



The Honorable Stephen Censky
Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

March 27, 2019

Re: American Sheep Industry Association Comments to FR Doc. 2019-05132

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 2018 Research, Education, and Economics Farm Bill Implementation Listening Session. Since 1865, ASI has been the national trade organization representing the interests of nearly 90,000 sheep ranchers located throughout the country who produce America's lamb and wool. ASI is a federation of forty-five state sheep associations representing a diverse industry.

ASI thanks the administration and deputy Under Secretary Hutchins for news that the President's FY 2020 budget does not contain any negative sentiment toward the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station. The Sheep Industry relies on the research conducted at the Sheep Station and fully supports that facility as we have for over a century.

Since its founding, the station has accumulated over 100 years of grazing, vegetation, fire, and climate data and an unparalleled 50 years of historical sage grouse rangeland data. There is no other facility in the country that has access to the living laboratory conditions of the Sheep Station, which positions it as a leader in the effort to address serious and growing national policy issues regarding wildfire, rangeland health, grazing management and domestic and wildlife interactions.

The U.S. sheep industry has unique opportunities for growth, while addressing competitive and environmental challenges. Recent environmental litigation is limiting or prohibiting access to traditional western grazing resources for many sheep producers. Since its inception, the Station's scientists have demonstrated that improvements can be made in sheep production, via improved genetics and land management practices.

The USDA, Agricultural Research Service Grand Challenge calls for a transformation in U.S. agriculture that results in 20% more quality products, with a 20% reduction in environmental resource impacts by 2025. The ARS Grand Challenge is entirely possible for the U.S. sheep industry. In fact, accomplishing such a challenge is essential for the industry to remain globally competitive. Therefore, the Station's current research program is based on the premise that improvements in sheep production should also benefit forest and rangeland ecosystems; and with the addition of staff allowed by the removal from the closure list we believe we can accomplish that goal.

ASI also supports the National Institutes of Food and Agriculture and their role in ensuring access to critical minor use and minor species technology research through the Minor Use Animal Drug Program, formerly NRSP 7. The sheep industry relies on new and developing

technologies to address issues with foot rot, parasites and various other animal health challenges. Often, sheep producers do not have access to the same technologies as our competitors in other developed countries due to the challenges of drug approval in the United States. The Minor Use Animal Drug Program has been very effective in helping overcome these challenges and ensure access to identify animal technology needs, disseminate data for safe application and facilitate FDA/CVM approvals. The Farm Bill provides up to \$5 million per year for animal health technology development and ASI strongly supports an annual allocation to NIFA.

The American Sheep Industry looks forward to working with you and the administration to maintain the U.S. Sheep Station's role as a jewel in the Agricultural Research system and continue to support the role of NIFA.