FY19 PROGRAMS OF INTEREST

USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative

USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative in Idaho

The University of Idaho (UI) partnered in recent years with other Western universities on seven major U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (USDA AFRI) research proposals of varying sizes and terms. These projects will have lasting effects on the economy, communities and the environment in Idaho, the Northwest and beyond.

Background

AFRI is the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s extramural competitive grants program. AFRI supports research, education and extension in several areas.

Recent AFRI Projects and Accomplishments

• Regional Approaches to Climate Change (REACCH) for Pacific Northwest Agriculture was funded in fall 2010, receiving $20 million over five years, concluding in early 2017. UI was the lead institution, partnering with Oregon State University and Washington State University. The efforts of its nearly 100 researchers helped to equip farmers with strategies to adapt to climate change to ensure the long-term viability of cereal-based farming in the Inland Northwest. This effort has now been extended for another 4 years with additional AFRI funding to guide ongoing land use change in the Inland Pacific Northwest towards sustainable, resilient agricultural landscapes and food systems.

• Improving Barley and Wheat Germplasm continues to be supported by AFRI funding since initiation in spring 2011. UI is partnering with the University of California, Davis, to identify beneficial gene forms that strengthen wheat and barley against diseases and pests, improve nitrogen-use efficiency, and resist drought. The goal of this research is to develop new wheat and barley varieties better adapted to changing environments. Some of the varieties produced are beginning to be utilized in commercial production.

• Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Education and Outreach in partnership with Alaska, Oregon and Washington land-grant universities was funded in September 2016 to provide customized food safety education, training and technical assistance to specific targeted audiences, including owners and operators of small and medium-sized farms, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, small processors, or small fresh fruit and vegetable merchant wholesalers, especially those in rural, remote locations. Training in FSMA-related food safety will ensure compliance to regulations and support a safe food supply.

Upcoming Goals

The goal for coming years is to continue to emphasize:

• The importance of programs to expand the range of potato development, production and nutrition research at UI in support of an important crop in Idaho and an important food source for the world.

• The efficient, sustainable use of natural resources that protect water quality and prevent the unwanted release of nutrients.

• Biofuels research that lessens the reliance on fossil fuels and introduces new industries to the Northwest.

• Novel, comprehensive research on Idaho’s economically important, livestock-focused agricultural and food processing industries that limits their impacts on the environment while enhancing their economic and environmental sustainability.

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Projected Impact of Continued and Increased Funding
AFRI is one of the most important federal mechanisms to support long-term research that improves the health and economic status of Americans, particularly in rural states like Idaho. AFRI is critical to conducting high impact research with wide-ranging benefits.

Accounts: Agriculture Appropriations, Department of Agriculture, NIFA/AFRI

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