

February 23, 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:

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to investing in food and agricultural research through USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). Your support for AFRI is helping to solve the food, agriculture and natural resource challenges facing us.

The undersigned members of the AFRI Coalition, a diverse group of scientific societies and agricultural research advocacy organizations dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of AFRI and the critical research it funds, strongly support fully funding AFRI.

We ask you to endeavor to fund AFRI at \$700 million, the amount authorized by Congress when it was established in the 2008 Farm Bill. This marks an important investment in our nation's future that will pay dividends for years to come.

Food, agriculture and natural resources research has been woefully underfunded over the decades. In the past four years, over 75 percent of AFRI proposals deemed worthy by expert review panels go unfunded due to budget constraints. In FY 2014, only \$270 million of the \$1.1 billion in projects recommended for funding by AFRI's review panels received support, leaving thousands of innovative projects unfunded.

AFRI funds cutting-edge science to meet 21st century challenges in public health, food production, national security and global competitiveness. A fully funded AFRI will also attract the next generation of scientists and advance innovations benefiting all Americans.

AFRI provides funding for the education and training of nearly 2,500 undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral students for careers in the food, agricultural and natural resources sciences. Fully funding AFRI will help close a critical shortfall of graduates in the agricultural sciences. According to a 2015 Purdue University study, graduates in these programs only fill about 60 percent of the expected annual openings in occupations involving food, agriculture, natural resources and environment.

A significant investment in food and agriculture research is needed to address some of our nation's most pressing challenges including human, plant and animal health; crop improvements; emerging plant pest risks and animal disease; drought; food safety and national security.

We urge you to make AFRI funding a priority and look forward to supporting you in this important effort.

Sincerely,

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
American Dairy Science Association
American Phytopathological Society

American Society for Horticultural Science
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Veterinary Medical Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Association of American Universities
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Crop Science Society of America
Entomological Society of America
FASS
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Genetics Society of America
Institute of Food Technologists
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
National Association of Plant Breeders
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Poultry Science Association
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Weed Science Society
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science

cc:

Members of the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies