

June 12, 2024

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson  
Chairman  
House Agriculture Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, Chairwoman Stabenow, and Ranking Member Boozman:

The undersigned organizations and institutions are grateful for your tireless and collective efforts to negotiate the next Farm Bill. We appreciate the investments proposed in Title VII of the House *Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024* and the outline for the Senate *Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act of 2024*. As Congress looks ahead to the 2024 election, we encourage you to work together to come to an agreement on a final Farm Bill as soon as possible. As organizations dedicated to building a more sustainable and resilient U.S. agricultural system, we encourage you to increase investments to support agricultural research and innovation programs in the final Farm Bill agreement.

The need for significant increases in investment in public agricultural research has never been greater. Public investment in U.S. agricultural R&D has declined by one-third over the last two decades. As the U.S. continues to underinvest in public agricultural research, spending in China, the European Union, and Brazil has continued to rise. Meanwhile, the U.S.’ insufficient investment in public agricultural research has resulted in tangible consequences for farmers and ranchers. Drought conditions are squeezing producers across the country, from Texas to California, Michigan and beyond; worsening floods across much of the South and Midwest have threatened yields; and pests and disease – including Highly Pathogenic Avian Flu (HPAI), African Swine Fever, and Citrus Greening – are an evolving threat. Fortunately, the key to putting new tools and innovations in the hands of producers to address these growing challenges lies in strong federal investments in a broad suite of research programs at USDA.

We are encouraged to see the following investments made in both the House and Senate proposals, and urge you to maintain or increase these levels of investment in the final Farm Bill agreement:

**Extend the authorization of \$700 million in annual appropriations for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), as included in the House and Senate proposals.** AFRI is USDA’s flagship competitive grant program that supports research on a wide range of critical climate mitigation strategies. AFRI is a critical source of funding for a wide array of institutions, including land-grant colleges and universities. Currently, nearly 60 percent of AFRI proposals

that are deemed worthy by expert review panels go unfunded, simply because not enough funding is available.

**Provide \$50 million in annual mandatory funds for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), as included in the House and Senate proposals.** As USDA's primary competitive research programs dedicated to addressing critical challenges facing organic and transitioning-to-organic producers, OREI supports projects that advance climate mitigation and adaptation goals. Projects have led to meaningful findings related to crop rotation, cover crops, and integrated livestock-crop systems. Currently, less than one-third of OREI proposals are funded.

**Extend the authorization of \$60 million in annual appropriations for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, as included in the House and Senate proposals.** As a regionally-based and outcome-oriented competitive research program, SARE is the only USDA competitive research program that positions farmers and ranchers as the primary investigators and cooperators in sustainable agriculture research and education projects. SARE has supported cutting edge projects on topics such as conservation tillage, crop rotations projects, grazing management, and soil health. Last year, less than half of SARE proposals submitted by farmers and ranchers received funding.

In addition, we urge you to maintain or increase the following Senate-proposed agricultural research investments in the final Farm Bill agreement:

**Authorize \$50 million in annual appropriations for the USDA Climate Hubs, as included in the Senate proposal.** As USDA's chief scientific in-house research agency, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) develops solutions to the highest-priority agricultural problems. ARS supports the Climate Hubs, which develop and deliver science-based, region-specific information and technologies to agricultural producers and natural resource managers to mitigate climate-related risks.

**Provide \$250 million in mandatory funds for the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR), as included in the Senate proposal.** As an independent non-profit funded by the federal government since 2014, FFAR builds research programs in partnership with commodity farm groups, industry, non-profits, universities, and other agricultural stakeholders. FFAR leverages private sector funding to achieve more than a \$1:\$1.40 match for every federal dollar.

Bolstering U.S. investment in agricultural research has never been more important. If the U.S. is to maintain a productive, profitable, and resilient agricultural sector, farmers and ranchers must have access to the best tools, data, and technologies. This will require the U.S. to reaffirm its leadership in funding public agricultural research. We therefore urge you to support the U.S. agricultural enterprise by reauthorizing and increasing funding for the above agricultural research programs in the next Farm Bill.

We thank you for your continued support for agricultural research, science, and innovation. We look forward to working with you on this important effort.

Sincerely,

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association  
American Association of Mycobacterial  
Diseases  
American Association of Veterinary Medical  
Colleges  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Institute of Biological Sciences  
American Society for Horticultural Science  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society for Nutrition  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Animal Science  
Carbon Business Council  
Carbon180  
Carbonaught  
Carbonfuture  
Carbony GmbH  
Cascade Climate  
CEA Alliance  
Ceres  
College of Micronesia Land Grant Program  
Colorado State University AgNext  
Colorado State University College of  
Agricultural Sciences  
Crop Science Society of America  
Ecological Society of America  
Ecosystem Services Market Consortium  
(ESMC)  
Eion  
Enhanced Weathering Alliance  
Entomological Society of America  
Environmental and Energy Study Institute  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Farm Journal Foundation

FASS Science Policy Committee  
Friends of the Mississippi River  
Illinois Stewardship Alliance  
Inari  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Lithos Carbon  
Mati Carbon PBC  
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate  
Initiative  
National Association of Plant Breeders  
National Grange  
National Wheat Improvement Committee  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
New Harvest  
North American Millers' Association  
OpenAir Collective  
Oregon State University  
Resilience Project  
Silica  
Soil and Water Conservation Society  
Soil Science Society of America  
Southern Association of Agricultural  
Experiment Station Directors  
Spark Climate Solutions  
Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council  
Terradot Soil, Inc.  
Texas A&M University  
The Breakthrough Institute  
The Good Food Institute  
The Nature Conservancy  
UC Davis CLEAR Center  
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder  
Committee  
Yard Stick PBC