

## UC's Priorities and FY 2025 Funding Requests in Agriculture and Natural Resources

**W**ith the University of California (UC) serving as a vital partner, California continues to be the nation's top agricultural state. For more than a century, California's \$56 billion agricultural industry has depended on UC for the stream of new technologies and research breakthroughs needed to stay competitive and be responsible stewards of the land. We respectfully request that Congress continue to support our activities through the annual appropriations process and the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization process.

### 1 Support those who do the work

For FY 2025:

- Hatch (Research and Education support for UC Agricultural Experiment Stations): \$300M
- Smith-Lever (Cooperative Extension/4-H): \$420M
- McIntire-Stennis (Forestry Research and Education): \$46M

These programs provide critical "people power" and research talent to enable California to connect local issues with the power of UC research. In 2022, 3,820 research and extension projects were conducted and there were 468,000 direct contacts/educational exchanges. Currently, there are 516 Agriculture Experiment Station faculty, 167 Cooperative Extension (CE) Advisors, and 110 CE Specialists working on research and extension projects.

#### **IMPACT: Fostering the next generation of scientists**

- In FY 2022/23, over 57,690 California youth benefited from high-quality 4-H programming efforts which was supported by over 6,415 trained adult volunteers who devoted 660,930 hours of services valued at over \$24.6 million.
- UC ANR is in the second year of a Bay Area chapter of "4-H Water Wizards," a science-based program that connects students of color with diverse scientists to imagine career possibilities in STEM fields. A highly anticipated field trip to Elkus Ranch Environmental Education Center provides unique hands-on learning opportunities on agriculture, natural habitats, and environmental stewardship.

Compared to their peers, 4-H youth are:

- 4 times more likely to make a positive contribution to their communities
- 1.7 times more likely to take courses/pursue STEM careers

#### **IMPACT: Wildfire prevention and recovery**

California's wildfire season has required increased resources each year due to climate change and more people moving to fire-prone areas. UC Fire Advisors routinely host prescribed fire workshops throughout California, helping private landowners understand the benefits and techniques for using prescribed burns. UC Cooperative Extension Advisors in Humboldt County spurred the creation of the first prescribed burn association in the West, which proliferated to 24 other counties across the state.

#### **IMPACT: Improved water-supply security**

A collaborative study led by a UC Cooperative Extension specialist at UC Merced found that covering California's 4,000 miles of water canals with solar panels could save 63 billion gallons of water annually and generate 13 gigawatts of solar power. The findings led to the Turlock Irrigation District constructing solar panels over its water canals with \$20 million in funding from the California Department of Water Resources.

Since 2017, wildfires have burned through over 11 million acres in California.

## 2 Support research

For FY 2025:

- **USDA NIFA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI): \$500M**

For fiscal year 2022-2023, UC ANR had 159 AFRI projects with over \$116.5 million in total awards to find cutting-edge solutions to high-priority issues affecting California's rural and urban communities.

- **Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI): waive matching funds requirement**

UC supports full funding for SCRI. UC supports the inclusion of language in the appropriations process which allows the Secretary of Agriculture to waive the matching funds requirement for SCRI, thus allowing for critical research to occur to address diseases and challenges facing the specialty crop industry.

- **UC also supports:**

\$50 million for **Hispanic Serving Institutions Education Grants Program**, \$45 million for the **National Animal Health Lab Network**, robust funding for the **Crop Protection/Pest Management (CP/PM) Program**, \$25 million for the **Minor Crop Pest Management (IR-4) Program**, \$4.5 million for the **Veterinary Services Grant Program** and \$2.5 million for the **Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank**.

### **IMPACT: Increasing food economies and markets**

Finding new plant cultivars that can adapt to climate change is crucial to maintaining California's agricultural industry. Recognized by TIME magazine as one of the "200 Best Inventions of 2023" in its Food and Drink category, the newly commercially released "Luna UCR" avocado variety was co-created by two UC scientists at the South Coast Research and Extension Center. Luna's flavor is similar to the popular Haas avocado but the rind turns black when it's ripe – an easy sign for consumers. For growers, Luna is as equally prolific as the Haas but its smaller trees are easier to manage and require less land and water.

## 3 Support Critical Infrastructure

For FY 2025: **Research Facilities Act: \$500 million**

UC research drives the agricultural sector – we deliver innovative technologies, we grow the agricultural marketplace, and we support job creation and boost the economy. However, many of our buildings and facilities are aging and in need of replacement or significant improvements. In fact, 70% of the research facilities at U.S. public colleges of agriculture are at the end of their useful life. Bringing our facilities up to modern standards would provide capacity for precision agriculture, remote sensing, growing space for CRISPR-based research, and would ensure that cutting-edge research can continue to be conducted to meet the agricultural and natural resources needs of California and the nation.

## 4 Support nutrition education

For FY 2025: **Support the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP): \$75.6M and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed): \$900M**

EFNEP helps low-income families improve their nutrition practices and teaches food-budgeting skills, while the CalFresh Healthy Living, UC program brings nutrition education to youth in local schools.

### **IMPACT: Improving food security for low-income families in California**

In 2023, CalFresh Healthy Living, UC, worked to reach over 137,000 youth and adults in 34 California counties through policy, systems, and environmental change efforts that increase access to healthy food and/or physical activity. In addition, EFNEP served more than 7,000 youth and 2,610 adults (impacting 11,235 family members). Adult graduates reported a 98% improvement in diet quality while also increasing their food resources management skills by 96%. They reported saving an average of \$63.95 in monthly food costs, which equals \$767 in food cost savings per year.

*Studies have shown that for every \$1 invested in EFNEP, more than \$8 is saved in current and future healthcare costs.*

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

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