March 11, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-307 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2632-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1514 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Granger and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

Thank you for your continued support for competitive agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). As you meet to consider funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, we urge you to provide funding and include report language to support the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA), authorized in Section 7132 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill).

The domestic agriculture industry faces challenges on several fronts, from changing climates to infectious disease outbreaks to labor shortages. Many of these challenges can be addressed through the targeted acceleration of novel, early stage innovative agricultural research. In several cases, however, this type of research cannot be undertaken by the private sector alone; the federal government must step in to alleviate the technological and financial uncertainties that come with seeking solutions to high-risk, high-reward research questions.

The AGARDA pilot program has the capacity to support a diverse set of research projects, from projects that help automate the harvesting of specialty crops to projects that develop countermeasures to animal and plant diseases. Additionally, the program is allowed special authorities through which USDA can explore creative public-private partnerships and funding avenues to support innovative concepts and potential commercialization.

As Congress strives to support our nation’s farmers and ranchers succeed in the twenty-first century, we request robust funding to support the establishment of the AGARDA pilot program. Additionally, we urge you to include report language that requires USDA to quickly establish and fill the position of Director of AGARDA within the Office of the Chief Scientist. We also request report language that strongly encourages USDA to complete the strategic plan for AGARDA, as directed by Section 7132 of the 2018 Farm Bill.
Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

Rodney Davis
Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne Jr.
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Roger Marshall, M.D.
Member of Congress

Neal P. Dunn, D.M.
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Clay Higgins
Member of Congress

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress
Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress

Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

Salud O. Carbajal  
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Mike Bost  
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Angie Craig  
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Mary Gay Scanlon  
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Susan Wild  
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Jim Costa  
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Peter A. DeFazio  
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André Carson  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
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Mike D. Rogers  
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Peter Welch  
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David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

Trent Kelly  
Member of Congress

Antonio Delgado  
Member of Congress

James Corcoran  
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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
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Susan A. Davis  
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Cheri Bustos
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Dean Phillips
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Ted S. Yoho, D.V.M.
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Abby Finkenauer
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Kurt Schrader
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Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

John Katko
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress