



Indian Country Priorities and Opportunities for the 2018 Farm Bill *Title VII: Research*

Key Points and Recommendations

- Research Title programs must allow for the development of tribal research, education, and Native youth in agriculture by making programs and funding more accessible to Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), support a tribally led focus on traditional knowledges and practices, and provide additional opportunities for education.
- Fund the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) at a minimum of \$10 million to address the persistent inequity in educating and developing Native American extension resource programming and Native youth in food and agriculture programming.
- Provide dedicated funding and tribal preference at National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to build tribal research and educational capacity.
- Require all institutions (non-TCUs) that receive any funding for extension programming in states that have tribal lands and tribal producers to report and demonstrate their work with tribal governments, tribal communities, and tribal producers and their cooperative and respectful coordination with TCUs in close proximity. These institutions should be required to conduct a percentage of their overall work that is equal to the amount of land in the state held by Indians, the Indian farms in those states, and such extension programming must be done with Indian communities and done by staff experienced in and knowledgeable of issues important to Indian Country.
- Remove FRTEP from the Farm Bill requirements that all Smith-Lever programs be competitive and reinstate the consultative requirements for FRTEP implementation.

Background Information and Context

Monitoring and exploring old and new knowledge regarding plant and animal health, exploring the impact of science to solve food problems, tackling societal issues related to food and health, and ensuring our food supplies are sound and resilient through food and agriculture research is critical to our food, health and self-sufficiency. Accessing research, building tribal research systems within TCUs, and supporting educational institutions within communities are critical to stabilizing tribal agriculture and food systems, food production, and tribal communities. We must also continue focusing on the importance of traditional knowledge, which is best done at tribally owned and managed institutions. Research Title programs must allow for educating the next generation of tribal producers, scientists, technical specialists, business managers, engineers, lawyers, and related professionals who advise and support the agriculture and food sectors. There are many Native youth who aspire to these career paths, and the funding and programs in the Research Title must help support these goals.



Opportunities for Indian Country in the Research Title

Parity in Funding for FRTEP

- Increase funding for FRTEP to at least \$10 million, and preferably increased to greater levels of funding. FRTEP supports farmers, natural resources managers, youth (via 4-H youth programs), and communities by providing an agent to liaise with other USDA programs, provide training in farm and ranch business management, supervise 4-H and youth development activities, and coordinate special training programs, including the application of new agricultural technologies, among many other vital activities. While there are more than 3,100 extension offices available to farmers nationwide (through the institutions in the land grant system), the current \$3 million funding level provides only 36 FRTEP extension agents to serve more than 50 million acres of tribal lands, a growing number of tribal food producers, and 567 federally recognized tribal reservations as well as many state-recognized tribal communities. Providing more than \$10 million in funding would begin to address this persistent inequity by nearly doubling the FRTEP staff and the number of Native youth served by the program. Greater attention must be given to whether the land grant extension system funding is being used appropriately or in such a way that tribal communities and producers receive the resources they need in relation to the proportionate formula funding distributed. The current system of competitive funding is also in need of adjusting, as it results in long-standing and effective programs being cast aside in favor of new programs with no established track record and states like South Dakota, with nearly 19 percent of the land owned by Indians, not receiving funding at all. Consultative review of all FRTEP applications must be reinstated.

Research Title Funding Mechanisms

- Update funding systems to reflect the research and educational needs of tribal communities. The competitive and formula funding mechanisms within the Research Title can provide much-needed research and development, infrastructure development, education, and extension of knowledge, but the assumptions about the funding systems have outlived their usefulness.

TCU Eligibility for all National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Funding

- Make TCUs eligible for all USDA-NIFA funding authorities. TCU extension professionals are not present among enough tribes, and they are currently not provided with even the minimum level of funding to accomplish their work. However, FRTEP, due to its unique history and implementation, must be excluded from this requirement as the circumstances of the FRTEP program is entirely different.

Additional Resources for Tribal College Extension, Research and Education Programs

- Increase non-FRTEP funding considerably for Tribal College extension programs so they can effectively address the needs for tribal research and education related to tribal food systems and food producers.
- Require extension programs funded at 1862 institutions to provide services to tribal food systems, so that there is not a gap in tribal educational scholarships, internships, and critical needs. The growth of Native food systems requires the improvement of access and parity within the Research Title.
- Commission a comprehensive study to explore the potential ability of 1862 Land Grant Institutions to share administrative functions, classroom and faculty resources, and other related support mechanisms.



Tribal Set-Aside, Preference, and Funding at NIFA

- Provide tribal set-asides and preferences within all non-FRTEP NIFA funding authorities while retaining the competitive nature of the funding, which is necessary to continue building capacity and strength.
- Amend the agricultural legal funding authority contained in the 2014 Farm Bill to ensure that competition for the funds occurs and funding is set-aside to be provided to organizations and entities that have a proven specialty and primary focus on Indian law issues that intersect with food and agriculture law.
- Require NIFA funding authorities to focus a portion of their work on building knowledge and capacity in business development unique to tribal lands and individual Indian owned land, and approach this work separately due to the unique complexities in tribal land use, law, regulatory burdens, and related issues. Since business training and the development of solid business planning tools are also necessary, funding would be best focused around risk management education programs and the funding authorities in this area.
- Allow tribal governments and tribal organizations full access to all nutrition education programs at NIFA, including SNAP-Ed, and all research programs related to building knowledge in nutrition, health, obesity, and diabetes prevention.
- Include a set-aside in Small Business Innovation Research projects funded through NIFA for tribal projects leading for commercialization of food products or food systems innovations.
- Ensure that the federal formula funding authorities that support basic research, education, and extension funding for 1862 institutions is revisited to ensure that the institutions receiving such funds based on the federal formula actually provide research, education, and extension services to the tribal communities, farms, ranches, farmers, and rural citizens who are counted in the formula that establishes funding allocations. At present tribal interests are considered in establishing formula allocations but there is no follow through to determine if actual projects result in such funding allocations.

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

- Reauthorize the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program with a set-aside for tribal sustainable agriculture project funding.

Agricultural Research Service Projects on Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- Launch and support a significant number of research projects within the Agricultural Research Service that focus on the important role that traditional knowledge plays in the environmental, natural resource, ecological, food science, nutrition, and health arenas. Funding provided in these unique content areas must be done with full consultation with tribal governments and full compliance with modern cultural practices and recognition.

Multi-Tribal Funding for Research Title Programs

- Develop a separate funding authority, like the Sun Grant or Sea Grant authorities, to allow multi-tribal, multi-state, and consortium approaches to meeting the research, education, and extension needs of Indian Country.

Native Youth Grants

- Include a provision of grants for youth-focused organizations in Indian Country that focus on developing food and agriculture leadership and scientific knowledge in all grants for youth organizations.



TCU Center of Excellence

- Encourage, allow, and include the Centers of Excellence approach to funding in the next Farm Bill Research Title.

For more information, please contact: Colby D. Duren, *Policy Director and Staff Attorney*, at cduren@uark.edu.

This document is strictly for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice nor create an attorney/client relationship.

September 2017

