

April 6, 2020

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chair Shelby, and Ranking Member Leahy:

We are writing to urge your support of the newly-announced goal of the USDA Innovation Agenda--to stimulate innovation to substantially increase production while simultaneously cutting the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture—by providing the highest possible FY 21 allocation for the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees. We appreciate the constraints that you are working under to provide an emergency relief package to people and stimulus to the U.S. economy in the face of the coronavirus pandemic and ask that you consider this long-term priority.

Strong funding for the Agriculture appropriations bill, including in particular its research, education, extension, and economics programs, is a critical step toward meeting the Innovation Agenda goal and the United States reclaiming its global lead in food and agricultural science and technology. A renewed common commitment to advances in agriculture, food and nutrition, natural resources, and environmental sciences is required to improve national security, competitiveness, sustainability, climate resilience, and public health. We believe securing these interests and reaching this goal cannot be achieved absent a very substantial increase in public funding for food and agricultural research, education, extension, and economics.

With relatively stagnant public funding over many decades, the U.S. fell behind China in public agricultural research in 2009 and is now less than half of Chinese investment.¹ The U.S. also lags behind Western Europe and the Pacific Rim countries.² This funding lag in public R&D investment has long-term implications for America's food security,

¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2016/november/us-agricultural-rd-in-an-era-of-falling-public-funding/>

² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2016/november/us-agricultural-rd-in-an-era-of-falling-public-funding/>

farmers' incomes, economic growth and resilience of the food and agricultural sector which accounts for 11 percent of total U.S. employment.³

We appreciate the constraints you face this second year of a two-year budget agreement but urge you to do as much as possible now to achieve a down payment on the major reinvestment needed in public food and agricultural research. We then urge you to help lead efforts next year to secure a long-term budget deal that includes a major rededication to this cause of returning the U.S. to its leadership role and positioning food and agricultural science to help solve major societal challenges with respect to economic opportunity, community wellbeing, health, and the environment.

We endorse a balanced portfolio that includes both extramural and intramural research, competitive and capacity funding, extension and outreach, and statistics and economics. While each organization may have its particular research emphases and priorities, we join together in this appeal in appreciation of the urgent need to move forward on multiple fronts to increase public investment in food and agricultural research.

The federal share of overall R&D spending as a percentage of GDP is now at its lowest point since the 1950s and food and agriculture lags even further behind most other federal R&D areas. The Agriculture appropriations bill is the key vehicle for addressing the agricultural research essential to economic growth, food security, and shared prosperity. We urge you and your colleagues to do everything you can to ensure a sufficient 302(b) allocation for Agriculture. Doing so will allow the Agriculture Subcommittees to support the research investments necessary to meet our nation's challenges and opportunities.

Sincerely,

Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Foundation
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Ag Forward
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Dairy Science Association
American Farmland Trust
American Phytopathological Society
American Seed Trade Association
American Society for Horticultural Science
American Society for Nutrition

³ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/ag-and-food-sectors-and-the-economy/>

American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Soybean Association
American Statistical Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Association of American Universities
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
Board on Agriculture Assembly, Association of Public and Land Grant Universities
Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Crop Science Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Eversole Associates
Farm Journal Foundation
FASS
Food Animal Concerns Trust
Institute of Food Technologists
IPM Voice
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
National Associations of State Departments of Agriculture
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Farmers Union
National Pork Producers Council
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Non-Land Grant Agriculture and Renewable Resources Universities

North American Regional Science Council
Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
Soil Science Society of America
Supporters of Agricultural Research
The Breakthrough Institute
Union of Concerned Scientists
U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
Weed Science Society of America
World Wildlife Fund

cc:

Speaker Pelosi
Minority Leader McCarthy
Major Leader McConnell
Minority Leader Schumer

Chair Bishop
Ranking Member Fortenberry
Chair Hoeven
Ranking Member Merkley