



The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
328A Senate Russell Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510  
Fax: 202-228-2125

February 28, 2011

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow:

We write to you on behalf of USAIN, the United States Agricultural Information Network, to ask for your support for full funding of the Cooperative Extension System, established by Congress in the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. Cooperative Extension provides a vibrant educational partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the land-grant universities across the nation. In the Continuing Resolution (CR) the Smith-Lever program would be cut by \$29.8 million, a reduction that would greatly harm Cooperative Extension programs across the country. It is important to restore funding to the FY10 level which would be stable, with no funding cut, and keep funding on par with the other formula funds.

USAIN is an organization made up of more than 150 agricultural librarians and information specialists who are employed by land-grant and other academic institutions, government agencies, and non-profit organizations. USAIN members work with their state and regional institutions (e.g. land-grant colleges and universities), Cooperative Extension units, and others, to facilitate access to key historical data and reports as well as to the latest scientific information upon which food and agricultural research is based. Cutting Extension's funding means that farmers, ranchers, small business owners, researchers, consumers, parents, youth, teachers, librarians and others will have drastically reduced access to reliable, practical, current, research-based information and programs that benefit communities in all states. A cut to funding will also create an enormous stumbling block to the progress in initiatives surrounding national food access, food security, community health, farmland conservation, and renewable energy.

USDA and land-grant funded research is broad and nearly all-encompassing in scope. Research outcomes are most often published in highly respected, peer-reviewed journals. Cooperative Extension educators interpret and apply the research-based information to answer their

customers' questions and provide tested solutions to their problems. Research and Extension are inseparable partners in the information stream. As information professionals, we often use and refer others to Extension information. Extension's research reports, fact sheets, and other materials from current research are digested into a form that is suitable for the general public to read and use. Restoring funding is critical to the continuation of this important information flow.

In 2006, USAIN funded the writing of a White Paper, "*Making the Case for a Next-Generation Digital Information System to Ensure America's Leadership in Agricultural Sciences in the 21st Century*" that implored:

“the leadership of USDA, NASULGC, the agribusiness industry, and others with interests in a vital agricultural sector to strongly support a process for bringing together key players in the U.S. agricultural information system (Land-Grant Universities, NAL, Cooperative Extension, members of the private sector, concerned policymakers, scientists at the cutting edge of the information industry, and others), to develop a detailed implementation plan and phased road map for a national digital agricultural information system for the 21st century”.<sup>1</sup>

Those words from 2006 still hold true five years later. Initiatives such as eXtension seek to make balanced, reliable, research-based information available via the Internet, anytime, anywhere. In order for Cooperative Extension to continue their vital role in the research transfer and dissemination process for food and agricultural information in the United States, Extension needs to be fully funded. Cooperative Extension is an indispensable part of a national digital agricultural information system that generates and disseminates knowledge to address a wide range of human, plant, and animal needs in both urban and rural areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to communicate support for Cooperative Extension and restored funding. This letter is submitted on behalf of the USAIN Executive Council, USAIN Legislative and Government Relations Committee, and the USAIN Membership. For more information about our organization please go to [www.usain.org](http://www.usain.org).

Sincerely,

Allison Level  
President, USAIN

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1. Making the Case for a Next-Generation Digital Information System to Ensure America's Leadership in Agricultural Sciences in the 21st Century. 2006. USAIN Task Force.  
<http://usain.org/WhitePaperFinal.pdf>



The Honorable Frank D. Lucas  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
Fax: 202-225-0917

February 28, 2011

Dear Chairman Lucas:

We write to you on behalf of USAIN, the United States Agricultural Information Network, to ask for your support for full funding of the Cooperative Extension System, established by Congress in the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. Cooperative Extension provides a vibrant educational partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the land-grant universities across the nation. In the Continuing Resolution (CR) the Smith-Lever program would be cut by \$29.8 million, a reduction that would greatly harm Cooperative Extension programs across the country. It is important to restore funding to the FY10 level which would be stable, with no funding cut, and keep funding on par with the other formula funds.

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