

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation to be Agriculture Secretary for President Joseph R. Biden.

Thank you for your previous strong support of agricultural research, education, extension, and innovation. With the ongoing battle against COVID-19, efforts to end inequity in our food and agricultural systems, efforts to strengthen that food system in light of the pandemic, and a re-energized focus to address climate change, we strongly urge you to continue that support for increased public investments in agricultural research and development (R&D) programs.

A recent study found that U.S. public agriculture R&D spending from 1910 to 2007 returned, on average, \$17 in benefits for every \$1 invested.¹ Increased funding of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) research and development programs will invest in our rural communities and give our farmers, ranchers, foresters, and producers the tools needed to manage current and future challenges they face, such as crop and livestock pests and diseases, invasive species, financial, and climate change. By providing solutions to help mitigate and adapt to climate change, farmers can be a part of the solution while improving our Nation's food security.

The federal share of overall R&D spending as a percentage of GDP is now at its lowest point since the 1950s, and food and agriculture lags even further behind most other federal R&D areas. Agricultural research funding at the USDA has remained fairly flat over the last fifty years.² In contrast, funding for other Federal research agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, has increased 10- to 20-fold during the same period. Additionally, other countries, including Brazil, China, and India, are investing heavily in agricultural R&D, while the United States is falling behind.³

¹ Baldos, Uris Lantz, Frederi G. Viens, Thomas W. Hertel, and Keith O. Fuglie. R&D Spending, Knowledge Capital, and Agricultural Productivity Growth: A Bayesian Approach. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. July 2018. 101(1): 291–310; <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajae/aay039>.

² <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/>

³ Jahn, Molly. New solutions for a changing climate: The policy imperative for public investment in agriculture R&D. August 2020. https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/report_new-solutions-for-changing-climate_0.pdf. Pages 1, 13.

Recently, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) released an analysis of the impact of the Budget Control Act on R&D funding. They concluded that the overall rate of R&D growth from 1978-2008 was 5.7%, before the Budget Control Act was signed into law.⁴ The White House Office of Management and Budget's historical data shows that R&D programs at the USDA had an overall funding growth rate of 3.5% over the same time period.⁵ AAAS concludes that the "cumulative "lost" federal funding may amount to \$96 billion for basic and applied research, and \$240 billion for total R&D. In other words, if R&D agencies had simply grown at their historical pace, the (annual) R&D budget would today be about \$33 billion or 20% larger."⁶

Increased investment in research, education, extension, and economics programs is a crucial step for the United States to reclaim our global lead in food and agricultural science while meeting the country's nutritional needs and rising to its climate challenges. We strongly support a balanced portfolio that includes both extramural and intramural research, competitive and capacity funding, extension and outreach, and statistics and economics.

While each of our organizations may have a particular research priority, we join together in this urgent call to substantially increase public investment in food and agricultural research and scientific innovation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you to advance science and innovation.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
Agricultural Retailers Association
Alabama Farmers Federation
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Dairy Science Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Mushroom Institute
American Phytopathological Society
American Pulse Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Society for Horticultural Science
American Society for Microbiology

⁴ <https://www.aaas.org/news/budget-control-act-may-have-cost-over-200-billion-federal-rd>

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/historical-tables/>

⁶ <https://www.aaas.org/news/budget-control-act-may-have-cost-over-200-billion-federal-rd>

American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Soybean Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation
Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industries
Association of 1890 Research Directors
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Board on Agriculture Assembly
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Board on Agriculture Assembly Experiment Station Section
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
California Farm Bureau Federation
Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Foundation
Colorado Farm Bureau
Colorado State University
Consumer Federation of America
Corn Refiners Association
Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology
Crop Science Society of America
Delaware Farm Bureau
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Fair Food Network
Farm Journal Foundation
FASS
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Florida International University
Georgia Farm Bureau
Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation
Illinois Farm Bureau
Indiana Farm Bureau
Institute of Food Technologists
Iowa State University
IR-4 Project
Kansas State University
Kentucky Farm Bureau
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
Maine Farm Bureau Association
Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation

Michigan Farm Bureau
Michigan State University, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Mid Atlantic Soybean Association
Missouri Farm Bureau
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative
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 Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Coalition for Food & Agricultural Research
National Corn Growers Association
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Sunflower Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
NC State University
New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation
New Jersey Farm Bureau
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau
New York Farm Bureau
North American Meat Institute
North Carolina Farm Bureau
North Central Regional Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Oregon Association of Nurseries
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Penn State University
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Produce Marketing Association
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Society for Range Management
Soil Science Society of America

South Carolina Farm Bureau
South Dakota Farm Bureau
Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Southern Weed Science Society
Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
Texas A&M AgriLife
The Food Industry Association
The Ohio State University
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Canola Association
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Cattlemen's Association
University of Florida
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Iowa
University of Maine
University of Memphis
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
University of Nevada, Reno
University of North Carolina System
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
Virginia Farm Bureau
Virginia Tech
Washington Farm Bureau
Washington State University
Weed Science Society of America
Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Western Society of Weed Science
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation

CC: Chairs and Ranking Members of the U.S. House of Representatives' and U.S. Senate
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees
Chairs and Ranking Members of the U.S. House of Representatives' and U.S. Senate
Agriculture Committees