

March 23, 2018

The Honorable John Hoeven
U.S. Senate
338 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

We respectfully request \$525 million in the FY 2019 budget for the USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). This program funds the competitive science that is key to solidifying the foundation for America's agricultural greatness.

USDA receives less than 4% of the federal non-defense, research and development (R&D) budget. Meanwhile, in real dollars, federal investment in agriculture research has fallen for over a decade. In the case of AFRI, this has translated into support for less than 1 in 5 of the projects *recommended* by the program's peer review panels. Yet every day brings renewed calls to grow more food with less, improve nutrition as a form of preventative health care, and preserve critical natural resources.

These calls can only be answered if we commit to meaningful investment in agricultural research. AFRI funds all facets of agricultural research, from cutting edge genomics, to precision agriculture, to innovative conservation practices. Funded projects are already making a difference in our fields and markets. For instance, AFRI funding led to the development of hypo-allergenic peanuts as well as fifteen percent of wheat cultivars planted in the U.S.

The bipartisan budget agreement announced in February presents a unique opportunity to reverse the decline in our research funding. And it's not a moment too soon. The U.S. has lost its spot as the top global funder of public agricultural R&D, falling behind China in 2009. Today, the U.S. trails Western Europe and is outspent nearly 2:1 by China.

Our best science and researchers should have every opportunity to succeed so that U.S. agriculture can enjoy greatness for generations to come. Funding AFRI with \$525 million in FY 2019 will strengthen rural economies, public health, and our national security.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Alliance of Crop, Soil and Environmental Science Societies

American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases

American Dairy Science Association

American Farm Bureau Federation

American Feed Industry Association

American Malting Barley Association

American Pulse Association

American Society for Microbiology

American Society for Nutrition

American Society of Agronomy

American Society of Animal Science

American Soybean Association

Brooks Tropicals

Consumer Federation of America

Crop Science Society of America

Entomological Society of America

Farm Journal Foundation

FASS

Global Harvest Initiative

MBG Marketing

Midwest Poultry Consortium

Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals Multistate Initiative

National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance

National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

National Association of Wheat Growers

National Barley Growers Association

National Barley Improvement Committee

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research

National Corn Growers Association

National Sunflower Association

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Pesticide Action Network

Pollinator Partnership

Poultry Science Association

Rural & Agriculture Council of America

Society for Range Management

Soil and Water Conservation Society

Soil Science Society of America

Supporters of Agricultural Research Foundation

Union of Concerned Scientists

US Canola Association

US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee

US Dry Bean Council

USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council

Village Farms International

Western Growers Association

Xerces Society