

Proposed Federal Grant Rule Threatens Agricultural Innovation and Grower Competitiveness

OMB proposal would change U.S. government research funding, including the crop, pest, and soil science behind American farming. Public comments close July 13.

SAINT PAUL, MN, UNITED STATES, June 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A sweeping federal proposal that would change how the U.S. government awards research grants could disrupt the agricultural science that underpins American farming. With a public

comment deadline of July 13, the public has a narrow window to weigh in on a decision that could directly affect U.S. agriculture's productivity, profitability, and long-term competitiveness.

On May 29, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a [412-page proposed rule](#) rewriting the federal "Uniform Guidance," the common rulebook that governs how every federal agency, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), awards and oversees grant funding. The proposal revises more than 320 provisions and, if finalized, would take effect October 1, 2026.

The USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) distributes more than \$1.5 billion in federal funding each year to universities for agricultural research, the bulk of which goes to land-grant universities. These institutions develop disease-resistant crop varieties, pest-and pathogen-management tools, and the soil and yield science that farmers depend on every season. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, every \$1 invested in public agricultural research returns approximately \$20 in benefits to the U.S. economy. The inability to rely on these funds will threaten vital advancements in soil health, input efficiency, and crop productivity while hindering economic gains for our nation.

Key Provisions Raising Concern

Two changes have drawn particular attention from stakeholders across agriculture.



- Reduced role of scientific peer review: Independent expert review, the decades-old system of subject-matter experts judging proposals on merit, would shift from a decision-making role to an advisory function with final authority moving to political appointees.
- Expanded grant cancellation authority: Federal agencies would gain broad authority to terminate grants for research projects already underway as federal priorities shift, even when the research is meeting its goals. These changes introduce significant uncertainty into long-term research investments, such as plant-breeding programs and multi-year field trials. Disruptions could delay or derail innovations that producers rely on to remain competitive with significant loss of data, plant material, and funding.

These changes reach past federal dollars: commodity boards invest growers' own money in research that is often leveraged with federal grants, so a cancelled grant, or a merit review overridden by political appointees, puts that grower investment at risk alongside the public one.

"When a project is cut halfway through, we don't just lose a study; we lose the answers to growers' questions that we were counting on addressing for the next seasons," said Lindsey du Toit, professor and chair of the Department of Plant Pathology at Washington State University. "Growers need to know this is happening, and that there's a short window to be heard."

The rule would also tighten limits on international research collaboration. Scientists depend on global cooperation for early warning and a rapid response to emerging threats as destructive crop pests and plant diseases move easily across borders. Additional provisions would restrict federal grant support for scientific publishing costs and conference attendance, limiting the transfer of new agricultural knowledge to Extension agents, growers, and the wider scientific community.

"Farmers count on research being judged by whether it works in the field, not by who happens to be in office," said Carolee Bull, president of The American Phytopathological Society (APS). "Peer review is how we make sure public dollars support science most likely to protect crops and yields".

This OMB proposal signifies a historical shift in the way the U.S. funds research and promotes scientific discovery for agriculture and beyond.

To Participate, Stakeholders Must Engage by July 13

- [Submit comments to OMB via Regulations.gov](#) (Docket OMB-2026-0034): Highlight specific examples of how research impacts commodity groups, growers, and regional economies.
- Engage your Congressional delegation: Share how federally funded agricultural research supports producers in your state and the risks posed by the proposed changes.
- Coordinate with peer organizations: Align messaging to amplify the collective voice of U.S. agriculture.

Act Before the Deadline: 11:59 p.m. EDT on July 13, 2026.

Early engagement helps ensure your specific priorities are reflected in coalition efforts and policy discussions to final rule-making.

The American Phytopathological Society (APS) is a non-profit, professional organization of 3,600 plant pathology scientists and practitioners working to safeguard agriculture. www.apsnet.org

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