

April 5, 2024

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
2334 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
2407 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harris, Chairman Heinrich, Ranking Member Bishop, and Ranking Member Hoeven:

As you prepare the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill and Report for FY2025, we write to request your support for including report language that directs the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prioritize research, development, measurement, monitoring, and verification related to enteric methane emission solutions.

Beef and dairy cattle release methane through enteric fermentation—a digestive process in which microbes decompose and ferment food—ultimately accounting for about 27% of the nation’s total methane emissions¹. However, projects to understand, measure, monitor, and reduce enteric methane emissions received less than 2% of the funds that USDA research agencies spend on climate mitigation and less than 0.1% of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s (NIFA) total budget for research programs, according to data through 2021².

As global demand for milk and meat continues to grow and sustainability demands build, equipping U.S. beef and dairy producers with new innovations and technologies will enable them to be more competitive in a global market. Funding for the development of accurate, deployable, and affordable enteric methane solutions and measurement technologies will ultimately empower U.S. producers to address inefficiencies in their production system, assess the effectiveness of changes in livestock management, and estimate emission reductions within their supply chains.

There is a suite of emerging innovations with the potential to reduce enteric methane emissions without reducing beef or dairy production or requiring consumer dietary shifts. For example, vaccines could be developed to target the microorganisms responsible for enteric fermentation, cattle could be bred to have lower emissions, and cattle could be fed dietary additives that reduce enteric methane production. These innovations require continued research and development, as well as lab and field testing for efficacy.

¹<https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/overview-greenhouse-gases#methane>

² <https://thebreakthrough.org/issues/food-agriculture-environment/from-lab-to-farm>

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is well-positioned to scale up agricultural research in this area. As USDA's flagship competitive grants program, AFRI grants have funded several projects related to enteric methane mitigation through its Sustainable Agriculture Systems and Foundational and Applied Science programs. Congress should direct AFRI to continue to fund research on solutions that reduce enteric methane emissions without compromising animal health or productivity.

FY2025 Request

We respectfully request that the Subcommittee provide AFRI with robust funding in FY25 and include the following report language:

Enteric Methane Innovation.—The Committee recognizes the value of public research in supporting innovations that reduce enteric methane. The Committee encourages AFRI to prioritize applications that focus on the advancement of enteric fermentation mitigation solutions, such as cattle feed additives, methane-inhibiting vaccines, breeding for low-methane cattle, and direct-fed microorganisms.

By providing AFRI with robust funding in FY25, Congress will enable researchers to generate new tools and insights to help U.S. producers remain globally competitive, keep food prices low, and empower producers to mitigate climate change while improving their bottom line. These research efforts are critical for developing region-specific enteric methane solutions and will ultimately bolster the long-term profitability and sustainability of the U.S. animal agricultural sector.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Feed Industry Association

American Society for Microbiology

American Society of Animal Science

ArkeaBio

Bipartisan Policy Center Action

Ceres

Clean Air Task Force

Colorado State University AgNext

Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

CowBell Labs

Earthjustice

Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (ESMC)

Environmental Defense Fund

Environmental Working Group

Hoofprint Biome

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

National Milk Producers Federation

National Wildlife Federation

Neutral Foods, Inc.

Rumin8 LLC

Spark Climate Solutions

Texas A&M University

The Breakthrough Institute

UC Davis CLEAR Center