



ASN Health and Nutrition Public Policy Newsletter July 17, 2007

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

House Agriculture Committee Begins Farm Bill Mark Up

Today through Thursday, the House Agriculture Committee is marking up the 2007 Farm Bill. House Agriculture Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN) released two versions of the 2007 Farm Bill – one, the Chairman's Mark that has flat funding within budget guidelines and the other, the Reserve Fund En Bloc Amendment plus the basics in the Chairman's Mark. While the En Bloc Amendment contains numerous provisions that increase the spending on agricultural and bio-energy research, fruit and vegetable programs, Food Stamps, conservation, and rural development, the \$20 billion worth of provisions must await offsets from other sections of the Farm Bill or other federal programs outside of agriculture. This dual approach allows the Committee to move towards House floor consideration of the bill, while also identifying priorities for reserve funding should it become available later.

Below are the research-related highlights of the basic Farm Bill:

- We are pleased to report that the [Nutrition Title](#) includes ASN's provision on nutrition monitoring. Section 4405 of this Title would mandate that nutrition monitoring activities by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) continue jointly and continuously collect dietary, health, physical activity, and diet and health knowledge data on a nationally representative sample. The provision also calls for periodic data collection on special at risk populations, also known as Community HANES, timely analysis and distribution of new data, regular updates of the food composition data, and development of data collection methods and standards. This language resembles a major provision in [H.R. 2844](#) introduced in 2005 during the 109th Congress.

The [Research Title](#), while less confusing than the version approved by the Subcommittee in late May, leaves much to be desired in the way of funding or meaningful change in the way research is conducted at USDA.

- This Title requires the President to submit a single line item reflecting the total amount requested for all agriculture research to track more effectively the total amount of federal investment in agriculture research activities. It is possible, however, that this approach could make it more difficult to track funds spent on nutrition and other specific research areas.
- It creates a National Agriculture Research Program Office (NARPO) to coordinate and minimize duplication among the programs of the USDA's research agencies, including Agriculture Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS), National Agriculture Statistic Service (NASS), and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). Six Program Offices, each with its own Director reporting to the Undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics, will be established and will include: renewable energy, natural resources, and environment; **food safety, nutrition, and health**; plant health and production protection; animal health and production protection; agriculture systems and technology; and agriculture economics and rural communities. It is debatable amongst stakeholders whether the

creation of NARPO would improve efficiency at USDA, or simply add another layer of bureaucracy.

- It combines the National Research Initiative (NRI) and the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS) into a National Institute on Food and Agriculture (NIFA) within the CSREES, with no clear Director, and authorizes appropriations for the NIFA at \$500 million. These funds will be divided with 60 percent going to basic research (formerly the NRI) and 40 percent going to applied research (formerly IFAFS). Also under the NIFA would be new research initiatives for bio-energy, specialty crops, and fresh cut produce safety, authorized in the new Farm Bill. The \$500 million authorization level may be interpreted as a \$200 million cut in competitive research funding at USDA, because a direct merger of NRI and IFAFS would technically imply a \$700 million authorization level. Under current law, \$500 million is authorized for the NRI and \$200 million is authorized for IFAFS.
- Lastly, the Research Title added specific language on nutrition research under the Sense of Congress Regarding Funding for Human Nutrition Research in Section 7112. Specifically, this provision identifies the specific four areas for human nutrition research that parallel ARS Human Nutrition Program Priorities for 2008 to 2012. Supporters of the language, including ASN and the American Dietetic Association, hope the inclusion of this language on how human nutrition research benefits agriculture and human health will provide a strong platform to advocate a larger proportion of the USDA budget for human nutrition research. The American Heart Association initiated this effort.

Reps. Sam Graves (R-MO), Charles Boustany (R-LA) and Dennis Cardoza (D-CA) are expected to offer an amendment at the mark up that would establish a Director of the NIFA, who would be chosen from a slate of distinguished scientists compiled by the National Academy of Sciences, appointed to a six-year term by the President, and report directly to the Secretary of Agriculture. The amendment also would ensure the NIFA has a Council of Advisors, evenly divided between highly qualified researchers and distinguished stakeholders of American food and agriculture and including food, nutrition, and health experts.

And on the Senate side...

Across the Capitol building, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) is working on another version of the 2007 Farm Bill which is expected to be more supportive of research, nutrition, and other non-subsidy oriented provisions. A date for mark up has not been set, and sources say it likely will not occur until September, as Harkin has made it clear that if the Farm Bill is not promised floor time before the August recess, no markups will be held until after Congress returns from the break. Debate of the FY08 defense authorization bill is likely to dominate the Senate floor debate through July, leaving little time for the Farm Bill.

Senate Agriculture Committee staff released a discussion draft of the Research title last week. Again, we are please to report that nutrition monitoring language, identical to that in the proposed House Nutrition Title, is included. The Senate proposes a research structure that, while essentially silent on funding, would appear to be more acceptable to ASN and other advocates for agricultural research.

- The Senate version does not include a NARPO
- This bill would establish a separate institute at USDA to be led by a Director, who will be a Presidential appointee to a single, 6-year term and will report directly to the Secretary of USDA. It eliminates the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) by transferring all its authorities to the NIFA. However, all programs under CSREES will continue under NIFA. The funding is not spelled out. Four offices will be established under NIFA: The Office of Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Network; the Office of Competitive Programs for Fundamental Research; the Office of Competitive Programs for Applied Research; and, the Office of Competitive Programs for Education and Other Purposes.

- The NAREEE Board will be modified and will be the Advisory Board for NIFA. Modifications include a reduction of the NAREEE Board from 31 members to 24. While some positions are being eliminated, the bill calls for a position to be filled by a representative from a nutritional science society.
- The bill requires the USDA Undersecretary for REE to prepare a roadmap for agricultural research that identifies major opportunities and gaps and to set the research agenda for USDA. "Such sums as necessary" are authorized to be appropriated.

The current farm bill expires on September 30. Chairman Harkin stated his interest in developing a six-to-seven-year farm bill, rather than the traditional five-year bill, claiming a longer bill would offer the needed budget savings and provide more flexibility. Sen. Harkin continues to work with Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and Senate Budget Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) to find offsets to make the \$20 billion reserve fund an actuality.

We will continue to keep you posted as the issue moves forward.

House Appropriations Committee Works on FY08 Labor-HHS-Ed Bill

Last week the House Appropriations Committee marked up the FY 08 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-HHS-ED) appropriations. The bill provides \$1 billion for medical research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and according to the summary, the bill provides the NIH with \$29.6 billion, a \$750 million increase over FY07, which will help support 545 new competing research grants. The bill also lifts a two-year freeze on the average cost of new research grants and helps train the next generation of researchers. Under the committee approved legislation, the National Children's Study will receive \$110.9 million and \$300 million is provided for the Global AIDS Fund. The bill also mandates that articles describing research funded by NIH be provided to the National Library of Medicine within 12 months of publication for open access to the public.

Under the bill's language for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) received \$120 million, which is an \$11 million increase over FY07 Funds. Language for the bill urges CDC to include food allergies in the National Health Interview Survey and encourages NCHS and USDA to strengthen the national nutrition monitoring system.

The bill now moves to the House floor for consideration on July 18, where it will face opposition from fiscal conservatives and a veto threat from the President. The Senate Labor-HHS-Ed appropriations bill still awaits floor action.

For more information, please visit the [House Appropriations website](#).

House and Senate Work on FY08 Agriculture Appropriations

On July 12, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, led by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), completed its work on appropriations to fund USDA and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) programs. The USDA would be funded at \$17 billion, a five percent increase over FY 07 and \$945.9 million over the President's request. FDA would be funded at \$1.7 billion, a seven percent increase above FY 07 and \$55 million above the President's request. Beyond the overall numbers, however, little detail was made available to the public; however, a press release issued by DeLauro's office provided insight into the program areas that received additional monies.

'As we bring this bill to the floor and eventually to the President for signature, we will work toward several key goals: reinvesting in rural America, protecting public health, improving nutrition for more Americans, transforming our energy future, supporting conservation, investing in research, a finally, enhancing oversight," said DeLauro.

With respect to nutrition and research, the bill does the following: fully funds the Food Safety and Inspection Service at USDA; provides a \$28 million increase for food safety at FDA; provides

more than \$131 million for food safety research at USDA; increases the budget for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program at USDA by eight percent; and, provides record level funding for the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

Further details of this bill are expected on July 18 when it goes before the full House Appropriations Committee for consideration.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture will mark up its version of the bill on July 17. Significant funding increases for nutrition programs are expected, including \$5.7 billion for the WIC program, a \$500 million increase over current levels and \$300 million above the President's request.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

FTC and DHHS to Hold Forum on Marketing to Children

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will sponsor *Weighing In: A Check-Up on Marketing, Self-Regulation, and Childhood Obesity* July 18th to bring together members from industry, media, and self-regulatory groups, to examine the next steps in addressing the increase in childhood obesity. The event follows a [recent report by the FTC](#) which revealed that food advertising on children's television programming has not increased in almost three decades, and it also serves as a follow up to a 2005 workshop on the same topic.

Currently, the agency is working on another report, which will examine all the other types of food marketing aimed at children and adolescents. The separate study will include information on the types of foods marketed and the techniques used to do so. The amount spent on marketing and the nature of marketing activities will also be examined, as well as any marketing policies, initiatives, or research in effect or undertaken by food and beverage companies.

This Workshop comes at a time when a recent effort sponsored by Sens. Sam Brownback (R-KS), Harkin, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to examine childhood obesity and the media, of which ASN is a part, has been delayed pending the announcement of voluntary initiatives by the food and beverage industry.

For more information, please visit the [FTC website](#).

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Background Materials for the Institute of Medicine's DRI Workshop Now Available

In preparation for the upcoming meeting, *Development of DRIs, 1994-2004: Lessons Learned and New Challenges*, the Institute of Medicine's DRI Workshop Planning Committee has identified relevant background information intended for workshop participants. The materials include comparison tables and background papers developed specifically for the workshop as well as existing documents.

The materials are available to all in preparation for the meeting, which will be held Sept. 18-20 in Washington. In addition, any person or organization may offer comment on these documents through August 11, 2007. The comments received will be posted on the website in a timely manner so that they can also be viewed by all. For more information, please visit <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/42135.aspx>.

New Grant Opportunity from Elsevier Foundation

The Elsevier Foundation has announced a call for grant proposals under its New Scholars Program, which will give priority to the efforts of the academic and research community to address the challenge of balancing childcare and family responsibilities with the demanding careers in science and technology. The program is focused on doctoral candidates and scientists in the first five years of their post-doctoral careers. Grant proposals are welcome for programs that enable scientists to attend conferences, meetings, workshops and symposia that are critical to the development of a career in science, with a particular emphasis on programs that help with childcare and other family responsibilities when attending scientific gatherings. Proposals must be submitted by October 1, 2007, and will be awarded at the end of the 2007 calendar year. For more information, please visit the [Elsevier Foundation New Scholars website](#).

RWJF Appoints David C. Colby, Ph.D., Vice President of Research and Evaluation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has appointed David C. Colby, Ph.D., a nationally-recognized health and health care researcher and policy analyst, as vice president of Research and Evaluation. Colby joined the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in January 1998 as senior program officer, after an already distinguished research and teaching career, specializing in health care financing and health policy, in government and the academic world. Since May 2006, he has served as interim Vice President for Research and Evaluation, whose projects account for roughly 25 percent of Foundation awards. Findings from these initiatives highlight lessons learned from investments, providing a useful knowledge base to inform future work in health and health care.

"The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has a well-deserved reputation within philanthropy for groundbreaking leadership in developing, using, and disseminating the tools and results of research and evaluation to promote change in policy, professional practice and behavior to improve health and health care in the United States," said Colby.

For more information, please visit the [RWJF Newsroom](#).