

April 25, 2022

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

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

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Chairman Bishop, Chairwoman Baldwin, Ranking Member Harris and Ranking Member Hoeven:

The undersigned members of the Friends of the Agricultural Research Service (FARS) Coalition write to thank you for your continued support of the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in FY 2022. As your committees consider Appropriations for the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for Fiscal Year 2023, we respectfully request \$1.90 billion for ARS salaries and expenses. Included in this amount is \$112 million for National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) and \$15 million directed to the new Big Data Initiative.

ARS is USDA's chief scientific in-house research agency supporting research across the full spectrum of food and agriculture at more than 90 research locations across the country. ARS is uniquely positioned to support critical long-term agricultural research across a variety of climates and agricultural settings, including the Long Term Agro-Ecosystem Research (LTAR) sites, the Resilient Economic Agricultural Practices (REAP) sites, and the USDA Climate Hubs. ARS also develops and maintains numerous, agriculturally significant, long-term datasets and is home to the National Agricultural Library, the world's largest collection devoted to agriculture.

ARS research is organized into four National Programs: Animal Production and Protection, Crop Production and Protection, Natural Resources and Sustainable Agricultural Systems, and Nutrition, Food Safety, and Quality. The coordination of research through the National Programs allows teams across multiple ARS locations to develop comprehensive solutions to address agricultural challenges. ARS researchers also collaborate extensively with state colleges and universities, where more than one-third of ARS locations are co-located.

Research of the ARS Animal Production and Protection National Programs improves the health, well-being, and efficiency of livestock, poultry, and aquatic food animals to ensure a productive and safe food supply. Infectious disease modeling is a critical part of preparedness and protection of U.S. livestock. Work by ARS scientists at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center showed that pigs can transmit foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) well before showing signs of sickness. Research such as this provides critical information to help build better models to protect livestock industries from FMD.

The ARS Crop Production and Protection National Programs deliver science-based information, genetic resources, and technologies for increased crop productivity, economically and environmentally sustainable methods of crop production, and crop protection from diseases and pests. USDA's National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) is the guardian of over 600,000 diverse strains of crop plants and their wild relatives. In an era of increasing pest and disease threats and environmental stresses due to climate change, support for NPGS collections to identify beneficial genetic variation takes on even greater urgency.

The ARS Natural Resources and Sustainable Agricultural Systems National Programs develop technologies and strategies that help farmers, ranchers, and other managers effectively steward the diverse agricultural systems across the nation. Precision agriculture combines cutting-edge technology with traditional farming methods to improve the productivity, efficiency, and viability of agriculture. ARS researchers in Auburn, Alabama have developed a unique mobile system that assesses and maps out soil carbon in real time. The data obtained from this new tool helps producers better understand how their land management practices can keep carbon sequestered in the soil rather than releasing it into the atmosphere.

The ARS Nutrition, Food Safety, and Quality National Programs maintain a healthy and safe food supply while improving the economic viability and competitiveness of American agriculture. Strawberries are a valuable crop in the United States, so loss of a small percentage of the crop to damage during postharvest storage is costly to growers and consumers. ARS researchers in Beltsville, Maryland, released and patented 'Keepsake', a new strawberry variety with improved shelf life. The fruits have outstanding flavor, but are also firm and tough enough for commercial handling

Also within the ARS budget we request \$112 million for research operations and management of NBAF in Manhattan, Kansas. This new, state-of-the-art facility, will be a key national asset for the protection of our nation's agriculture and its citizens against the threat and potential impact of serious animal diseases. Once fully operational, NBAF will be the only maximum biocontainment (BSL-4) facility in the U.S. with the capacity to study diseases affecting large livestock. As ARS assumes ownership and operational authority of NBAF, it is vitally important that the agency's account is increased so that the expanded responsibility of this new facility does not come at the expense of ARS's four existing National Programs.

As you work on agriculture appropriations for fiscal year 2023, we urge you to provide no less than \$1.9 billion for ARS salaries and expenses. This level of funding will ensure that ARS can respond to new plant and animal pests and diseases, weather and environmental stresses, and food safety and nutrition security concerns. Thank you for your consideration of our request. The FARS Coalition stands ready to work with you as the process moves forward and answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

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 Phytopathological Society

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
Cereals & Grains Association
Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)
Crop Science Society of America
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Eversole Associates
Farm Journal Foundation
FASS.
International Alliance for Phytobiomes Research
International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium
Montana Grain Growers Association
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Corn Growers Association
National Grange
National Wheat Improvement Committee
North American Craft Maltsters Guild
North American Meat Institute
North American Millers' Association
North Carolina State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Plant Based Products Council
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Society for Range Management
Soil Science Society of America
Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council
Tufts University
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
Weed Science Society of America