

April 15, 2022

Spring is a time of excitement and anticipation in agriculture – the blooming of flowers, the planting of crops, the birth of new generations of livestock and wildlife. It is also the time when the Louisiana legislature reviews requests and appropriates revenues. This year is especially important as the State of Louisiana projects a surplus for FY '22 and increased revenues in FY '23.

The Governor's office has asked for increased funding for higher education, including the LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture. As we visit with our state representatives and senators, we have 3 priorities:

1. A 3% pay raise for faculty and staff;
2. Funding of 39 new positions in the cooperative extension service; and
3. Upgrading field and laboratory equipment, with an emphasis on new equipment for precision agriculture.

Our current salary structure is below the southern regional average, making it difficult for us to both retain and recruit top talent.

Each year, agents of the Cooperative Extension Service demonstrate best practices in agriculture and natural resources, and in family and consumer sciences. They support over 150,000 youth through our 4-H programs. Many of our agents are responsible for multiple parishes, limiting available time for all. Additionally, we need to add specialists to support poultry, crawfish, and urban youth development, among others.

Aging equipment in the fields and laboratories places us at a competitive disadvantage for research grants and students and creates challenges in teaching new technologies to producers across the state.

While we do not rely solely on state government to solve these problems, they are our primary funding source. We would appreciate the help of our alumni and producers, our commodity groups and agricultural associations, and our agribusiness partners in communicating our priorities to state senators and representatives. We will be provide the supporting details to help the LSU AgCenter and LSU College of Agriculture deliver our mission of research, extension, and teaching for the citizens of Louisiana.

Luke Laborde, PhD  
Interim Vice President for Agriculture and  
Dean of the College of Agriculture