.

In some cases, patients are given a "prescription" for technology by their health care provider. The patient can bring the prescription to the library, or phone them, to reserve a telemedicine kit to either take home or use from the library parking lot on highspeed WIFI.

USDA RUS: Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants

WSU supports reauthorization of this program at no less than the authorized amount in the 2018 Act.

WSU supports the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program and appreciates its role in improving health outcomes in rural communities through technology-driven solutions. As health disparities persist and rural communities struggle to recruit and retain a strong health professional workforce, ensuring an infrastructure to enable remote health professional learning and the provision of telemedicine is critical. Washington's rural communities continue to struggle with a wide array of negative health impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and WSU encourages reauthorization of the program at no less than the currently authorized level of $82 million per year for this account to meet this challenge. Telemedicine has proven to be particularly effective in expanding access to chronic disease management, mental health, and substance use treatment services, and it is critical that this includes evidence-based prevention programs.

Advocating for equitable access to broadband remains a strong priority for WSU as we seek to fulfill our land-grant educational mission. WSU is proud of its tradition of serving rural, remote, and underserved communities. WSU students, including those within medicine, nursing, and pharmacy, learn through an expanding distributed campus model across the state. Targeted and dedicated funding that is provided through programs such as the USDA RUS Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant are vital to training the next generation of health care professionals committed to addressing the unique needs of Washington's rural residents.

Telemedicine gained significant purpose during the COVID pandemic as more and more professionals utilized the opportunity to meet with patients virtually. WSU will continue to look for opportunities to support our community partners around the state as they look for ways to better connect to health care providers and support patient care in rural areas.

USDA – RUS: Rural Community Facilities Loan and Grant Program:

WSU supports reauthorizing this program at no less than the 2018 levels.

The Rural Community Facilities Loan and Grant program provides affordable funding to develop "essential community facilities" in rural areas. Essential facilities include fire stations, community centers, childcare centers, and medical clinics, utility services such as telemedicine or distance learning equipment, and local food systems such as community gardens, food pantries, community kitchens, food banks, food hubs, or greenhouses.

As the Land Grant Institution in Washington State, WSU touches all 39 counties and several tribal communities through our extension offices. In this capacity, we work directly to provide counsel to those local communities with which we engage in these areas. This program supports the work our trusted extension advisors provide.

USDA – RUS: Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant Program

WSU Supports reauthorization of the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant Program.

The Agriculture Act of 2018 established the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant Program (RISE Grants). The goals of the program are to offer grant assistance that will accelerate the formation of new business and to support industry clusters in low-income rural areas for the purpose of creating high-wage jobs. Grant awards are not less than $500,000 and not more than $2 million, and the law included the authorization of appropriations for up to $10 million per year from FY2019-FY2023.

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TITLE VII – RESEARCH, EXTENSION and RELATED MATTERS

WSU has a long and proud collaborative partnership with USDA supporting the state's agriculture stakeholders and their research needs. This partnership and the USDA investment in our research provides the necessary support to advance important agricultural research and education initiatives, including basic research in the plant sciences, agricultural sector risk management/mitigation, support for local farmers, development and delivery provision of education and learning tools for Washington stakeholders and students, and protection of our food sources across the state.

Agricultural research is one of the best investments the federal government can make, and yet it accounts for less than four percent of the federal non-defense R&D budget.[5] We must make the investment in research funding as threats to our food system are mounting and food insecurity is on the rise. **Research is the foundation for ensuring the availability of affordable food for consumers while promoting national security, safety, health, environmental stewardship, and global competitiveness through agriculture productivity.** Furthermore, research investments will help the U.S. develop and retain the next generation of researchers and capitalize on new scientific opportunities unavailable decades ago, including meeting the national need for research veterinarians through its partnership with USDA in training tomorrow's DVM, PhDs.

USDA's programs under Title VII support 23 academic units, four research and extension centers, 39 county extension offices, and a tribal office distributed across Washington State, WSU Extension, the College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS), and the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM). These programs provide local and global leadership in discovering and disseminating knowledge that:

- contributes to a safe, abundant, and affordable food and fiber supply,
- promotes the well-being of individuals, families, and communities,
- enhances sustainability and profitability of agricultural and economic systems,
- supports opportunities for our tribal, rural, and underserved communities,
- and cultivates stewardship of natural resources and ecological systems.

WSU has competed for and been awarded more than $149 million in direct and indirect NIFA funds since the 2018 reauthorization of the Farm Bill. We are proud of the work we have done to support our agriculture and industry stakeholders around Washington State and support reauthorization of the following programs within Title VII.

I. REAUTHORIZATION OF USDA NIFA PROGRAMS

WSU supports fully reauthorizing the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

USDA's external funding programs run through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and help WSU and USDA scientists keep Washington food and agriculture safe, strong, and resilient, while protecting its natural resources.

[5] Retaking the Field – SOAR

NIFA funding supports WSU's work in both plant and animal agriculture. On the plant side, NIFA supports the development of crop varieties for wheat, barley, apples, cherries, raspberries, hops, cool season legumes, potatoes, and quinoa that can adapt to Washington's unique growing regions. It supports research to reduce the impact of insect and disease problems in these crops and many others including onions, pears, blueberries, mint, and grapes through the development of preventive and predictive strategies. Additional advances have been made through support for robotics, sensor-based technology, modeling, and artificial intelligence to save labor and reduce and optimize inputs like water, fertilizer, and pesticides in fields, grazing lands, orchards, and vineyards, and to adapt to climate change.

On the animal side, NIFA supports research to improve the health of farm animals, including their reproductive capacities and growth efficiency. NIFA funding also helps WSU train the next generation of agricultural and environmental scientists. WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine research benefits animals, humans, and the planet, and is consistently ranked among the top ten U.S. colleges of veterinary medicine in total research expenditures. Working with WSU's stakeholders and students, WSU researchers collaborate with federal partners to find innovative solutions to the challenges facing regional food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences.

Overall, the impact of NIFA programs and funding for the advancement of agriculture research cannot be understated. Factors such as global competition, disease, and climate change have increased pressure on our food systems and the U.S. must continue delivering robust funding for research not only to address these and other issues, but to encourage active, inclusive, and sustainable participation in scientific discovery.

Within the NIFA program, WSU supports reauthorizing the following discretionary programs:

USDA Capacity Funding

WSU supports reauthorizing the following three NIFA programs that underwrite the basic research and extension capacity at America's land-grant universities; the Hatch Act (including Hatch Multistate), McIntire-Stennis, and Smith Lever.

Through these programs, WSU receives around $10.2 million annually to support our research and extension activities across Washington state. All have state-matching requirements and are essential for institutions like WSU to assist our stakeholders in sustaining the national food, agriculture, and natural resources research and extension capabilities that benefit residents in both rural and urban areas.

Foundational capacity funds (Smith-Lever, Hatch, McIntire-Stennis), combined with state and county investments above and beyond the match requirement, provide the stability of faculty salaries necessary to conduct competitively-funded research and Extension projects/programs that are essential to the agricultural industry and the quality of life for Washington residents. Competitive funding supports students, research assistants, and project-specific needs while capacity funds support the faculty salary lines that provide program continuity and long-term expertise. This collaboration allows WSU to provide support to our communities around the state.

Reauthorization of the Research Facilities Act

WSU strongly supports reauthorization and implementing the Research Facilities Act implemented through NIFA. WSU supports waiving matching requirements for this program, utilizing mandatory funding to support the program, and encourages Congress to ensure that all land grant institutions are eligible to utilize this program.

Between CAHNRS and CVM, WSU **has over $830 million** in deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs. From modernizing water and sanitation systems, fixing leaking roofs, optimizing windows for energy efficiency, fixing HVAC systems, and providing 21st century laboratory updates, WSU is putting band-aids on current problems resulting in larger funding and retention issues in the future.

The impact of aging infrastructure is pronounced as WSU works to maintain our competitiveness and ability to support food and nutrition for the residents of Washington, the nation, and world. Washington's agriculture stakeholders rely on WSU's innovative and cutting-edge research to support the $10 billion ag economy. In addition, WSU has extension offices in all 39 counties and on the Colville Reservation, along with Research and Extension Centers in Wenatchee, Mount Vernon, Prosser, and Puyallup. The WSU footprint, and the deferred maintenance needs to achieve its tri-partite mission, are vast.

Most of these facilities are facing numerous challenges: decaying infrastructure, failing roofs, significant asbestos remediation, irrigation system problems, failed septic systems, and old electrical infrastructure. In fact, many WSU facilities are 70-80 years old, and some are nearly 100 years old. Maintenance and critical upgrades are often impossible with dated construction of buildings and the rarity of the parts needed for antiquated infrastructure systems.

For WSU's national programs of significance to remain globally competitive and successful, as well as continue attracting and maintaining top scientific talent, Congress must reauthorize the Research Facilities Act and waive the matching requirements. Land grant institutions, like WSU, are at the forefront of these issues and must be eligible to utilize the program to better the lives of all Americans.

Reauthorization of the Agriculture Food and Research Initiative (AFRI)

WSU encourages Congress to fully reauthorize AFRI and its programs.

WSU successfully competes for funding through USDA-AFRI to support research on biomass feedstock development, sustainable forest production and conversion processes for producing biofuels and bio-products, climate change impacts on agriculture, organic crop breeding and management, and site-specific/precision agriculture practices. These projects represent a successful model of regional cooperation and have seen recent successes of note, including building the aerospace and sustainable aviation fuels industry in the Pacific Northwest.

WSU has continued to see success in competing for NIFA funds, more so recently with mandatory spending for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and the Organic Agriculture Research and Education Initiative. These programs are essential for WSU to support the specialty crop industries, particularly those in which Washington is a leading producer. Washington ranks first in the nation in the production of apples, raspberries, and pears and second for grapes, onions, carrots, and potatoes.

Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)

WSU supports renewing and making permanent USDA competitive grant programs currently receiving direct mandatory Farm Bill funding including the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) at no less than its current $80 million annual direct funding level.

The specialty crop industry in Washington is state-wide including tree fruits, berries, hops, grapes, onions, potatoes, and numerous minor crops that benefit from research at WSU. WSU works closely with our partners around the state to help find solutions through the SCRI program.

WSU researchers have led or participated in 31 multi-institutional SCRI projects since the program started in 2009. Funding for projects led by WSU total more than $48M. Recent projects led by WSU include research on controlling critical pathogens in grapevine, hops, and onion production, precision fertilization of grapevines, development and use of biodegradable plastic mulches, and development of genomic databases for specialty crops to assist breeding programs.

SCRI Waiver Language:

WSU supports including legislation to waive the 1:1 match for SCRI introduced by Congresswoman Schrier, Congressman Newhouse, and Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers in the House and Senator Cantwell in the Senate in the Farm Bill.

Section 7614 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (aka the 2018 Farm Bill) amended the matching funds requirement instituted by the 2014 Farm Bill for numerous research programs including the Specialty Crops Research Initiative under the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998, which exempted capacity eligible entities from matching requirements.

Most of the agriculture research programs prior to enactment of the 2014 Farm Bill's universal matching requirement included specific statutory authority for each program which authorized USDA/NIFA to waive the matching requirement under specific conditions. An exception to this general rule was SCRI.

After difficulties with implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill, matching requirements for SCRI were changed to allow specific indirect costs to count. To fix that issue, language was included in the yearly appropriation legislation and was not in the underlying 2008 statute. Therefore, SCRI and the related citrus program have no waiver authority for matching requirements. In addition, the new 2018 matching requirements are effective beginning on date of enactment of the 2018 Farm Bill, which was December 20, 2018.

Congress restored the waiver authority annually through the funding bill for USDA. WSU urges Congress to include a permanent fix in restoring the waiver authority.

WSU requests that H.R. 679 introduced by Congresswoman Schrier, Congrssman Newhouse, and Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers and similar language under consideration by Senator Cantwell in the Senate be included in the Farm Bill:

H.R. 679

To amend the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to waive the matching funds requirement under the specialty crop research initiative, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. MATCHING FUNDS WAIVER UNDER SPECIALTY CROP RESEARCH INITIATIVE.

Section 412(g)(3) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7632(g)(3)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(C) WAIVER.—With respect to a grant awarded under this section on or after the date of enactment of this subparagraph, the Secretary may waive the matching funds requirement under subparagraph (A)."

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)

WSU supports renewing and making permanent USDA competitive grant programs currently receiving direct mandatory Farm Bill funding including the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative at no less than its current $50 million annual direct funding level.

NIFA supports programs to address critical organic agriculture production and marketing issues through institutions such as WSU, which integrate research and extension to develop and translate new organic plant varieties and crop management techniques into practice. Organic agriculture saw a 31 percent increase in overall sales since 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) 2019 Organic Survey.[6] The same survey shows that Washington state accounts for 30.9% of the US farmgate organic fruit sales and 3.8% of the US farmgate vegetable sales. The farmers supporting these crops are located across the state providing organic product to our local communities.

WSU researchers support our farmers through the help of OREI grants. Recent and ongoing research funded under this program includes developing vegetable varieties that are more adapted to organic growing conditions, reducing disease risks in organically raised chickens, controlling post-harvest diseases in organically grown apples, and breeding cattle with reduced incidence of uterine diseases in organic production. WSU has received roughly $3 M from the program since the last farm bill (2018) for research supporting our stakeholders around the state in addressing issues affecting organic crops and livestock.

The State of Washington has over 1000 certified organic farms and many other operations using organic practices. Through the OREI program, WSU has directly helped organic farms across the state with filling the research gap as organic farmers look for ways to profitably meet the organic standards while addressing climate friendly conservation, soil health, and nutrient management supporting their crops.

[6] https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2019-organic-survey-finds-big-gains-for-organic/ ; https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/tfrec.cahnrs.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2020/11/WA_OrgStats_ann_rev_2019.pdf

Reauthorization of Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

WSU supports reauthorizing the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) through the land-grant university (LGU) system.

At WSU, EFNEP exposes families with limited resources to the knowledge and skills necessary to lead healthy lives. EFNEP brings together federal, state, and local resources to support Washington's low-income families with young children and low-income youth.

Nationwide, 76 land-grant institutions deliver EFNEP through Cooperative Extension. EFNEP operates within the larger context of existing non-profit, public, and federal nutrition education programs reaching an average of over 200,000 low-income adults and 450,000 youth in rural and urban communities each year.[7]

At WSU the program evaluation shows that EFNEP graduates improve their diets and nutrition practices, stretch their food dollars farther, handle food more safely, and increase their physical activity levels. After taking EFNEP classes, families cook more meals at home, select proper portion sizes, boost health and self-esteem, and raise children with healthier behaviors. WSU ENFEP remains at the forefront of education efforts to improve healthy behaviors and reduce nutrition insecurity in Washingtonians.

Reauthorization of the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN)

WSU supports reauthorizing the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN).

FRSAN seeks to improve the health and wellness of farmers, ranchers, and other agriculture-related workers through programs and targeted services specially designed to manage stress and build mental health resiliency.

The Agriculture Act of 2018 reauthorized the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) for the purpose of addressing the mental and behavioral health of farmers and ranchers in America. In coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Agriculture was authorized to make competitive grants available to eligible entities in the amount of $10 million annually for FY2019-FY2023 to establish training and workshops for affected farmers and ranchers.

The program funded four regional networks across the U.S., including the Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program (WRASAP), to expand opportunities for individuals to access help within their state and closer to their own communities.[8] Washington State University Extension is the lead organization for the WRASAP that represents thirteen western states and four territories, including Washington state. In 2020, the collaborative, through WSU, was awarded a three-year, $7.3 million FRSAN grant to support farm stress/agricultural suicide prevention efforts. Key components of the program focus on intentional community engagement and afford the flexibility to effectively respond to locally identified needs. Working in close partnership with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), WSU prioritizes inclusion in its implementation of evidence-based practices to tackle the unique challenges that impact a wide diversity of farm families. Additionally, WSU Extension is an

[7] USDA NIFA EFNEP – About the program

[8] USDA NIFA (2019, Oct. 22) USDA's NIFA Invests $1.92 Million in Grants to Launch the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network.https://cris.nifa.usda.gov/cgibin/starfinder/0?path=fastlink1.txt&id=anon&pass=&search=R=89805&format=WEBFMT6NT

established trusted leader among the farm and agriculture community which is critical to supporting the efficacy of implemented programmatic strategies. Leveraging the early success of Washington's FRSAN programming, WSDA subsequently secured additional federal resources to expand WSU's rural suicide prevention efforts including the provision of financial literacy education.

Reauthorize the Sun Grant Program

WSU supports reauthorization of the Sun Grant program and supports extending the program at its current funding levels.

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized this program for grants to enhance national energy through the development, distribution, and implementation of bio-based energy technologies. Activities are supported that promote diversification, the environmental sustainability of agricultural production in the U.S., and economic diversification in rural areas of the U.S. The program authorizes five national centers to look at energy needs through programs that support research, education, and extension.

The Western Region is led by Oregon State University with WSU researchers heavily engaged in the program. WSU has received around $600,000 in the 2022 & 2023 competitive grant cycle supporting work in both the Voiland College of Engineering and Architechure and the College of Agricultural Human and Natural Resource Sciences. Our researchers are focused on the following areas:

- Hemp fibers for cellulosic materials preparation and application
- Designing an Integrated Comminution and Flash Hydrothermal Biomass Pretreatment (CFHP)
- Selective Carbonization: A Technology Critical for the Creation of a Green Carbon Economy
- Abundant Plant Protein for Fabrication of Bio-Air Filters Capable of Simultaneously Capturing Particulate and Gaseous Pollutants

Reauthorize the Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA)

WSU supports reauthorization of the RREA.

RREA strengthens existing Extension programs by mandating and funding an expanded role for Extension in renewable natural resource conservation and management. RREA provides forest and rangeland owners and managers with information they need to sustainably produce wood products, forages and livestock, manage fish and wildlife populations, and create outdoor recreation opportunities.

The program strives to enhance the sustainability of the nation's forest and rangeland resources and to assist landowners and managers in making resource management decisions based on sound science. These projects must maximize the capacity, reach, and impact of the Cooperative Extension System – Extension Forestry and Rangeland Programs and must directly work across state boundaries to share expertise to address common problems.

Reauthorize and increase authorized funding for the Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP)

WSU supports continued authorization of the VSGP, along with VMLRP, but urges Congress to review how to encourage veterinary students to return to rural and underserved communities through incentives to serve.

The Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP) was created to help qualified veterinarian students offset a portion of their debit incurred if they agree to provide veterinary services in veterinarian shortage situations for a determined period. A graduating veterinarian student must commit to at least three years to providing veterinary services in a designated veterinary shortage area, and NIFA may repay up to $25,000 of their student loan debt per year. In Washington, NIFA has designated veterinarian shortage areas across the state. In FY 2022 Adams, Franklin, Clallam, Jefferson, Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties were designated as shortage areas. In FY 2019-21, , Kitsap, Mason, Clallam, Thurston, Whatcom, Grays Harbor and even parts of Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties were designated as shortage areas. [9]

This program is designed as a companion program to the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) to address gaps in veterinarian shortages in rural areas. WSU is proud to educate students who study veterinary medicine to care for both companion animals and to care for those animals that are part of the agriculture economy. However the challenges these students face in delivering care in rural areas, including intense shortages of colleagues and low pay, need to be addressed. The VSGP is indispensable for the recruitment and retention of much-needed veterinarians serving both small farms and large producers, yet it's not enough to address the needs of these rural areas.

Reauthorize and increase funding for the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP)

WSU supports fully reauthorizing the VMLRP.

The VMLRP recruits critically needed veterinarians to practice in areas of the country where they promote food safety and assist communities with agricultural needs. Since its last reauthorization in 2018, the VMLRP has increased funding in FY 2023 to $10 million to assist students who want to practice in public health or as livestock veterinarians. This funding is designated in areas by USDA and state animal health officials as areas with critical shortage situations or needs.

The WSU College of Veterinary Medicine is one of the nation's top veterinary schools with scientists studying animal and human disease. For the fall of 2022, more than 2000 students applied to WSU College of Veterinary Medicine and 140 were accepted. Nationwide more than 80 percent of veterinary students are in debt upon graduation; the average debt for U.S. students is $176,000. In Washington, our veterinary students graduate with around $124,000 in debt, much lower than the national average. In 2021 the mean starting salary for veterinarians entering corporate practice was $106,000 and mean starting salary for independent practices was $94,000. For WSU grads, those going into food animal practice, earn an average of $78,000; mixed practice around $100,000; and for exclusive practices for companion animals around $119,000. These are earnings for the class of 2022 from the American Veterinary Medical Association.

[9] https://www.nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp-map?state=48

Much like what WSU found with our college of medicine, many vet med students are more likely to practice near their hometown so many go back to urban areas. Our rural students come not only with the disadvantage of debt, but the challenges of practicing in rural areas are much greater and the need is there to support large animals in these communities.

According to a report issued by Cornell University, more than 500 counties across the U.S. are experiencing shortages of veterinarians who service food animals and less than 4 percent of vet med graduates pursue livestock or other large animal practices.

WSU also urges Congress to look at creative ways to encourage vet med students to return to rural and underserved areas to practice and encourage students to return and practice large animal veterinarian medicine. Congress should explore how we can utilize telehealth, interprofessional practices such as rural health centers that include human and animal health support, loan repayment programs, workforce development for staff to support veterinarians, and utilizing extension at land grant institutions to educate young students around the opportunities to pursue careers in livestock and food animal veterinarian care.

New Beginnings for Tribal Students

WSU supports the reauthorization of the USDA NIFA New Beginnings for Tribal Students.

The New Beginnings for Tribal Students program authorizes USDA to match state investments at land grant institutions to support tribal students through tuition fees, recruiting, tutoring, counseling, or any service to increase native student retention and graduation. Supporting recruitment, college persistence, and graduation of American Indian and Alaska Native American students is integral not only to Native individuals' well-being and economic mobility, but also to tribal nation building.

WSU's statewide locations are on the traditional and current homelands of 35 federally recognized Tribes (29 are federally from Washington State). The relationship between the tribal nations in the State of Washington and WSU is long-standing and important to the institution. In 1997, WSU signed a Memorandum of Understanding with regional Tribes to create a structure and strengthen relationships between the University and our tribal partners. Since that time, 12 Tribes have signed the agreement with more to come. The MOU established the Native American Advisory Board to the President that gathers Tribal government leaders/delegates and WSU leaders to strengthen the relationship between the University and the Signatory Tribes at the highest levels, and to ensure American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students are provided with intellectual, academic, cultural, and social support to cultivate a sense of belonging and nation building at WSU. The Office of Tribal Relations, currently led by Dr. Zoe Higheagle Strong, was also established to implement recommendations and help maintain close relationships.

Through the leadership of this office, WSU is utilizing competitive funding through the USDA NIFA New Beginnings for Tribal Students program to engage Tribal communities and implement their feedback on how to improve and advance AI/AN undergraduate college pathways, retention, and graduation success utilizing culturally responsive and nation building strategies across WSU's campuses and extension offices. This grant has expanded the Tribal Nation Building Leadership program and Native Youth Exploring Higher Education outreach camps hosted on our flagship campus to three other campuses. The grant has helped improve AIAN student data collection, assessment, and reporting, and identify meaningful indicators for AIAN student success.

II. AGRICULTURE RESEARCH SERVICE

WSU houses one of the largest concentrations of USDA Agricultural Research Service scientists on any university campus in the nation. These individuals work side by side with WSU faculty across multiple research disciplines and play a key role in developing new agricultural products to enhance domestic and global competitiveness, guard against pests and diseases, breed new crop varieties, conserve water, and protect soil, all of which strengthens the Washington and U.S. economies. To continue and enhance this critical work, USDA ARS scientists and WSU faculty need modern facilities capable of state-of-the-art research and student training.

Working together with ARS, WSU is a top five go-to research institution in USDA NIFA efforts to tackle complex issues related to food security and food safety. As the university expands the scope of its research to address these challenges, the need for state-of-the-art facilities that support interdisciplinary collaboration at the university is greater than ever.

USDA's NIFA is also responsible for efforts to protect our nation's food supply. Threats to animal health continue to be one of the most important non-traditional security threats around the globe. As we've witnessed with avian bird flu as a recent example, an outbreak of a foreign animal disease could cripple the entire agricultural sector and have long-lasting ramifications for the economic viability of U.S. livestock production. It is critical that the 2023 Farm Bill address these risks to animal health while bolstering the long-term competitiveness of U.S. animal agriculture in the global marketplace and providing consumers around the world safe, wholesome, affordable food.

III. ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE (APHIS)

NIFA/APHIS: National Animal Health Laboratory Network

WSU supports reauthorization of the NAHLN program under APHIS providing mandatory funding at $45 million to maintain a consistent stream of funding to safeguard our food supply.

The National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) was developed in response to the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002, and Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD-9) to "…*develop nationwide laboratory networks for food, veterinary, plant health and water quality that integrate existing Federal and State laboratory resources, are interconnected, and utilize standardized diagnostic protocols and procedures*". The NAHLN serves as our nation's most vital early warning system for emerging and foreign animal diseases.

NAHLN is a network of non-Federal public animal diagnostic labs, funded under NIFA and the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Funding for the over 60 laboratories nationwide, including WSU, contribute significantly to protecting a safe, stable, and nutritious food supply. The bipartisan Blue-Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense (http://www.biodefensestudy.org/) concluded existing levels of funding for the NAHLN are inadequate to protect our food supply. NAHLN has been authorized at $30 million since 2012 but is only currently allocated $4.3 million through NIFA and $15.9 million through APHIS.

The Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab (WADDL) at WSU Pullman is a Tier one (highest-level) laboratory, and our lab located at WSU's Puyallup Research and Extension Center is also a Tier One Animal Health Lab. In December of 2022, an avian flu outbreak occurred in Washington state and WSU's WADDL, working with the Puyallup facility, determined the positive test for this outbreak five days before USDA

confirmation at the national lab allowing incident command to respond quickly. Support from NAHLN remains critical so that WADDL remains at the forefront of animal diagnostic testing and can continue responding rapidly to unfortunate outbreaks. This network of labs is key to meeting the food safety needs of our state and the Pacific Northwest region.

WSU supports mandatory funding under NIFA for the NAHLN at $45 million when reauthorized as part of the Animal Disease and Disaster Prevention Program. This consistency in funding streams will help support NAHLN and bring together the federal government with states, industry, universities, and other interested groups to reduce the impact of high-consequence animal diseases, provide rapid detection and response capabilities to respond to animal diseases, develop disease prevention and mitigation technologies including vaccines, prevent the entrance and spread of foreign animal diseases into the United States, and identify and support critical research needs.

WSU believes it is essential that USDA and state animal health officials work collaboratively to deliver the sufficient development and timely deployment of all measures necessary to prevent, identify and mitigate the potential catastrophic impacts that an animal disease outbreak would have on our country's food security, export markets, and overall economic stability.

NIFA/APHIS: National Animal Pest and Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP)

WSU supports reauthorization of the National Animal Pest and Disease Disaster Prevention and Response Program.

This new program was established in the 2018 Farm bill to help prevent animal pests and diseases from entering the U.S. and reduce the spread of disease and addresses the risk through cooperative or interagency agreements between APHIS and eligible entities including states, land grant universities and tribal partners. In Washington, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is collaborating with Washington State University (WSU) to update the Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) Carcass Management Response to help livestock agriculture professionals with best management practices in mortality management.

This program provides an investment in food safety through supporting collaborative projects enhancing prevention, preparedness, detection, and response animal diseases that threaten U.S. agriculture.

NIFA/APHIS: National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB)

WSU supports reauthorization of the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank.

As we have seen with Covid-19, emergency planning and preparedness is important for our state and nation as the next pandemic could come from any source. USDA recognizes that our food supply is also in need of such preparedness and the 2018 Farm Bill established a new U.S.-only vaccine bank to address the needs of agriculture livestock stakeholders and industry. Through this vaccine bank, USDA can stockpile animal vaccines and related products for use in the event of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease or other high-impact foreign animal disease.

In Washington state, the WSDA is the lead state agency for any potential disease outbreak impacting our domestic animals. WSU works closely with WSDA to ensure that the state is prepared in case of such an event.

APHIS: National Clean Plant Network

WSU supports the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance in requesting an increase for the NCPN to no less than $8 million in mandatory funding.

First created in the 2008 Farm Bill, the National Clean Plant Network established a collaborative program of centers that focus on diagnosing and eliminating pathogens in plants, keeping crops virus free, and protecting the industry from devastating viral and virus-like diseases. This collaborative effort, funded through APHIS, utilizes the regulatory expertise of APHIS, the scientific expertise and facilities of LGUs, input concerning needs from stakeholders, and partnership initiatives of NIFA. The focus is on vegetatively- (not seed) propagated crops, since most viruses are not spread through seed but are readily spread along with the planting material (vegetative cuttings) made by nurseries for many of our most valuable perennial crops like tree fruit, grapes, and berries.

Since the 2018 Farm Bill, the program has been mandatorily funded at no less than $5 million a year. WSU joins our fellow land grant institutions across the country participating in this program to urge Congress to provide additional mandatory funding for this important program. The NCPN has provided nearly $65 million since its creation for work done at 35 clean plant centers and in 20 States and U.S. Territories including at WSU Prosser Research and Extension Center. [10]

As one of 35 centers in 20 states, Washington State University implements a significant portion of the National Clean Plant Network focusing on tree fruits, hops, and grapes for wine. WSU Prosser works collaboratively with USDA and our state's agriculture industry to provide the research for propagating, maintaining, and distributing virus-tested fruit trees, grapevines, and hop plants from our facilities. WSU's philosophy of "start clean, stay clean" emphasizes the importance of planting with clean materials to ensure high-quality production from orchards, vineyards, and hop yards.

The WSU Clean Plant Center Northwest (CPCNW) at Prosser is one of the largest of the NCPN centers and receives over $1M in funding each year from the Network. The CPCNW creates virus free planting stocks for new tree fruit, grapevine, or hop varieties that are introduced into the U.S. and maintains these stocks for distribution to the nursery industry. The processes are also used to rejuvenate stocks of existing U.S. varieties that inadvertently become virus infected. If nurseries do not have verified virus-free planting stock to amplify and maintain, they inadvertently distribute virus infected material and spread devastating diseases through our production regions. An example is Little Cherry Disease, which is currently threatening the cherry industry in the Western U.S. and many of the nurseries selling planting material were recently found to be infected. Since these perennial crops generally can't by cured from viral diseases once they are infected, the only control measures are to destroy infected orchards, vineyards or hop yards.

The NCPN is especially important to Washington State, with perennial, vegetatively propagated crops playing such an important role in the agricultural economy. The NCPN protects the tree fruit, berry, wine and juice grape, hop and other specialty crops industries, including ornamentals like roses. The CPCNW leverages a substantial return on this federal investment for these industries, including Washington State's $4.8 billion wine industry and billion-dollar tree fruit industry.

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[10] https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ncpn/downloads/ncpn-factsheet.pdf

TITLE IX – ENERGY

WSU supports the energy programs authorized in Title IX of the Farm Bill and reauthorization of these programs with acknowledgement of USDA's role in supporting Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF).

Since Congress created the Energy Title in the 2002 Farm Bill, the biofuels industry has evolved to support alternative fuel for cars, trucks, materials, and our aerospace and aviation industry. USDA's renewable energy programs are key federal partners in research and development for the adoption of these renewable energy projects, with USDA's primary focus on fuel source and the production and use of biofuels in rural and underserved communities. With the launch of the Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Grand Challenge by the Biden Administration in 2021, USDA has become an equal partner with the Departments of Transportation and Energy in developing a roadmap to achieve the Grand Challenge goals for SAF production by 2030 and 2050.

Washington State University is a national leader and an active partner in the Pacific Northwest supporting the successful promotion of bioproducts industries and the development of biofuels that help our state and nation's industry maintain their global competitiveness and address climate change. Our work spans from research on feedstocks and bioproducts to leading the field on Sustainable Aviation Fuels. Our work focuses on efforts that support our stakeholders from the field to the airspace with expertise spanning from feedstock development, conversion technologies, fuel qualifications, and systems analysis.

The energy title of the Farm Bill includes foundational programs that support the agriculture economy in the biofuels and bioproducts industry. The 2018 Energy Title authorized just under $400 million in mandatory funding, representing a small fraction of the total mandatory funding reauthorized. In fact, most of that mandatory funding supports biorefineries and renewable chemicals in Sec. 8103 and in Sec. 8107 the Rural Energy Savings program. Mandatory funding to support the bioeconomy has consistently shrunk since the Energy title was added in 2002 and the programs that are funded with discretionary funds have not been funded by Congress to their authorized levels.[11]

With increasing national and international focus on competitiveness in the aerospace industry, WSU has taken a leadership role with the federal government advising on Sustainable Aviation Fuels. As the co-leader of the FAA Center of Excellence for Alternative Jet Fuels and the Environment, the joint FAA and industry Commercial Aviation Alternative Fuels Initiative (CAAFI), and others, WSU has provided guidance on federal investment and engagement in this industry. The University has contributed to major technology developments for converting alcohols and wood into drop-in fuels to augment petroleum-based supplies, while providing price stability and opportunities for rural development. Our researchers have developed economic models that are currently used to inform the U.S. positions on UN SAF policy implemented through the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). This work has also been used to assist U.S. industries on the impacts of state and federal SAF policy. Finally, new capabilities in fuel characterization are assisting industry in achieving fuel qualification to enter the SAF marketplace. Through both research and outreach, WSU provides the people of Washington with leadership for the emerging industry to create the best products.

[11] https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10639

WSU urges Congress to support USDA's role in the bio economy and especially the role of USDA in the government-wide approach in collaborating with industry, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations on a path to reduce cost, enhance resiliency and sustainability, and expand rural economies through domestic production. The goal to achieve 3 billion gallons per year of *domestic sustainable aviation fuel* production that achieves a minimum of a 50% reduction in life cycle greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) compared to conventional fuel by 2030 and 100% of projected aviation jet fuel use, or 35 billion gallons of annual production, by 2050 cannot be done without an all-in approach from the federal government. Agriculture has a vital and unique role to play in this goal as is evident from the Administration's Grand Challenge to meet 100% of U.S. aviation fuel demand by 2050.

Recommendations:

- Reauthorize Title IX with robust funding to support feedstock development, renewable energy production, and research & development in support of the rural economy. These programs support development of feedstocks, facilities, and rural communities who are an important component to the competitiveness of our farmers and the end users of their products – in this case transportation, whether on the road, rail, farm, or in the air.
- Congress should acknowledge the role that USDA, land grant institutions, and America's farmers have in the growing SAF economy – the work done in states across the country to support SAF is providing economic development in rural and underserved communities through the agriculture economy and job development. Acknowledgement of the role USDA plays in the SAF Grand Challenge in the reauthorization of the Farm Bill will help foster the necessary collaboration between USDA, America's farm communities, and partner federal agencies.
- Congress should authorize USDA to include SAF R&D in each of its programs with linkages of SAF Grand Challenge Roadmap developed by USDA, DOT, and DOE.
- Congress should require the Office of the Chief Economist to work with NIFA on a study to review how USDA can best support and incentivize the development of the bioeconomy through developing feedstock to supply the growing production capacity to meet national targets.
- Authorize the Biomass Crops Assistance Program (BCAP) to create and implement a National Feedstock Network (NFN) to incentivize farmers with crop rotations and diversity of crops and harvest waste agricultural and forest materials to assure strategic feedstock supply to grow and support the bioeconomy in rural America. WSU would welcome the opportunity to work with you in ensuring that a National Feedstock Network is created in a manner that would align with USDA's role in promoting all sustainable fuels.
- WSU is a leader in the research, development, and evolution of advanced grid modeling to support planning and operations of complex power systems, including future interactions with transportation and other energy systems through the Advanced Grid Institute and our partnership with PNNL. WSU welcomes the opportunity to work with Congress on how best to provide access to and buildout our grid system as we look to expand access to renewable sources of energy to farms and rural communities.

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TITLE X – HORTICULTURE

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG)

WSU supports continuing the SCGB at fully authorized levels.

The Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) Program provides Washington State with important tools to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Continued funding of the SCBG Program would ensure a flexible, locally responsive, and state-led program. Since 2006, the SCBG has funded more than $953 million for 11,331 projects nationwide to support the competitiveness of specialty crops.[12]

Since the 2018 Farm Bill, the state of Washington has received over $9 million to support Washington's valuable and diverse specialty crop industry. The 32 research projects funded include a variety of Washington's traditional specialty crop industries like apple, potato, cherries, pears, ornamental nursery crops, wine grapes, peas and strawberries as well as some minor or emerging crops like radicchio and cider apples. Essential research projects have focused on management of pests and diseases like the devastating little cherry disease (X disease) that is threatening the cherry industry. Others have focused on managing abiotic stresses like frost, heat and drought stress; precision application of water and nutrients; managing post-harvest quality of fruit and potatoes; pollinator health and mechanical pollination of fruit trees; and managing/monitoring soil health in common cropping systems. Extension programs included education of small-scale food processors and educating and organizing underrepresented farmer groups on marketing and food distribution approaches.

The SCBG first received mandatory funding in 2006 at $55 million per year. The 2018 Farm Bill increased that amount to $85 million per year for a total of $425 million over the life of the bill which has gone to support Washington's agriculture industry. The SCBG is implemented through the Washington State Department of Agriculture in a longstanding partnership with WSU across the state.

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[12] USDA Agriculture Marketing Service, Press Release, August 25, 2022