March 9, 2026

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
1536 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

RE: FY 2027 request for USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)

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

The undersigned research institutions, scientific societies, and agricultural stakeholders respectfully request **$500 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) in FY 2027**. AFRI is USDA's premier competitive grants program that supports merit-based, fundamental and applied research, extension, and education that strengthens U.S. agriculture across crops, livestock, food systems, and rural economies. Increased investment in AFRI is one of the most effective ways Congress can help American producers remain competitive, protect animal health, and grow demand for U.S. products.

In recent years, AFRI funding has experienced reductions even as producers face tighter margins, evolving animal disease threats, and intensified global competition. We therefore urge you to **at least restore funding to the program's highest appropriated level of $455 million for FY27.** Restoring these cuts is essential to maintain the pipeline of innovation needed to keep U.S. agriculture globally competitive.

AFRI-funded research directly supports farmers, ranchers, processors, rural communities, consumers, and the broader U.S. economy. The program addresses challenges such as crop and livestock productivity, supply chain resilience, food safety, nutrition security, soil and water management, invasive weeds, pests and diseases, and workforce development across the food and agriculture system. Importantly, AFRI is also a primary mechanism for advancing research aligned with the new USDA Research and Development Priorities for 2026. **Strong AFRI funding is therefore essential to ensure that USDA can execute these newly articulated national research priorities in partnership with universities, industry, and research institutions.**

AFRI delivers practical results that matter to producers and rural communities, including:

- **Improving farmer profitability through technology and decision tools.** AFRI has supported efforts such as the AI Institute for Future Agricultural Resilience,

Management, and Sustainability (AIFARMS), which aims to develop technologies that help producers improve resilience and long-term profitability while adapting to labor constraints. AFRI also supports research that helps advance regenerative agriculture.

- **Protecting livestock and poultry health from costly disease outbreaks.** AFRI-supported projects include work to improve detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)—including development of more scalable diagnostic approaches for H5/H7 subtypes—and research advancing African swine fever (ASF) detection platforms to strengthen preparedness and response capabilities.
- **Expanding markets by creating new uses and value-added products.** AFRI research helps develop new processes and products that can broaden demand for U.S. grown commodities—such as technologies for producing biobased products and fuels from grains and efforts to develop new food uses, creating additional market pathways for producers.
- **Advancing nutrition to improve public health.** AFRI supports research that improves the nutritional quality, safety, and functionality of foods while helping consumers make healthier choices. This work aligns with growing national interest in improving health outcomes through better diets and prevention-focused strategies, while also expanding market opportunities for U.S. farmers by increasing demand for nutritious, domestically produced foods.

We appreciate your past support for AFRI and for the broader USDA research mission. As Congress works through the FY 2027 appropriations process, we urge you to invest in the future of U.S. agriculture by **striving to provide $500 million for AFRI, but no less than $455 million** to reverse the program's recent funding cuts. These investments are critical for ensuring U.S. leadership in agricultural innovation, economic resilience, and national security.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

2Blades
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
agInnovation North Central
agInnovation Northeast
agInnovation South
agInnovation West
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Dairy Science Association
American Feed Industry Association
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Malting Barley Association
American Meat Science Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Society for Horticultural Science
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
American Veterinary Medical Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Association of 1890 Research Directors
Association of American Universities
Association of Public & Land-grant Universities
Carbon180
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)
Crop Science Society of America
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Extension Committee on Organization and Policy
Farm Journal Foundation
Friends of the Mississippi River
Friends of the US Dairy Forage Research Center
International Fresh Produce Association
Land Core
Maize Genetics Cooperation
Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS)
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals - MI
National Association for Plant Breeding (NAPB)
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council of America
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
North American Plant Phenotyping Network (NAPPN)
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Pet Food Institute
Resource Renewal Institute
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Society of Weed Science
Spark Climate Solutions
Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council
The Breakthrough Institute
The Good Food Institute
Union of Concerned Scientists
University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences

USA Pulses
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science
World Coffee Research