

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
2334 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
2407 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harris, Chairman Heinrich, Ranking Member Bishop, and Ranking Member Hoeven:

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Coalition is composed of research institutions, scientific societies, and other food and agricultural stakeholders. Working together, we advocate for increased investments in AFRI, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) flagship competitive grants program for fundamental and applied research, extension, and education in support of all topics across the food and agricultural enterprise.

For FY 2025, we request an appropriation of no less than \$500 million for the AFRI program. This funding level for the program is needed to invest in crucial areas aimed at addressing our nation's most urgent and pressing food, agriculture, and public health challenges. AFRI-funded research plays a pivotal role in advancing food and agriculture knowledge, innovation, and technology, which are critical for the economic well-being of our farmers, supporting rural communities, protecting limited natural resources, maintaining the overall health and safety of our food supply, and preserving global competitiveness.

Agricultural research enabled by AFRI has a direct impact on producers' bottom lines by providing them with cutting-edge technologies, practices, and information to **enhance productivity, reduce operational costs**, and respond to market opportunities based on consumer demand. Record-high farm production expenses continue to impact growers across the country, putting farm livelihoods and rural communities at risk. In an era of rapidly evolving challenges such as high input costs, climate change, pests and diseases, and market volatility, investing in research becomes imperative for farmers to adapt and thrive in a constantly changing agricultural landscape.

Rural communities heavily rely on agriculture, and the success of our producers and food and agriculture-associated industries directly impacts the economic vitality of these areas. AFRI funding supports research that **strengthens rural economies** by creating new opportunities,

fostering innovation, and ensuring the viability of agriculture as a cornerstone of these communities. **Addressing agricultural workforce needs** remains a persistent challenge, but in addition to farm labor, the food and agricultural sector must fill a broad array of occupations, many of which require a mix of education, training, and experience. AFRI funding also supports the food and ag research workforce to address emerging needs in conservation, crop breeding, precision ag, animal science, nutrition science, and innovative food technology.

AFRI-supported research contributes significantly to **adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change**. By researching practices that minimize the environmental impacts of production, such as precision agriculture and sustainable crop management, AFRI plays a vital role in ensuring the long-term health of our land, water, and ecosystems. Sustainable agriculture practices not only benefit farmers seeking to preserve their land and reduce emissions, but also contributes to a resilient agricultural sector.

Research supported by AFRI contributes to **improved nutrition and food safety**. By investing in research that explores healthier and safer food and agricultural practices and products, we can ensure the well-being of consumers while maintaining the integrity of our food supply chain. AFRI-funded research also plays a vital role in addressing food costs by developing strategies to enhance efficiency in production, reduce waste, and improve distribution systems, ultimately benefiting consumers through more affordable and accessible food options.

In a globalized economy, maintaining competitiveness is crucial. AFRI-funded research **enhances the competitiveness of American agriculture** by fostering innovation and technological advancements. This, in turn, allows our nation to stay at the forefront of food and agricultural production and ensures our ability to meet the growing demands of a global market. As significant agricultural competitors like China, the EU, India, and Brazil continue to increase agricultural R&D investments, the U.S. is in jeopardy of losing its role as a leader in agricultural innovation. With regard to our economic and national security, we want the next generation of agricultural innovations and technologies to originate here in the U.S.

The AFRI Coalition remains committed to our longstanding goal of achieving the \$700 million authorized funding level for AFRI, while maintaining the investment in other vital research, education, and extension programs across NIFA. The coalition strongly believes the increase in AFRI funding should not come at the expense of other competitive and capacity programs. Sustained funding across the food and agricultural research enterprise is needed to ensure our global competitiveness and national security.

Thank you for your support of AFRI and previous efforts to increase AFRI funding. We urge you to invest in our country's future by providing no less than \$500 million for AFRI in FY 2025.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
agInnovation - West
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association

American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Dairy Science Association
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Pulse Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Soybean Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Association of American Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Carbon180
Clean Air Task Force
Colorado State University
Corn Refiners Association
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)
Crop Science Society of America
CropLife America
Earthjustice
Ecological Society of America
Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (ESMC)
Eion
Entomological Society of America
Farm Journal Foundation
FASS-SPC
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)
Friends of the Mississippi River
Institute of Food Technologists (IFT)
International Fresh Produce Association
Land Core
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative
National Association of Plant Breeders
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project
North Central Weed Science Society

Northeastern Weed Science Society
Oregon State University
Organic Seed Alliance
Pet Food Institute
Plant Based Products Council
Purdue University
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Weed Science Society
Spark Climate Solutions
Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council
The Breakthrough Institute
The Good Food Institute
The Nature Conservancy
Union of Concerned Scientists
University of Florida
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Washington State University
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science
World Coffee Research
Zero Food Waste Coalition

cc:

The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Susan Collins
The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro