

# End Animal Tests Funded by Agricultural ‘Checkoff’ Programs

APRIL 2023

Twelve of the 21 agricultural research and promotion (R&P) boards, or “checkoffs,” overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service are compelling farmers; agricultural producers, handlers, processors, and importers; and others to fund cruel experiments on animals through their checkoff fees. The tests, used in attempts to bolster human health claims in order to market agricultural products, are entirely unnecessary.

## Agricultural Animal Tests Are Cruel and Unscientific

In tests funded by R&P boards and published between 2015 and 2019, more than 2,600 animals were poisoned, force-fed, starved, irradiated, doused, bled, suffocated, beheaded, and/or dissected.<sup>1</sup> Given that there are drastic physiological differences between species, the results of these tests on animals don’t apply to humans.

## Farmers Are Unfairly ‘Taxed’ for the Animal Tests

The funding for these animal tests comes from mandatory assessment fees paid by farmers, who could face penalties of up to \$10,000 if they fail to comply,<sup>2</sup> effectively serving as a draconian “tax” on struggling farming communities. The U.S. Government Accountability Office reports that in 2016, USDA assessment fees totaled over \$885 million,<sup>3</sup> part of which was used to fund cruel animal tests for marketing agricultural products. F.A.R.M.S.<sup>4</sup> and Farms to Grow,<sup>5</sup> national advocacy groups for Black farmers, have urged the USDA to end these tests on animals. F.A.R.M.S. wrote, “Many farmers in today’s economy are struggling. They don’t need barbaric tests on animals to sell their agricultural commodities. Rather, they need economic relief from inflated assessment fees that are wasted on worthless experiments on animals. We are firmly against taxing farmers to fund needless and senseless animal tests.”

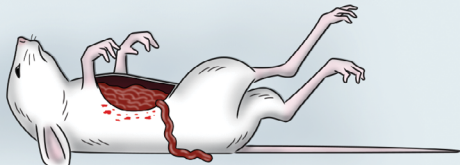
## These Animal Tests Are Not Required by Law

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and other agencies around the globe do not require animal tests or accept animal data as standalone evidence for establishing health claims for foods. Animal tests are not “vital to the welfare of persons engaged in the production, marketing, and consumption of such commodities, as well as to the general economy of the United States,” which is the congressional intent of the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996.

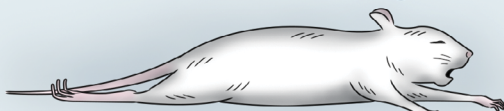
**Farmers are forced to fund cruel tests in which animals are**



**beheaded for blueberries,**



**mutilated for mangoes,**



**and suffocated for soy.**

PETA

## Superior, Affordable, Human-Relevant Tests Can Replace Animal Tests

The agricultural products being used in animal tests—including blueberries, mushrooms, and watermelons—have a long history of safe human use. Multiple clinical studies already show the human health effects of these foods. For additional information, researchers could instead conduct safe and effective human trials and implement other advanced, non-animal methods, such as organs-on-a-chip and computer modeling, which would yield human-relevant results. After discussions with PETA, the Hass Avocado Board checkoff adopted a new public policy stating that it “does not support, fund, or conduct animal research.”<sup>6</sup>

### What PETA Is Requesting

Congress should require the USDA to use its regulatory authority, pursuant to the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996, to prohibit R&P boards from using farmers’ assessment fees for animal tests. Please see PETA’s letter to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack.<sup>7</sup>



***For more information, contact George McElwee at [mcelwee@commonwealthstrategic.com](mailto:mcelwee@commonwealthstrategic.com). Thank you.***

<sup>1</sup>PETA. Animal Experiments Funded by the Research and Promotion Boards. December 2020.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Animal-Experiments-Funded-by-the-Research-and-Promotion-Boards.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Sabet M. Understanding the Federal Commodity Checkoff Program. April 2010.

[https://pennstatelaw.psu.edu/file/aglaw/Federal\\_Commodity\\_Checkoff\\_Program\\_Michael\\_Sabet.pdf](https://pennstatelaw.psu.edu/file/aglaw/Federal_Commodity_Checkoff_Program_Michael_Sabet.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>United States Government Accountability Office. Agricultural Promotion Programs. USDA Could Build on Existing Efforts to Further Strengthen Its Oversight. November 2017. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/688519.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Hishaw J. (Letter to Thomas J. Vilsack.) July 7, 2021. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FARMS-to-USDAs-re-checkoff-animal-testing-1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>Myers G. (Letter to Thomas J. Vilsack.) October 28, 2021.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2021-10-28-FTG-to-USDAs-and-checkoffs-re-animal-testing.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>Hass Avocado Board. Research Opportunities. n.d. <https://research.loveonetoday.com/research-opportunities/>

<sup>7</sup>PETA. (Letter to Thomas J. Vilsack.) March 22, 2021. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-PETA-to-USDAs-re-AMS-animal-testing.pdf>