

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 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 2024. As your committees consider Appropriations for the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for Fiscal Year 2025, we request \$1.95 billion in total funding for ARS. A robust federal investment in ARS research provides the foundation for a strong, resilient domestic agricultural and food supply chain.

As USDA's chief intramural research agency, ARS supports food and agricultural research at more than 90 research locations across the country. ARS has a strong track record of delivering cutting-edge scientific tools, and innovative solutions for American farmers, producers, consumers, and communities. ARS research is organized into 15 National Programs that span the full spectrum of our food and agricultural system including crops, animals, natural resources, and nutrition and food safety. 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. These partnerships are strengthened through ARS extramural support of research at these institutions.

Support food and agricultural research at ARS is an investment in the nation's food security, economic prosperity, environmental resilience, and overall well-being. ARS research ensures that the food and agriculture sector can adapt, innovate, and thrive in the face of evolving challenges and threats. Research supported by ARS is working to address such issues as preventing wildfires through better forecasting tools, identifying risk factors for plant and animal pests and diseases, protecting pollinator health, developing produce varieties with a longer shelf life, and improving the composition of infant formula just to name a few.

ARS is uniquely positioned to support critical long-term agricultural research across a variety of ecosystems and agricultural settings, including the USDA Climate Hubs and the Long Term Agro-Ecosystem Research (LTAR) sites. ARS also develops and maintains numerous, agriculturally significant, long-term datasets. It is home to the National Agricultural Library, the world's largest publication and data collection devoted to agriculture, and the Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN) which provides data on national collections of animal, microbial, and plant genetic resources important for food and agricultural production.

Investing in ARS will not only benefit our producers, but the knowledge and tools generated through ARS research also contribute to job creation, economic growth, and the long-term health of our rural communities. Discoveries resulting from ARS research have a ripple effect throughout the entire agricultural supply chain, positively impacting every American who relies on a stable and affordable food supply.

As you work on agriculture appropriations for fiscal year 2025, we urge you to provide no less than \$1.95 billion for ARS. By doing so, you will be supporting the growth and resilience of our food and agricultural sector, fostering innovation, and supporting the future of American producers and consumers alike. The FARS Coalition stands ready to work with you as the process moves forward and answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Malting Barley Association
American Phytopathological Society
American Pulse Association
American Seed Trade Association
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
Carbon180
Cereals & Grains Association
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
International Fresh Produce Association
Meat Institute
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative
National Association of Plant Breeders
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Sunflower Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Oregon State University
Pet Food Institute
Plant Based Products Council
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Weed Science Society
Spark Climate Solutions
Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation
The Breakthrough Institute
The Good Food Institute
The Nature Conservancy
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
Washington State University
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science

cc:

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

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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

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

As your Committees consider Appropriations for the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for FY2025, the undersigned organizations, companies, and institutions urge you to provide an investment of \$50 million for the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA).

Advanced research agencies have been effectively deployed in defense, energy, and health to tackle the biggest challenges facing these industries in novel and groundbreaking ways. Established in the 2018 Farm Bill and modeled after successful advanced research agencies like DARPA and ARPA-E, AGARDA will foster research, development, and technology transfer resulting in significant benefits across the U.S. food and agriculture value chain.

The challenges facing agriculture today require bold, forward-thinking solutions. Record-high farm production expenses continue to impact growers across the country, putting farm livelihoods and rural communities at risk. These costs are also felt by consumers through higher food prices and limited availability. Climate change is altering growing conditions, threatening crop yields, and leaving livestock vulnerable to pests and disease. The global population continues to grow, placing increasing pressure on our food production systems. To adequately address these challenges, we must invest in novel research mechanisms and new technologies that prioritize mission-driven innovation and collaboration across disciplines. By providing AGARDA with sufficient funding, Congress can demonstrate its commitment to supporting agriculture as a cornerstone of our economy and a fundamental component of global food security.

While we appreciate the \$1 million in funding for AGARDA over the past several fiscal years, this amount is inadequate to support ARPA-caliber research at USDA. Programs such as DARPA, ARPA-E, and ARPA-H receive substantial funding for defense,

energy, and health research respectively, but the allocation for agricultural research falls short in proportion to its significance. All other ARPA programs received a significant initial investment to properly launch the program and support a portfolio of diverse research projects. Individual projects under ARPA-E's ROOTS¹ and TERRA² programs ranged from \$3-10 million. A typical DARPA project can be tens of millions of dollars. Even as a pilot program, AGARDA must be funded at an appropriate level to support the kinds of high-impact research that can produce transformative results.

While funding AGARDA at \$50 million will give the program the greatest chance at success, we understand the budgetary constraints facing the Congress in FY2025. Therefore we urge the Subcommittee to fund AGARDA at a minimum of \$10 million for FY2025 and strongly urge consideration of fully funding the pilot program. It is critical that AGARDA has the necessary funds to appoint leadership, hire staff and support a sufficient number of projects to show that this research model can produce impactful results. In doing so, we can unlock the potential for groundbreaking innovations that will not only benefit producers and consumers but also ensure the resilience of our agricultural systems and keep U.S. agriculture globally competitive.

The U.S. food and agricultural enterprise is at a crossroads: continue to underinvest in research and innovation or support a robust, diverse public agricultural research enterprise that will transform our agricultural system and maintain U.S. global leadership. AGARDA can be a key component of that future, but we can't wait, the time to invest is now.

As Congress looks for ways to respond to the challenges facing the U.S. food and agricultural system, we urge you to fund AGARDA at \$50 million in FY2025. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Conservation Coalition Action
American Dairy Science Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farmland Trust
American Feed Industry Association
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Phytopathological Society
American Seed Trade Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agronomy

¹ <https://arpa-e.energy.gov/technologies/programs/roots>

² <https://arpa-e.energy.gov/technologies/programs/terra>

American Society of Animal Science
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Soybean Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
Bipartisan Policy Center Action
C3 Action
Cereals & Grains Association
ClearPath Action
Colorado State University
Corn Refiners Association
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)
Crop Science Society of America
CropLife America
E2
Earthjustice
Ecological Society of America
Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative
Eion
Entomological Society of America
Evangelical Environmental Network
Farm Journal Foundation
FASS SPC
FMI - the Food Industry Association
International Fresh Produce Association
Iowa State University
Kansas State University
Meat Institute
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative
National Association of Plant Breeders
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 Wheat Improvement Committee
Natural Resources Defense Council
North American Millers' Association
Pet Food Institute
Plant Based Products Council
Soil Science Society of America
Spark Climate Solutions
Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation
The Breakthrough Institute
The Nature Conservancy
University of Florida
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
Washington State University
Weed Science Society of America

