



College of Agricultural, Consumer  
and Environmental Sciences

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National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Board  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 332A  
Jamie L. Whitten Building, Mail Stop 0321  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250-0321

Dear NAREE Advisory Board,

I am a Senior Research Assistant working at NMSU's Sustainable Agriculture Science Center (SASC) at Alcalde, NM. My research focus is on healthy soils in agriculture, with an emphasis on understanding the role of soil microbes and plant/microbe interactions with respect to improving soil health. In 2019, the New Mexico State Legislature passed the NM Healthy Soils Act, which provides funding to farmers, ranchers, and landowners across the state to 1) implement projects that utilize soil health principles to improve soil fertility on their lands; and 2) fund outreach and education projects which promote soil health principles.

Soil Health Principles include: minimize disturbance (tillage); maximize biodiversity; maintain a living root in the ground; keep the soil covered (avoid bare fallow); and integrate animals into the landscape.

Concurrently, we at the SASC have applied for a WSARE Research and Education grant which, if funded, would allow us to provide farmers the tools, techniques, and reliable data on how to implement soil health principles in New Mexico. This is an example of how federal (WSARE) and state (NM Healthy Soils Act) dollars can be combined and leveraged to provide actual, on-the-ground change to move the state forward in its goals to improve soil fertility and function. Without the scientific research that WSARE provides, farmers must use trial and error to figure out how to improve soil health. Without the state funding, the research and information is less likely to reach a broader, public audience. In New Mexico, we have an incredible opportunity to seize the interest and desire from farmers to implement change on their lands and give them the tools on what works (as well as what doesn't) so that they can be successful at improving soil health and farm profitability.

This is why I urge you to consider strengthening investment in research by increasing funding for public agricultural research, available through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to \$1 billion by 2024. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Larsen', written in a cursive style.

Amy Larsen