

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
BUDGET  
ENERGY AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
INTELLIGENCE  
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

As your subcommittee considers the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I would respectfully like to bring to your attention several funding matters that are of particular importance to the state of Maine. While you are both undoubtedly well-versed in the range of programs that fall under your committee's jurisdiction, I feel it is necessary for me to outline how many of these programs affect my state. My hope is that the following requests will further inform the committee's important work by providing insight on the current agricultural and rural landscapes in Maine.

## 1. Sustainable Aquaculture Report Language

**Agency:** Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

**Member Requested Report Language:** *Sustainable Aquaculture – The Committee notes that aquaculture is the fastest growing food production industry in the world. An additional \$3,000,000 is provided to support rapid response research on sustainable aquaculture for coldwater and warmwater production environments, with special emphasis on workforce education. The Committee further directs the Secretary to report on how the Agriculture Experiment Station model could be applied to support the U.S. aquaculture industry to develop and deploy sustainable production practices and better manage coastal aquaculture resources.*

**Purpose:** As new commercial species and modes of productions grow, there will be barriers and bottlenecks to expansion. For example, a substantial barrier to the success of scallop aquaculture in Maine is the high cost of specialized equipment available only from Japan. Relieving this bottleneck through targeted research and training will result in an expansion of harvestable scallops, which, in turn, will inform optimal site selection over time. The Aquaculture Research Institute (ARI) and its affiliate facilities already act as a conduit for translational research between academia and industry but it is possible to accelerate response and to avoid industry-community conflict using the best possible

science and reducing risk. As an Aquaculture Experiment Station (AqES), ARI and its affiliates could perform a systematic comparison of aquaculture gear at their experimental farms and share results with industry or address emerging shellfish diseases and biotoxins that may increase with rapidly changing coastal environments.

**2. Establishment of Aquaculture Experiment Stations (AqES) in Maine and Alabama**

**Agency:** Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

**Member Request:** \$3 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** N/A

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** N/A

**Purpose:** The objective of this pilot Aquaculture Experimental Station program would be to facilitate Academic-Industry partnerships to quickly resolve aquaculture bottlenecks and challenges to sustainable expansion. These stations would be able to respond to both short and long-term industry-determined challenges, by deploying rapid response research dollars and developing training programs that meet the workforce needs of emerging industries.

**3. Potato Breeding Research**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$2.75 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$2.5 million

**Purpose:** This funding will allow university research programs across the U.S. – including at the University of Maine – to provide new potato varieties in order to marketing opportunities and address new and expanding pest challenges faced by the potato industry. These mounting challenges including late blight, pink rot, nematodes, and potato virus diseases.

**4. Aquaculture Research Grant**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$1.35 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$1.35 million

**Purpose:** Maine aquaculture leads the nation in terms of sales and continues to see industry growth. Aquaculture Research program supports the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable aquaculture industry in the U.S. and generates new science-based information and innovation to address industry constraints.

**5. Wild Blueberry Research**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$2 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** N/A

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** N/A

**Purpose:** Maine is the world's largest producer of naturally occurring, low bush wild blueberries. The challenges facing wild blueberry growers are not the same as those facing cultivated blueberry growers. The wild blueberry industry depends on research to

help determine best practices and maximize yields. The USDA strongly supports other berry research, and I believe that all berry growers need the support of research. This language will help ensure the equitable treatment of wild blueberry growers.

**6. Hatch Act and McIntire-Stennis programs**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$292 million for the Hatch Act and \$41 million for the McIntire-Stennis program.

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$243 million for the Hatch Act, \$29 million for the McIntire-Stennis Program

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$244 million for the Hatch Act, \$34 million for the McIntire-Stennis Program.

**Purpose:** This funding is critical to the continued success of both the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station and The University of Maine Cooperative Extension. The Station is responsible for valuable research regarding Maine's agriculture and forestry, among other important natural resource areas. Station researchers collaborate with scientists from other states to pool resources and solve problems that extend beyond state borders. Extension, created in 1914 has provided the essential link between cutting edge university research and the people who will use it to improve their farms, families and communities.

**7. Smith-Lever 3 (b) and (c) and 1890 Research and Extension**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$359 million for Smith-Lever 3(b) and (c) and \$109 million for 1890 Research and Extension programs

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$299 million for Smith-Lever 3(b) and (c) and \$101 million for 1890 Research and Extension programs

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$300 million for Smith-Lever 3(b) and (c) and \$100 million for 1890 Research and Extension programs

**Purpose:** The \$59 million increase—\$50 million for Smith-Lever and \$9 million for 1890s—would have a significant impact on our land grant institutions. For Maine, the increased funding would allow our State Extension to hire three faculty/professional positions: Agricultural Engineer, Small Farm Business Management Educator, Food Scientists located in southern Maine.

**8. Source Water Protection Program**

**Agency:** Farm Service Agency

**Member Request:** \$6.5 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$6.5 million

**Purpose:** The Source Water Protection Program (SWPP) provides each state with at least one full-time person to organize and assist rural communities, farmers, and other land-use interests in the implementation of source water protection plans including non-point source protection practices in agriculture.

**9. Regional Aquaculture Center (RAC) Program**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$5 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$5 million

**Purpose:** Maine Aquaculture generates over \$100 million gates sales annually, providing over 90 million healthy seafood meals to American consumers. The RAC system has only been funded at half of its authorized level since its inception, and full funding will allow the centers to maximize their efforts to support the expanding aquaculture sector.

#### **10. Forest Products Research**

**Agency:** Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

**Member Request:** \$3.5 million for ARS Forest Product Research (USDA-ARS portfolio of National Program 306 Quality and Utilization of Agricultural Products).

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY19 Enacted Level:** \$3.5 million

**Purpose:** About 90% of Maine land is forested, making us the most forested state in the country. As in other pulp and paper states, Maine's forest products industry is dependent on innovation. Consistent funding for forest research improves evaluation standards and techniques for forest products.

#### **11. Forest Products Research and Utilization**

**Agency:** Agricultural Research Service (ARS); National Program 306, Quality and Utilization of Agricultural Products

**Member Requested Report Language:** *Forest Products—The Committee recognizes the important role of the forests products sector to the U.S. economy. The need to create new and improved value-added products and renewable energy from our Nation's wood supply is critical to the sustainability of the national economy. The Committee recommendation includes no less than the fiscal year 2016 level to support research on wood quality improvement and improvement in forest products evaluation standards and valuation techniques.*

**Purpose:** The research at Maine's Land Grant University encourages experimentation and innovation within companies contributing to Maine's forest-based economy. This is accomplished through conduct and communication of high impact/quality research, training of future scientists and leaders (graduate student education), explicit evaluation of economics of researched technologies, and helping to establish national programs through interactions with federal agency leadership.

#### **12. WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)**

**Agency:** Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

**Member Request:** \$24 million

**Presidents FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$18.5 million

**Purpose:** WIC provides critical nutritional assistance to young mothers and their children, and deserves full authorization. Not only does the FMNP increase access for mothers looking for locally grown, healthy food, it also expands the market for growers.

The FMNP builds on the important partnership between federal nutrition programs and farmers.

**13. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) Commodities**

**Agency:** Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

**Member Request:** \$350 million for TEFAP mandatory commodities, and similarly fund TEFAP Storage and Distribution at the full authorized level of \$100 million.

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$320 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$306 million

**Purpose:** TEFAP funds help food banks fight hunger in local communities.

Organizations like Good Shepherd Food Bank in Maine work tirelessly, and though they are buoyed by private donations, those donations are not enough. Even when meals are available, storage and distribution costs can be prohibitive. Increasing the Storage and Distribution funding will alleviate some of the costs of distributing food, and allow food banks to focus their limited resources.

**14. McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$40.67 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$28.8 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$33.9 million

**Purpose:** Experiment Station scientists provide economic analyses critical for Maine's natural resource-based industries and communities. The overarching goal of Experiment Station research programs is to improve the quality of life for Maine people by enhancing the profitability and sustainability of Maine's natural resource-based industries and by protecting Maine's environment and the health of its citizens.

**15. Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM)**

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$20 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$20 million

**Purpose:** Over the past several decades, CPPM has provided critical funding to University of Maine Cooperative Extension to carry out Integrated Pest Management projects that have helped farmers protect crops from disease and pests. Upfront investments in pest management and regional crop research has served as a financially responsible method of implementing preventative measures that have helped Maine avoid major devastation to our crops and saved USDA from paying out large disaster claims. While the 2018 Farm Bill authorizes \$20 million for CPPM, the President's FY 20 budget proposes zeroing out this program.

**16. Minor Crop Pest Management, IR-4 Program**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$19 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$11.9 million

**Purpose:** This funding will allow extension teams around the country to assist farmers with pest management efforts and help develop Integrated Pest Management Systems for specialty crops. These integrated programs are particularly important for Maine growers, where wild blueberries and potatoes are a critical part of the state's agricultural economy and heritage.

**17. National Organic Program (NOP)**

**Agency:** Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

**Member Request:** \$18 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$12 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$12 million

**Purpose:** The organic industry has seen an increase growth in organic sales, as well as a need to increase domestic organic production. To keep up with this growth in the sector, funding should be increased, with a focus on enforcement of organic standards. The 2018 Farm Bill authorized \$18 million for the NOP and appropriations should follow suit.

**18. Animal Health and Disease Research**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$4 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$4 million

**Purpose:** Vaccines and other biotechnology products are a vital part of the US aquaculture industry. Without a single Coldwater aquaculture vaccine and biotechnology center in the United States, however, our aquaculture companies are often forced to import vaccines. A portion of AHDR funds should be dedicated to developing aquatic vaccine research here in the United States.

**19. Survey of Average Feed Costs by State**

**Agency:** National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

**Member Request:** \$3 million within the NASS budget be designated for a survey of average feed costs by state.

**President's FY 20 Request:** N/A

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** N/A

**Purpose:** Accurate information on regional variation in feed costs is critical for designing a program that better supports small and family farms in all regions of the country.

**20. Renewable Resources Extension Act**

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$4 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$4 million

**Purpose:** Funding is used to support University of Maine Extension's work with the valued added non-timber forest products. Specifically, UMaine Extension is regarded as the best resource for information on maple syrup production, processing and quality control in Maine.

**21. Increased subsidy for school nutrition programs to offset the costs of the regulatory changes that have been imposed on schools and communities; determine the addition challenges the regulation have placed on rural schools and create an advisory committee of School Food Services Directors to provide guidance to USDA on these and future regulations.**

**Agency:** Food and Nutrition Services (FNS)

**Member Request:** Adequate funding to support the increased costs required for compliance with the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFK) of 2010.

**Purpose:** The initial funding increase of .06 per lunch meal to implement the HHFK Act of 2010 has proven to be woefully inadequate to cover the cost of the new regulations. Not only are estimates of the actual increased cost per lunch around .35 but the new regulations for breakfast have been implemented with no additional per breakfast bonus funding. These increased costs imposed by the federal government are being borne by local communities, and in the case of Maine local property tax payers.

**22. Kitchen Equipment and Training for Schools Grants**

**Agency:** Food and Nutrition Services (FNS)

**Member Request:** \$35 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$30 million

**Purpose:** As schools struggle to bear the financial burden of the HHFK Act of 2011 they have little or no capacity to purchase equipment. As we've seen in Maine, outdated kitchen equipment further compounds the difficulties of school nutrition professionals who are working to meet the new meal requirements. The President's FY 20 Request recognizes that USDA must bear more of the cost of compliance and be a partner in this process, not just a regulator.

**23. Organic Transition Program**

**Agency:** National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$8 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$5 million

**Purpose:** OTP supports the development and implementation of research, extension and higher education programs to improve the competitiveness of organic livestock and crop producers, as well as those who are adopting organic practices. In Maine, the average age of farmers has gone down, bucking the national trend upwards. Farmers joining or transitioning into organic agriculture has been a major contributing factor for this trend.

**24. The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)**

**Agency:** Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

**Member Request:** \$1 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$1 million

**Purpose:** Though this program has previously operated as a state pilot program, the 2018 Farm Bill established a national program that will increase access to healthy food and spur economic development through grants and loans to grocery stores. These one-time

incentives will promote healthy food options, particularly in rural and lower income areas where this access is always a challenge.

**25. Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLPP)**

**Agency:** Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

**Member Request:** \$25 million, as authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill

**President's FY 20 Request:** N/A

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$30 million

**Purpose:** Maine has recently enjoyed a resurgent local foods movement. This encouraging growth has been fueled in part by an expanding network of farmers markets. Full support of the FMPP will help foster continued growth of farmers markets in Maine and around the country.

**26. Conservation Funding in 2018 Farm Bill**

**Agency:** United States Department of Agriculture

**Member Request:** Support the full mandatory funding for conservation programs as authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill.

**Purpose:** Farm Bill conservation programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) help farmers, foresters and ranchers conserve water, protect water quality, and improve soil health, which in turn helps agricultural production. These programs are increasingly important to the long-term viability of family farms as producers face challenges such as drought, wildfire, and floods. Improving soil health and water quality, and providing robust wildlife habitat, is critical as our growing population increases pressure on private agricultural lands.

**27. Acer Access and Development Grants**

**Agency:** Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

**Member Request:** \$5 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$0

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$3 million

**Purpose:** Maple syrup is an important agricultural product across 10 states in the Northeast and Upper Midwest. Maple is also a critical conservation crop, which helps to keep our forests in production, conserves important lands, protects water quality, and provides a valuable economic benefit to rural communities. The maple industry has shown significant growth in recent years. U.S. production has nearly doubled in the last decade thanks to recent innovations in vacuum tubing, sanitation practices, and better taps. The new Acer program will provide the opportunity for further investment and research in this important crop can increase production, strengthen conservation and help drive efficiency in maple sugaring.

**28. Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program**

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$45 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$19 million



**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$35 million

**Purpose:** SARE grants and education program has advanced agricultural innovation that promotes profitability, stewardship of the land, air and water, and quality of life for farmers, ranchers and their communities.

**29. Specialty Crop Block Grant**

**Agency:** Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

**Member Request:** \$85 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$85 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$85 million

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. This program is particularly important in Maine where the majority of the crops are specialty crops.

**30. Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development Program (FMDP)**

**Agency:** Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)

**Member Request:** Support funding above the mandatory levels of \$200 million for MAP and \$34 million for FMDP

**President FY 20 Request:** N/A

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$200 million for MAP and \$34 million for FMDP

**Purpose:** Both programs allow agricultural trade associations, farmer cooperatives, non-profit trade groups, and small businesses to apply for either generic or brand-specific promotion funds supporting trade shows, market research, consumer product promotion, technical assistance, and other efforts vital to supporting export efforts.

**31. Value Added Producer Grants**

**Agency:** Rural Development (RD)

**Member Request:** \$18 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** N/A

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$18 million

**Purpose:** Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program helps agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of new products. These grants provide Maine and around a much-needed source of financing to develop new markets, and create new value chains, which helps small and mid-scale family farms reach the profit margins they need to stay in business.

**32. New Beginning for Tribal Students**

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$5 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** N/A

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** N/A

**Purpose:** The 2018 Farm Bill created a new Native American student scholarship fund for tribal students attending land-grant universities and colleges. This request fully funds the program, as authorized in the Farm Bill.

**33. Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach**

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$10 million

**President's FY20 Request:** N/A

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** N/A

**Purpose:** The \$10 million in discretionary funding request would restore the Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Development Program (BFRDP) and the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers—now merged under FOTO—programs to historic levels and meet increased needs for the effective combination of education and training models designed to support new farmers, and historically underserved producers. Maine has a burgeoning group of veteran farmers, as well as immigrant and refugee farmers, who would greatly benefit from increased support under FOTO.

**34. Food Safety Outreach Program**

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$10 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$4 million

**FY19 Enacted Level:** \$7 million

**Purpose:** USDA-NIFA Food Safety Outreach Competitive Grant Program provides funding for food safety training and education for small and mid-sized producers and processors affected by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

**35. Specialty Crop Pests Program**

**Agency:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

**Member Request:** \$178 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$176.8 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$178.17 million

**Purpose:** The Specialty Crop Pests (SCP) Program protects U.S. farmers and producers of fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, horticulture, and nursery crops from adverse impact associated with invasive pests, such as crop damage or threats to international trade and interstate commerce.

**36. Agriculture and Food Research Initiative**

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Member Request:** \$445 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$500 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$415 million

**Purpose:** AFRI-funded science is vital to meeting food, fiber, and fuel demands as the world's population races toward a projected 9 billion by 2050 concomitant with diminishing land and water resources and increasingly variable climatic conditions. Maine farmers rely on these federally funded projects to help develop solutions for these growing challenges in agriculture. However, despite increasing food and environmental challenges, USDA research funding has remained flat.

**37. Tree & Wood Pests Program**

**Agency:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

**Member Request:** \$56 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$56 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$56 million

**Purpose:** The APHIS Plant Health: Tree & Wood Pests program helps combat invasive pests, an ongoing effort that requires constant attention. In Maine, these funds assist farmers, foresters and researchers as they struggle to contain the damage caused by aggressive species that are relatively new to the state, such as the Asian long-horned beetle and the winter moth. With more and more invasive species finding their way into and around the United States, we must be vigilant and keep on top of these threats.

**38. Technical Assistance for Specialty Crop (TASC) Program**

**Agency:** Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)

**Member Request:** \$9 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$9 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$9 million

**Purpose:** TASC is designed to address unique barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops. Under the program, grants are provided to assist U.S. organizations in activities designed to overcome sanitary, phytosanitary, or technical barriers to trade.

**39. Circuit Rider Technical Assistance**

**Agency:** Rural Utilities Service (RUS)

**Member Request:** \$19.57 million

**President's FY 20 Request:** \$19 million

**FY 19 Enacted Level:** \$19 million

**Purpose:** This technical assistance provides Maine's schools, mobile home parks, camps and campgrounds with a reliable technical assistance provider that is available on-site at a moment's notice, in order to assistance with drinking water treatment, operations, maintenance, and compliance.

**40. Water & Waste Disposal Technical Assistance & Training Grants; Small Systems Technical Assistance Grants**

**Agency:** Rural Utilities Service

**Member Requested Bill Text Language:** *...of which \$9,000,000 shall be made available for a grant to a qualified non-profit multi-state regional technical assistance organization, with experience in working with small communities on water and wastewater problems.*

**Purpose:** Technical assistance provided by Rural Community Assistance Partnerships (RCAPs) under this program is targeted to RUS water/wastewater loan and/or grant eligible communities. The proposed funding amount will allow RCAPs to expand their assistance to very small rural communities, helping them to apply for USDA financing and better manage existing systems.

**41. Bill Text Language on Origin of Organic Livestock**

**Agency:** Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

**Member Requested Bill Text Language:**

*Not later than 180 days after enactment of this section, the Secretary of Agriculture shall issue a final rule based on the proposed rule entitled "National Organic Program; Origin of Livestock," published in the Federal Register on April 28, 2015 (80 Fed. Reg. 23455). The final Rule shall incorporate public comments submitted on the proposed rule.*

**Purpose:** The original intent of the origin of organic livestock rule was to allow farmers a one-time conversion of conventional dairy cows to organic as long as they are managed organically for a one-year period. Unfortunately, certifiers are interpreting these rules in different ways, creating a loophole. Some operation are circumventing the requirement by continually transitioning cows into an organic operation or even cycling cows in and out of organic management.

These practices can distort the organic market with rapid expansion of cow numbers, due to the lower cost of production to raise animals conventionally, creating an economic disadvantage for organic farmers who are complying with the intent of the organic regulations. Organic farmers who raise their calves according to organic standards from birth spend an average of \$600-\$1,300 more per calf than farmers who raise calves conventionally. The proposed 'Origin of Livestock' rule in 2015 would have addressed this issue.

Without explanation, the final rule was never published and in 2018, it was removed from the USDA's Unified Regulatory Agenda. The organic industry in Maine supports the USDA acting immediately to improve clarity and consistency for transitioning organic dairy livestock into organic production.

**42. Report Language on Public Plant and Animal Breeding Programs**

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA); Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)

**Member Requested Report Language:** *The USDA must establish a separate funding stream within AFRI to fund efforts for breeding of regionally adapted cultivars. The agency must take steps to improve its tracking of public cultivar projects within AFRI and report its progress in meeting this goal.*

**Purpose:** Like many other states and regions, Maine's growing climate is unique. In order to capitalize on the shorter, and often wetter, growing season, Maine farmers require greater access to cultivars that are locally and regionally adapted to their soils, climates, and farming systems.

**43. Bill Text Language on Purposed NIFA-ERS Reorganization**

**Agency:** Title I/National Institute of Food and Agriculture/Research and Education Activities

**Member Requested Bill Text Language:**

*No FY 2020 funds shall be provided to reorganize ERS outside the REE mission area and no FY 2020 funds shall be provided for the relocation of ERS and NIFA outside the National Capital Region (NCR).*

**Purpose:** This bill should prohibit funds from being used to implement an ill-considered relocation of 750 combined employees of NIFA and ERS away from the National Capital Region. This proposal will incur significant costs and is not backed by any documentation or input from employees or employee representatives. The Agricultural & Applied Economics Association and the American Statistical Association, the advocacy groups for NIFA and ERS employees, believe this will detract from - not add to - these agencies' missions. More than 100 scientific associations, more than 1,100 scientists, and over 75 leaders in the relevant agricultural fields back their view. Furthermore, the Joint Explanatory Statement for the FY19 conference report explicitly directed USDA to submit cost estimates of moving the agencies and a detailed analysis of any research benefits of the relocation. This directive was ignored; in fact, there was no comment option at all under USDA's Expressions of Interest document for the proposed relocation for stakeholders to comment that they oppose the relocation. The President's budget proposes to reduce ERS funding and direct over half of the remainder to relocation, a major overhaul that appears unsupported by evidence. Finally, the USDA Inspector General is also investigating the decision-making that led to this proposal, which caught all stakeholders by surprise and was done without consultation or expert review. In sum, there are unanswered questions here that should be answered before any funding is permitted for this purpose.

Thank you for your timely consideration of these requests. Please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Olin Hartkopf at 4-5665 or [Olin\\_Hartkopf@king.senate.gov](mailto:Olin_Hartkopf@king.senate.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angus King". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Angus" and the last name "King" clearly legible.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.  
United States Senator