April 1, 2025

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

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
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

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

The undersigned research institutions, scientific societies, and agricultural stakeholders, respectfully request no less than $500 million for the USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) in Fiscal Year 2026. AFRI is USDA's premier competitive grants program supporting fundamental and applied research, extension, and education to address the most pressing challenges in food and agriculture.

Food and agriculture research drives innovation that improves agricultural productivity, enhances economic opportunities in rural communities, and ensures the safety and affordability of the nation's food supply. AFRI-funded research has been instrumental in developing solutions to combat emerging threats such as avian influenza, improving livestock and crop resilience to variable weather conditions, and supporting precision agriculture to increase efficiency and sustainability.

With record-high farm production expenses, fluctuating market conditions, and the increasing threats of pests and diseases, AFRI research empowers American farmers and producers with science-based solutions to enhance productivity, lower operational costs, and maintain global competitiveness. Furthermore, AFRI investments foster innovation that strengthens supply chain resilience, improves nutrition security, and supports the agricultural workforce of the future.

To illustrate the impact of AFRI-funded research, consider a recent project aimed at protecting the health and welfare of agricultural animals. In September 2024, the USDA's National Institute

of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) announced an investment of $17.6 million[1] to advance research in this area, including high-priority studies on highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and African swine fever (ASF). This investment supports projects that develop strategies to prevent and control diseases affecting livestock, thereby ensuring a safe and adequate food supply. Such initiatives not only safeguard animal health but also enhance agricultural productivity and food security, demonstrating the critical role of AFRI in addressing pressing challenges in the food and agriculture sector.

AFRI-funded nutrition research also keeps our food supply nutritious and safe and ensures the health of American citizens. The greatest return for federal investment in nutrition research takes place when research is put into practice. Approximately 100 million U.S. adults have obesity, with diet-related diseases, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes, accounting for half of the deaths in the US each year. Government spending, including Medicare and Medicaid, to treat cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes accounted for 54% of the $383.6 billion in health care spending, a 30% increase from 2009 to 2018.[2] Slowing or preventing chronic diseases with nutrition and diet-related efforts will provide improved cost-effective outcomes for Americans, as nutrition research is translated into better human health. Nutrition is a modifiable risk factor for numerous chronic diseases, representing a highly viable approach to reduce adverse health outcomes.

At a time when countries such as China, India, and Brazil are significantly increasing their public agricultural research investments, it is imperative that the United States reinforces its global leadership in food and agricultural innovation. We must maintain strong investments in food and agriculture research today if we hope to adequately address the challenges of tomorrow.

We urge you to invest in the future of American agriculture and food security by providing no less than $500 million for AFRI in FY 2026. Thank you for your past support of AFRI and for considering this request to strengthen our nation's food and agricultural enterprise.

Sincerely,

2Blades
agInnovation
agInnovation North Central
agInnovation Northeast
agInnovation South
agInnovation West
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

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[1] https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/press-releases/usda-invests-176m-protect-health-welfare-agricultural-animals

[2] Government Accountability Office. 2021. Chronic Health Conditions: Federal Strategy Needed to Coordinate Diet Related Efforts. GAO Publication No. 21-593. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-593.pdf.

American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Malting Barley Association
American Meat Science Association
American Phytopathological Society
American Pulse 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
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Association of American Universities
Association of Public & Land-grant Universities
Carbon180
Cereals & Grains Association
Crop Science Societies of America
CropLife America
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Farm Aid
Farm Journal Foundation
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)
Friends of the Mississippi River
Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities
Institute of Food Technologists
International Fresh Produce Association
Land Core
Maine Farmland Trust
Meat Institute
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS)
National Association for Plant Breeding (NAPB)
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Corn Growers Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeast Weed Science Society

Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences
Pet Food Institute
Quapaw Canoe Company
Regenerative Agriculture Coalition
Resource Renewal Institute
RI Food Policy Council
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 Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USDFRC Stakeholder Advisory Committee
VA Association for Biological Farming
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science
World Coffee Research