

March 17, 2025

The Honorable Russell Vought  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Michael Kratsios  
Assistant to the President for Science and Technology  
Office of Science and Technology Policy  
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20502

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Director Vought, Mr. Kratsios, and Secretary Rollins,

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the undersigned organizations urge the inclusion of \$10 million for the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AgARDA).

AgARDA was established in the 2018 Farm Bill to support high-risk, high-reward research to address the most far-reaching challenges facing the food and agriculture system. Modeled after the highly successful Department of Defense's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Congress created AgARDA to bring a proven model of transformative research to USDA. AgARDA was designed to accelerate innovative technologies by fostering pioneering research, development, and technology transfer. AgARDA can replicate the success of DARPA in agriculture, a sector that represents a critical component of the U.S. economy and contributes meaningfully to national security.

America's farmers and ranchers are under pressure from animal disease outbreaks, increased production costs, supply chain disruptions, devastating natural disasters, and growing global competition. Consumers are also facing rising food prices. These challenges demand bold, forward-thinking innovations to ensure an abundant, affordable and nutritious food supply. AgARDA's approach to high-risk, high-reward research can help de-risk innovative technologies by funding research which may be too early-stage or technically challenging for private-sector

investment. AgARDA has greater flexibility than other programs within the Research, Education, and Economics mission area to take on higher risk projects with a mission-driven approach. AgARDA would complement and enhance the research at the Agricultural Research Service and under the National Institute of Food and Agriculture competitive and capacity grant programs. In turn, enabling USDA and its partners to bring new technologies and solutions to market more quickly. Without continued innovation, America is at risk of falling behind international competitors like China in biotechnology, AI, and agri-tech innovations.

Despite the promise of AgARDA, it was omitted entirely from the Biden-Harris administration's budget requests for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. AgARDA has received less than \$4 million in funding to date – an amount that is insufficient to support ARPA-caliber research within USDA.

To stand up AgARDA, an initial funding level of \$10 million is essential. This will allow the agency to support a robust set of research initiatives that can deliver impactful innovations, benefiting both producers and consumers – lowering the cost of production, improving productivity and profitability, and bringing much needed relief to consumers who have been saddled with high grocery bills.

By strengthening investments in high-risk, high-reward research we can protect farmers and ranchers, ensure the resiliency of our food system, safeguard our national security, deliver new agricultural innovations and maintain our global leadership in the face of competition from countries like China.

AgARDA has bipartisan, bicameral support in Congress and wide-ranging support from agriculture stakeholders, representing the need for a permanent advanced research program at USDA. We respectfully urge the administration to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring the program reaches its full potential by including no less than \$10 million for AgARDA in the President's FY2026 budget request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Society of Agronomy  
Bipartisan Policy Center Action  
C3 Solutions  
Crop Science Society of America  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Soil Science Society of America  
The Breakthrough Institute