



USDA plans to offer \$800 mil. for larger, longer-term research grants in February

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Washington, Jan. 6 – USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) expects to release its request for applications (RFA) for the 2010 Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) no later than mid-February 2010 and will commit up to \$800 million in funding for new grants, contingent on annual appropriations in following years.

AFRI is NIFA’s flagship competitive grant program and was established under section 7406 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, otherwise known as the 2008 Farm Bill. AFRI will support work in the following priority areas: plant health and production and plant products; animal health and production and animal products; food safety, nutrition, and health; renewable energy, natural resources, and environment; agriculture systems and technology; and agriculture economics and rural communities. Programs focused on these areas will use a disciplinary-based approach to building a foundation of knowledge critical for solving current and future problems.

Within these priority areas, AFRI will support interdisciplinary, multi-functional projects in five “societal challenge” areas to achieve significant and measurable outcomes.

Research goals include:

1. Keep American agriculture competitive while ending world hunger
2. Improve nutrition and end child obesity
3. Radically improve food safety for all Americans
4. Secure America’s energy future through renewable biofuels
5. Mitigate and adapt agriculture to variations in climate

NIFA will issue a series of RFAs to address these program areas. Grants in 2010 will be larger in size with funding up to \$25 million and longer in duration with five year grants awarded that are eligible for renewal upon achieving specific goals. NIFA expects such grants will lead to greater collaboration among institutions and organizations and will integrate basic and applied research with deliberate education or extension programs.

In addition, up to \$5 million in funding opportunities for pre- and postdoctoral fellowship grants will be offered. This program area will create a cadre of “NIFA Fellows” poised to become the next generation of agricultural scientists, educators and practitioners.

All RFAs will be available on NIFA’s Web site and on Grants.gov. Some program areas require letters of intent, which will be requested no sooner than three weeks after the RFA’s release. Submission of full proposals to those program areas will be no sooner than six weeks after the letter of intent deadline, with deadline dates determined based on proposal complexity. Applicants will be allowed a minimum of 90 days to prepare proposals for large, complex projects. For program areas that do not require letters of intent, proposal submission deadlines will be no sooner than four weeks after the RFA’s release and will be determined with consideration of application complexity.

For more information about the AFRI funding opportunity, visit the NIFA Web site at <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/afri/afri.html>.

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