



Long Term Funding of Extension and Agriculture Research Policy Development 2015

Issue:

Extension and agricultural research all touch the heart of rural Tennessee. The programs provide essential unbiased and accurate research then take the findings and apply them to real life, on farm applications alongside producers. Even 4-H integrates a critical youth education and development component that has for over a century taught leadership and science based agriculture through K-12 programs. Traditional funding sources are making reductions and difficult spending decisions by prioritizing. Funding for these areas are not always prioritized near the top.

Questions:

1. Have Extension or 4-H programs faced cuts in your county? If so, have cuts been noticeable?
2. Do you believe producers in your county rely on The University of Tennessee to provide accurate, unbiased research?
3. Can outside funding from private industry and/or checkoff programs for example, help meet funding demands?
4. How can these programs look for creative funding sources?

Background:

Extension and research are funded primarily by two federal programs. The Hatch Act of 1887 funds research laboratories throughout the country which includes UT Research and Education Centers. The Smith-Lever Act of 1913 funds extension outreach programs which go hand in hand with work in the experiment stations. Both of these programs have received either stagnant or less funding over the past decade. When adjusted for inflation the numbers are even less. State funding of these activities follows the same path. Within the UT system both formula (higher education costs) and non-formula (extension, county technical assistance, agricultural research, etc.) are facing severe reductions because state taxpayer funding of these programs is less than cost increases. Formula programs have held steady because of double digit tuition increases however, non-formula programs are almost completely dependent on state and federal funding. This could pose a problem for Tennessee's agriculture infrastructure if research and extension programs are not able to function.

TFBF Policy

UT Extension (Partial)

The University of Tennessee Extension and the Tennessee Research and Education Centers have made outstanding contributions to the welfare of all Tennesseans. These programs must be strengthened to meet the future needs of agriculture.

Agricultural Research (Partial)

Strong, well-funded agricultural research programs are essential to the future viability of agricultural production in Tennessee and the United States. We urge the Tennessee State Legislature and the U.S. Congress to ensure adequate funding for agricultural research not as a favor to farmers but as a wise investment for a strong economy in our future. We encourage regional (including out of state) cooperation among experiment stations and research institutions.

Publicly funded agricultural research performs many essential functions, among them testing of technologies, varieties, and products developed privately and marketed to agricultural producers.

Public research institutions must remember their purpose is to serve the public interest. Privately funded grants should be accepted only in cases where the public service function of the institution will not be compromised.