

Sent via E-mail and U.S. Mail
2/12/2016

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman, Agriculture Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building, 2362-A
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr
Ranking Member, Agriculture Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Longworth House Office Building, 1016
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr:

We appreciate your continued leadership demonstrated through additional investment in the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). These funding decisions, in the face of tough budgets, will result in meaningful contributions that benefit all Americans.

We are writing to ask that you continue this investment in agriculture and food research by meeting the president's challenge, which is to fund AFRI fully in fiscal year 2017. This summer marks eight years since the 2008 Farm Bill called for this premier farm science and innovation program to be funded with \$700 million. Now is the time to make that investment in a sector that generates more than \$800 billion in annual economic activity, or roughly 5% of our nation's GDP.

As you know, agricultural research is critically important to solving some of society's greatest challenges, including improving human health, maintaining our global competitiveness and enhancing our national security. In this past year alone, the vulnerability of our food system and the necessity of additional research was put on stark display with an estimated \$3.3 billion in economic losses from a new strain of the avian flu and unprecedented drought in places like California. Yet 2015 also showed the strength of our agricultural research system with the development of vaccines and new products like the allergy-free peanut. These innovative discoveries are just the tip of the iceberg of what agricultural science and technology researchers can deliver with sufficient support.

Even with recent AFRI-funded successes, there is still much ground to cover. Every year, over half of AFRI's research grant proposals rated as "highly innovative" go unfunded due to budget constraints within the agency. In FY 2014, only \$270 million of the \$1.4 billion in projects recommended for funding by AFRI's review panels received support. The need for more federal support is echoed in the December 2012 report from the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST), which urged an additional \$700 million in funding for new agricultural research to combat issues such as food safety, animal diseases, emerging plant pests and the risks associated with drought and flooding. As with numerous National Research Council (NRC) reports since 1963, the PCAST study stressed that this new funding be distributed through a competitive grants program like that embodied by AFRI.

A significant investment matching the president's FY 17 budget proposal is desperately needed to support the best scientists and innovators working in the crucial fields of agriculture. Ultimately, this investment will ensure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive, and it will narrow the gap between current productivity and future anticipated need.

We ask that you give our request careful consideration as you set out to fund the nation's agricultural policy priorities in fiscal year 2017. We realize the difficulty of your task, and we are

confident that increased investment in the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative will prove to be a wise decision now and for the future. We look forward to continued discussion with you throughout the FY17 appropriations process.

Thank you,

The Founding Members & Partners of Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR)

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Society of Agronomy
American Society for Horticultural Science
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Veterinary Medical Association
Consumer Federation of America
Crop Science Society of America
Entomological Society of America
National Coalition for Food & Agriculture Research
National Pork Producers Council
Soil Science Society of America

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