

March 11, 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:

As your committees consider Appropriations for the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for Fiscal Year 2023, we respectfully request full funding for the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AgARDA), authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill.

The critical importance of agricultural research funding has never been more clear. Producers across the food and agriculture sector are facing unprecedented challenges: extreme weather events, increased operational costs, and significant supply chain disruptions. One key to addressing these issues is through investing in innovative agricultural research. Funding AgARDA will be instrumental to overcoming the gaps in the stability of the U.S. food system, and it will help the United States maintain a position of global leadership when new challenges emerge.

Modeled after the successes of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), AgARDA will foster research and development that could result in significant benefits across the U.S. food and agriculture value chain. The power of AgARDA lies in its specialized statutory hiring authorities and contracting vehicles, allowing significant achievements to occur more rapidly than in a conventional setting. The successes of other federal high-risk, high-reward research programs have made untold contributions to the U.S. economy. AgARDA is an opportunity to establish a legacy of transformative innovation at USDA, kickstarting new ventures and creating new career opportunities in the agricultural sector.

The agricultural industry has experienced significant losses and economic consequences from infectious disease outbreaks in animals and plants caused by pathogens. The recent detection of African Swine Fever (ASF) in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, has put into sharp focus the continued threat of zoonotic diseases here in the United States. USDA needs novel and flexible research funding mechanisms to adequately prepare for and respond to plant and animal disease outbreaks.

U.S. agricultural systems are also facing real threats from extreme weather events brought on by climate change. At the same time, soil is one of the largest natural carbon reservoirs and an important climate mitigation tool that farmers, ranchers, and foresters are already working to put into action. However, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the full capacity of soil carbon storage. Research supported by AgARDA can advance climate smart tools and technologies to monitor, model, and quantify soil carbon more effectively, allowing landowners to make better data-driven decisions.

Challenges to the food and agricultural supply chain often have the greatest impact on our most vulnerable communities. Mitigating these disruptions, through innovative agricultural research will help ensure a more resilient and equitable food system and have a positive impact on both rural and urban communities.

As Congress looks for ways to combat the health, economic, and climate crises Americans currently face, we urge you to fund the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority pilot at the authorized level of \$50 million. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Dairy Coalition
American Dairy Science Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farmland Trust
American Feed Industry 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
American Veterinary Medical Association
Animal Health Institute
California Citrus Mutual
California Fresh Fruit Association
College of ACES, University of Illinois
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University
Colorado State University
Corn Refiners Association
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)
Crop Science Society of America
Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative
Entomological Society of America
Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy

Farm Journal Foundation
FASS.
Florida Tomato Exchange
Institute of Food Technologists
International Fresh Produce Association
Iowa State University
Kansas State University
Michigan State University AgBioResearch
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Corn Growers Association
National Council on Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
North American Meat Institute
North Central Regional Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Pet Food Institute
Plant Based Products Council
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
SoAR Foundation
Soil Science Society of America
The Breakthrough Institute
University of Florida
Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors

cc:

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Richard Shelby
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
The Honorable Kay Granger