

August 28, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Davis
Chairman
House Agriculture Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research
1740 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research
214 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Davis and Ranking Member Grisham,

As organizations concerned about the future of food and agricultural research, we thank you for your leadership and continued support. We also congratulate you on being named to the farm bill conference committee.

As you know, the U.S. has been second to China in total public agricultural research funding since 2008. By 2013, China's spending on public agricultural R&D became nearly double that of the U.S. In fact, the U.S. agricultural research budget has declined in real dollars since 2003 despite being an area of R&D where return on investment is estimated at 20-1.

As such, this farm bill conference represents a critical opportunity to reverse this concerning trend and reassert our nation's global leadership in agricultural research. One of the best ways to start this process is to use the extraordinary tools offered by AFRI to make sure that the best scientists in America can immediately ramp up efforts in these areas.

As you prepare for the work of the conference committee, we recommend acceptance of all the increases in mandatory research funding included in the Senate bill as well as inclusion in the Conference Bill of a one-time boost of mandatory funding for the **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)** as a down payment toward implementation of the research strategy recommendations presented in the July 2018 National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's *Science Breakthroughs to Advance Food and Agricultural Research by 2030* report.

Mandatory funding for AFRI would not only jumpstart science and technology in U.S. agriculture, but also set down an important marker that our nation is ready to restore American competitiveness in agriculture research over the next decade.

We understand in these times of limited government spending, the difficulties you face due to major competing priorities. However, the Foundation of Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) offers a strong precedent for using mandatory funding to invest in research designed to strengthen the future of farming.

Mandatory AFRI funding is taxpayer dollars well spent because it is open on a competitive basis to all comers, including the best scientists at land-grant universities, the 1890s, and other major research universities and institutions in the United States. Additionally, AFRI funds are flexible, focused, and accountable directly to the Secretary and Congress.

This funding will allow agricultural science to maximize public investments in research and enable the United States to maintain its global leadership position in agriculture and protect our national and economic security.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to continuing to work with you in developing a Farm Bill Research Title that serves the vital needs our nation and restores our status as the world leader in agricultural research and innovation.

Sincerely,

- American Society for Nutrition
- American Society of Agronomy
- American Society of Plant Biologists
- Crop Science Society of America
- Noble Research Institute, LLC
- Soil Science Society of America
- Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation

CC: Members of the House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research