April 1, 2025

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
1536 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

The undersigned organizations from academia, agriculture, and food stakeholder groups write to thank you for your continued support of the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Fiscal Year 2025. As your committees consider Appropriations for the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for FY2026, we respectfully request $1.877 billion for ARS salaries and expenses, which represents a five percent increase over the FY2025 level. Sustained federal investment in food and agricultural research at ARS provides the foundation for a resilient domestic agricultural supply chain and ensures American farmers remain competitive in global markets.

As USDA's chief intramural research agency, ARS supports research across the full spectrum of food and agriculture at more than 90 research locations across the country. ARS has a proven track record of delivering science-based solutions to critical agricultural challenges facing our Nation and improving the competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience of U.S. agriculture. ARS research is organized into 15 National Programs that address the most pressing needs across our food and agricultural system, from crop and animal production to natural resources, nutrition, and food safety.

Long-term federal investments in agricultural research are essential for addressing complex challenges that require sustained attention and investments. ARS is uniquely positioned to support critical long-term agricultural research across diverse ecosystems and agricultural settings. ARS also plays an invaluable role in partnering with universities and industry to advance science and address emerging issues. More than one-third of ARS locations are co-located at public land-grant universities, fostering collaborations that leverage federal investments and accelerate the delivery of solutions to farmers and consumers. These partnerships are strengthened through ARS extramural support of research at these institutions.

ARS research has repeatedly demonstrated significant return on investment through innovations that lower costs and increase agricultural efficiencies. For example, ARS scientists in Beltsville, Maryland recently developed a new AI-driven technology that efficiently identifies wheat plants resistant to Fusarium head blight, a devastating fungal disease. This innovation speeds up breeding programs and reduces screening costs by approximately 80%, helping farmers access disease-resistant varieties more quickly while saving millions in fungicide applications and crop losses.

In the area of nutrition research, ARS scientists at the Children's Nutrition Research Center in Houston, Texas have developed improved methods for assessing nutrient requirements in children and adolescents. This research has led to more accurate dietary recommendations that optimize children's growth and development while reducing food waste in school meal programs. By precisely identifying nutritional needs, these findings have helped school districts across the country reduce meal program costs by approximately 15% while simultaneously improving nutritional outcomes for millions of children – demonstrating how nutrition research directly benefits both public health and economic efficiency.

Furthermore, ARS develops and maintains numerous agriculturally significant long-term datasets and is home to the National Agricultural Library, the world's largest collection devoted to agriculture. The agency also manages the Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN), which safeguards genetic diversity critical for breeding crops and livestock that can withstand emerging pests, diseases, and environmental stresses.

As you work on agriculture appropriations for FY2026, we urge you to provide no less than $1.877 billion for ARS salaries and expenses. This level of funding will ensure that ARS can respond effectively to new plant and animal pests and diseases, weather and environmental stresses, and food safety and nutrition security concerns. The innovative research supported by this funding helps American farmers produce safe, nutritious food while protecting natural resources for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Our organizations stand ready to work with you as the process moves forward and answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

2Blades
agInnovation North Central
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
Agricultural Utilization Research Institute
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Malting Barley Association
American Meat Science Association

American Phytopathological Society
American Pulse Association
American Seed Trade Association
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 Soybean Association
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Carbon180
Cereals & Grains Association
ClearPath Action
Crop Science Societies of America
CropLife America
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Farm Journal Foundation
Institute of Food Technologists
International Fresh Produce Association
Meat Institute
National Association for Plant Breeding (NAPB)
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Corn Growers Association
National Sunflower Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
North American Millers' Association
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Pet Food Institute
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Weed Science Society
Spark Climate Solutions
Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council
The Breakthrough Institute

The Good Food Institute
The Nature Conservancy
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USDFRC - Stakeholder Advisory Committee
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science
World Coffee Research