

March 20, 2019

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
U.S. House of Representatives
2407 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
U.S. Senate
338 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
U.S. House of Representatives
1514 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

Thank you for your leadership and past support of agricultural research. We are writing to respectfully request \$445 million in the FY 2020 budget for the USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). This competitive grant program funds science that will help the U.S. build thriving farms and a healthier nation.

The U.S. has lost its position as the top global funder of public agricultural R&D to China, which now spends double that of our nation.ⁱ In the case of AFRI, this lack of funding has translated into support for only a quarter of the projects recommended by the program's peer review panels.

Meanwhile, the challenges facing our nation's producers and consumers are mounting. USDA projected 2019 net-farm income to be half that of 2013.ⁱⁱ Additionally, the 2015 avian flu epidemic that affected more than 50 million U.S. chickens and turkeys resulted in \$879 million in federal spending, a decline in production and exports, and increased costs for farmers.ⁱⁱⁱ

AFRI-funded research addresses the greatest challenges facing agriculture. The program is open to all institutions and supports all facets of agriculture, including advances in animal and plant production, water management, healthier soils, and food safety. It is already making a difference in our fields and markets. For instance, AFRI funding is responsible for fifteen percent of wheat cultivars planted in the U.S. and the first development stages of hypo-allergenic peanuts.

Our nation's best scientists stand ready to deliver the solutions that American agriculture needs. With a \$20 economic return on every \$1 spent, agricultural research is a sound investment.^{iv} Funding AFRI with \$445 million in FY 2020 will support research that strengthens rural economies, improves public health, and enhances our ability to compete in a global economy for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
Agricultural Retailers Association
Alliance of Crop, Soil and Environmental Science Societies
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Dairy Science Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Malting Barley Association
American Phytopathological Society
American Pulse Association
American Society for Horticultural Science
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Soybean Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Association of American Universities
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Brooks Tropicals
Consumer Federation of America
Crop Science Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Farm Journal Foundation
FASS
Idaho-Oregon Fruit and Vegetable Association, Inc.
MBG Marketing
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals Multistate Initiative
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
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 Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Farmers Union
National Pork Producers Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Pollinator Partnership
Poultry Science Association
Restaurant Services, Inc.
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Society for Range Management
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America
Supporters of Agricultural Research Foundation
Union of Concerned Scientists
US Canola Association
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
US Dry Bean Council
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
Western Growers Association

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

ⁱⁱ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-sector-income-finances/highlights-from-the-farm-income-forecast/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/86282/ldpm-282-02.pdf?v=3994> ;

<http://www.choicesmagazine.org/choices-magazine/theme-articles/economic-consequences-of-highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza/government-spending-to-control-highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza>

^{iv} https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/42826/11496_eb10_1.pdf?v=0