



UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS  
SYSTEM

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

FOR FY2026, THE U OF I SYSTEM REQUESTS **\$500 MILLION** FOR AFRI; WE ALSO REQUEST **\$500 MILLION FOR THE RESEARCH FACILITIES ACT.**

We also support [APLU's requests.](#)

AFRI
<b>FY2025</b> = \$445.2M
<b>FY2024</b> = \$445.2M
<b>FY2023</b> = \$455M
<b>FY2022</b> = \$445M
<b>FY2021</b> = \$435M

**Appropriations Bill:** Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

**Agency:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture

## Questions? Contact:

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## USDA ALLOCATIONS/AWARDS, FY 2023

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Account	Amount
Hatch Act (Research & Education Programs)	\$7.3M
Smith-Lever 3(b)-(c) (Extension Activities)	\$10.4M
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) (Research & Education Programs)	\$13.7M
Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)	\$2.2M
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)(Extension + UIC)	\$19M

UIUC maintains a robust and dynamic partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). UIUC's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) and the Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station are critical components of the state's ag research and educational infrastructure. Hatch Act and related formula funds enhance capacity for applied science in Illinois, benefiting areas such as plant genetics and photosynthesis, soil and water conservation, animal performance, and strategies for human health and nutrition. The USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) provides competitive research programs that drive discovery and innovation in ACES and other campus units.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) also supports [Illinois Extension](#), whose educator network spans all 102 Illinois counties, delivering evidence-based outreach and engagement programs in five key areas: community, economy, environment, food, and health. NIFA provides capacity to Extension through Smith-Lever 3(b) & (c) support.

More than \$7M in competitive USDA funding to the College of Veterinary Medicine advances agricultural animal health through basic and applied research into disease prevention and through training programs

that help producers and veterinarians improve biosecurity and productivity on farms.



## USDA-SUPPORTED PROJECTS AT UIUC

### Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture

The **\$20M USDA-funded** Artificial Intelligence for Future Agricultural Resilience, Management, and Sustainability Institute serves as a nexus for multidisciplinary research teams that advance foundational AI and use these advances to address important challenges facing world agriculture. Accomplishments include advancements in computer vision, including applying technology developed for human dance to detect livestock movement; improvements in small robot navigation in corn and soybean fields; as well as many developments in AI algorithms. The project continues to serve and receive input from diverse stakeholder groups.

## Farmer Mental Health

Agricultural producers in the North Central region experience anxiety, depression, substance use, and death by suicide at disproportionately higher rates than the general population. Through a [\\$7.2M grant from USDA-NIFA](#), which was recently renewed, ACES researchers and Extension specialists formed the North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center to create and expand stress management and mental health resources and services. The Center provides professional interventions, has received over 20,000 calls on a telephone hotline, and has trained and provided resources for 18,000 producers and those who support them.

## Creating Food Oases in Urban Ecosystems

USDA helps College of ACES and Illinois Extension support urban farmers in Illinois. Researchers received a [\\$975K USDA-NIFA grant](#) to integrate recent advances in robot hardware design, vision-based perception, autonomous navigation, and manipulation towards automating high tunnel operations such as harvesting, pruning and pest management thereby achieving sustainable increases in yield and profitability. Extension professionals are engaging with urban and minority farmers in Illinois and Alabama to assess the economic implications that accompany the increase in yield and identify barriers to adoption.

## Animal Health

UIUC's College of Veterinary Medicine has more than \$7M in competitive USDA funding to support animal health research. These projects are focused on vaccine development and understanding the pathogenesis and transmission of agricultural animal diseases. For instance:

- Supporting the beef, pork and poultry industries by developing vaccines to fight important viral diseases, developing new ways to detect and monitor for disease threats, and preparing producers and veterinarians to respond in case of a disease outbreak.
- Fighting global hunger with novel approaches to reduce the impact of key livestock parasites.
- Delivering high-quality online learning focused on animal-disease training and other needs of rural veterinary practitioners and students, so these professionals can partner with producers to ensure on-farm biosecurity

and increase productivity and efficiency.

## Optimizing Fermented Foods to Improve Human Immune Function

UIUC researchers received a \$638K AFRI award from USDA NIFA to study bioactive metabolites in fermented foods, that may be optimized to support a healthy gut microbiome and promote anti-inflammatory activity in humans. The grant contributes to the Personalized Nutrition Initiative, aimed at optimizing health and quality of life through nutrition – an interdisciplinary partnership that includes the College of ACES and the Carl R. Woese Institute of Genomic Biology.



## Regenerative "Farm of the Future"

UIUC received a [\\$3.9M USDA-NIFA grant](#) to establish an 80 acre farm testing regenerative approaches to corn, soybean, and livestock production. Researchers with the university's Center for Digital Agriculture, National Center for Supercomputing Applications, and Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment will leverage digital tools including precision farming, remote sensing, autonomous robotic management, and AI to accelerate new practices and management technologies that are more sustainable, profitable, affordable, and scale-neutral.

## Insulin from Cow's Milk

In an exciting proof-of-concept study supported by NIFA's Multistate Research Fund, ACES researchers and Brazilian collaborators [created a transgenic cow capable of producing human insulin in her milk](#). The cow produced human proinsulin – an insulin precursor – and insulin at highly promising rates. The researchers envision a 100-head herd one day providing all the insulin needed for the country. System refinement and FDA approval would be needed before

transgenic cows could supply insulin, but the advancement could herald a new era in insulin production, eliminating drug scarcity and high costs for people living with diabetes.

## Innovative Cover Cropping Project

Cover cropping benefits farmers and the environment. ACES researchers received nearly \$5M from USDA to address obstacles to adoption. The [iCOVER project](#) utilizes autonomous technologies to reduce the cost and labor of cover crop planting and to enable low-cost soil measurements. The team plans to scale up robotic cover-crop planting from 1,000 to 20,000 acres over four years, bringing the cost to less than \$10 per acre.

## IMPACTS OF THE ILLINOIS SNAP-ED AND EFNEP INVESTMENTS

University of Illinois Extension and UIC leveraged \$19M of total investment in Illinois' 2024 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) to improve food access, promote healthy food choices, and help Illinois families save money. SNAP-Ed partnered with organizations across Illinois to deliver more than 33,000 nutrition education programs, and reached over 2 million Illinois residents through face to face classes, newsletters, and outreach assistance. SNAP-Ed also helped partners and communities acquire grant and donor funds to expand food access and health in priority areas. A recent three-year return-on-investment study estimated broad societal and economic value of the Illinois SNAP-Ed program. Results estimate that a single year of IL SNAP-Ed programming generates a total societal value of between \$76.0 million and \$135.3 million dollars. View the full report on the [Illinois SNAP-Ed Impacts page](#).

Using the \$2.2M Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) investment, University of Illinois Extension continues to deliver in-depth nutrition, physical activity, and food buying educational programming to diverse audiences having limited incomes. More than 235,000 contacts were made in FY24 through EFNEP. Through virtual and in-person programs, 96% of adults reported making healthier food choices after participating in the EFNEP program and 91% of youth improved their knowledge or abilities to choose foods according to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.



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