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Testimony of

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On

Fiscal Year 2019 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Submitted to the

Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,

Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

United States Senate

April 13, 2018

The Entomological Society of America (ESA) respectfully submits this statement for the official record in support of funding for agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). **ESA requests discretionary appropriations of at least \$1.526 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2019 for USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), including at least \$525 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). The Society also supports a discretionary funding level of at least \$1.35 billion for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) including robust funding for the ARS Crop Protection budget as well as funding to preserve valuable pest management research and invasive species programs in FY 2019.**

Advances in the agricultural sciences, including the field of entomology, help to address some of our most pressing societal needs related to food security and safety, as well as environmental and

human health. Through improved understanding of insect pests and the development of biological approaches to pest management, entomology plays a critical role in the protection of crops from infestation and disease. In addition, entomology contributes to our knowledge of pollinator biology and the factors affecting pollinator health and populations, helping to ensure safe, reliable crop production that meets the needs of a growing world population.

As NIFA's premier competitive research program, AFRI funds a wide range of agricultural research, education, and extension projects at universities and research institutions nationwide. In addition, AFRI's Education and Literacy Initiative supports more than 2,000 trainees annually that will become the next generation workforce of agricultural and food scientists. **ESA appreciates the Subcommittee's efforts to increase the AFRI budget since the program's establishment, and ESA requests \$525 million for AFRI in FY 2019.** ESA also supports the proposed inclusion of pollinator health as a special area of emphasis within the AFRI Foundational Program.

To maximize its limited resources, AFRI supports projects that address key societal challenges and build foundational knowledge in high-priority areas of the food and agricultural sciences, such as food safety and food security. For example, researchers funded by AFRI are currently devising new strategies to deal with one type of bumblebee parasite that has developed resistance to the methods used to kill them. Bees and other pollinators contribute approximately \$3 billion per year to food production in the United States alone, and with many species of pollinators in

rapid decline, research in this area is increasingly critical to maintain our agricultural economy.¹ In addition to AFRI, other NIFA grants support programs to study and implement evidence-based approaches to reduced-risk integrated pest management (IPM), which has implications for human health, the environment, and the economy.

ESA supports increased funding for research on pollinator populations. These insects play a vital role in our nation’s agriculture industry; for example, bees pollinate an array of important crops in the United States. To ensure a healthy bee population, more research is needed to fully understand the complexities of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) and to examine the diverse factors that endanger bee health. In addition to the funding increases requested within AFRI and ARS, **ESA supports USDA’s participation in multi-agency activities to further investigate pollinator health and develop implementation plans to prevent pollinator population decline.**

As USDA’s intramural research agency, ARS funds research with a direct impact on our nation’s agriculture enterprise, including in the areas of crop and livestock production and protection, human nutrition, food safety, and environmental stewardship. However, the President’s FY 2019 budget request proposed significant reductions for the agency, including eliminating 20 ARS research facilities and cutting funding for the Crop Protection and Production accounts. The ARS Crop Protection research program builds knowledge and develops approaches that are made

¹ AFRI Competitive Grant: “Inter-strain Variation and Evolution of Resistance to Phytochemicals in the Bumblebee Trypanosome Parasite, *Crithidia bombi*.”

available to crop producers, enabling better control of pest and disease outbreaks as they occur. In addition, the ARS Crop Production research program develops and approves safe and effective strategies for reducing crop loss and providing a dependable food supply. **ESA supports maintaining strong funding levels for the Crop Protection account as well as the Crop Production account.**

ESA, headquartered in Annapolis, Maryland, is the largest organization in the world serving the professional and scientific needs of entomologists and individuals in related disciplines.

Founded in 1889, ESA is a non-partisan professional organization with nearly 7,000 members affiliated with educational institutions, health agencies, private industry, and government.

Members are researchers, teachers, extension service personnel, administrators, marketing representatives, research technicians, consultants, students, pest management professionals, and hobbyists.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer the Entomological Society of America's support for USDA research programs. For more information about the Entomological Society of America, please see <http://www.entsoc.org/>.