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’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). As you meet to consider funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, we urge you to sustain this critical effort by supporting research, education and extension programs that help to ensure that the United States can remain globally competitive in food and agriculture.

NIFA’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is a vital competitive grants program that focuses on six priority areas outlined by the Farm Bill that include plant and animal health, production and products; food safety, nutrition and health; bioenergy, natural resources and environment; agriculture systems and technology; economics and rural communities. Increased investments in these key areas of research will drive the technological change that is critical to maintaining the United States ability to spur innovation for the future.

In Fiscal Years 2012-2016, the USDA-NIFA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) review process identified $4.9 billion in grants worthy of funding. However, with a limited annual budget, the program could only award $1.3 billion—a quarter of the science that the program’s expert panels deemed worthy. Grants provided by AFRI are important to research institutions of all types, not only providing critical funding to land-grant universities, but also to public non-land-grant universities, private colleges and universities, private research foundations, industry and individuals. Together these entities continue the to achieve the program’s goals of
funding research that protects, secures and improves our food and agriculture and natural resources systems to meet our growing agricultural needs and managing efficient food systems.

Agriculture research only accounts for about 2 percent of federal research and development spending, however the rate of return on these public investments in agricultural research range from 20 to 60 percent. In FY2020, the House-passed appropriations bill included $460 million for AFRI, and ultimately was enacted at $425 million. Considering the President’s FY2021 budget request of $600 million for AFRI, an increase of $175 million above the enacted levels, we respectfully request further robust increases to build on the important work made possible by the Committee's prior support.

Thank you for your leadership in ensuring that the necessary funds to protect animals, crops, and people will continue to be available and that this important research can continue.

Sincerely,

Rodney Davis  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne Jr.  
Member of Congress

Roger Marshall, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

David Scott  
Member of Congress

Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján  
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

Glenn 'GT' Thompson  
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Clay Higgins  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Trent Kelly  
Member of Congress

Antonio Delgado  
Member of Congress

Don Bacon  
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress

Jared Golden  
Member of Congress

Conor Lamb  
Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter  
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress  

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress  

Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress  

Al Green  
Member of Congress  

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress  

Alcee L. Hastings  
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John Garamendi  
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Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress  

Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress  

Austin Scott  
Member of Congress  

Kurt Schrader  
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Tony Cárdenas  
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David Rouzer  
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John Katko  
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Brian Higgins  
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Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress  

Anthony Gonzalez  
Member of Congress  

James Comer  
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Earl Blumenauer  
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Seth Moulton  
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Sam Graves  
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Susan A. Davis  
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Abigail D. Spanberger  
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Mike Levin  
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Debbie Dingell  
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Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee  
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Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress

Michael Guest  
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Darin LaHood  
Member of Congress

Ron Kind  
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Dusty Johnson  
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Lucy McBath  
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Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress

Jim Banks  
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Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress

James R. Baird  
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer  
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Josh Harder  
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Josh Gottheimer  
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Sean Casten  
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Frank Pallone, Jr.  
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Fred Upton  
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Terri A. Sewell  
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Doris Matsui  
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Sean Patrick Maloney  
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Rick Crawford  
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress

Denny Heck  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress
Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

Andy Barr
Member of Congress