

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-226, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-255, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for COVID-19 Relief and Recovery via Agriculture Research, Education, and Extension

Dear Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your extraordinary work in passing the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The legislation provides critical support to Americans as we continue to combat this global pandemic. This crisis underscores the importance of the agricultural sector. Our nation's ongoing commitment—at federal, state, and local levels—to a robust, safe, affordable, and accessible food supply is paramount.

As Congress considers the next supplemental appropriations package, we urge you to provide the necessary resources to our agricultural research, education, and extension system and specifically ask for \$380 million for the USDA *National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)*.ⁱ This request reflects a commitment to agriculture, families, businesses, and communities. It includes **\$300 million of job-saving support for capacity and competitive research**¹ and is consistent with the research community's broader recommendations² across the science agencies. These funds will ensure research crucial to our agriculture and food systems is not lost due to pandemic-related delays and disruptions in data collection. The synergy between research and extension is essential.

The request also supports an **\$80 million request for the Cooperative Extension System** to meet the direct needs of the public related to spread of, and recovery from, COVID-19. Finally, dramatic disruptions to our research talent pipeline, including the facilities and equipment that support it, will require additional support. We are working to identify research, infrastructure, and workforce areas of national importance and share them with Congress.

Supporting Job-saving Supplemental Funding for Research Capacity

Regarding research capacity and competitive programs, we ask that Congress provide at least \$300 million of job-saving supplemental funding for 1) ramp-down and ramp-up costs to close and restart research activities; 2) salaries, benefits, and other costs associated with retaining research, technical, and work-study personnel; 3) research specific to COVID-19; and 4) core facilities supporting NIFA

¹ Hatch and Evans Allen research capacity funding, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), McIntire-Stennis forestry research, Tribal Colleges Research Grants Program (TCRGP) as well as other critical accounts.

² AAU, APLU, AAMC, and ACE COVID-19 Research [Recommendations](#)

research. The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting lab- and field-based research activities. In some cases, this stoppage will create a year or more of delay in critical agricultural research, disrupting the talent pipeline for agri-business and food supply chains.

Supplemental funding will support capacity and competitive grant activities for up to 12 months for existing grantees and institutions managing programs in the Research and Education, Integrated Activities, and Farm Bill Mandatory Accounts. These programs fund high-caliber research through State Agricultural Experiment Stations, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), and other critical research accounts across the U.S. agriculture, food, and natural resource sectors. Supplemental funding is needed to sustain our research and innovative capabilities. These capabilities underpin a highly responsive agriculture enterprise that allows the U.S. to pivot to address emerging threats to the global and domestic food supply, public health, and rural economic development.

Accelerating the United States' Cooperative Extension System Service and Response

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) is part of the 112 land-grant institutions located throughout the nation. Cooperative Extension System educators and agents have built long-lasting and trusted partnerships with individuals, community organizations, and local businesses. There is an increased need to reach people in their homes, making it imperative that Cooperative Extension increase its capability to virtually provide essential programming and engagement services in ways that can effectively reach clientele who have varying degrees of access to adequate broadband.

We request \$80 million for the Cooperative Extension System to meet the direct needs of the public related to the spread of, and recovery from, COVID-19. The funding would be allocated through Smith Lever and 1890s Institution Extension capacity programs, as well as through an ongoing contract for the NIFA New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE). The NTAE provides technical assistance to Extension agents and educators for effective delivery of virtual extension programs including educational and meeting platforms, training on new meeting formats, and customized support for scaling programs. NTAE will provide 1994 tribal colleges with financial support and assistance.

This supplemental funding will enable CES educators and agents to: collaborate with emergency responders; develop innovative educational materials; assist business owners with loans and supply chain options; connect families to information on telemedicine, food, financial health and methods of socialization; support farmers and businesses; provide seniors with support; and work with clientele to be successful during the upcoming recovery period. With enhanced virtual learning capabilities, Cooperative Extension can strengthen its service as an educational and community backbone for individuals, families, farms, businesses, and communities in the coming months and year.

Building Food System Resilience in a Post-Pandemic America

The rapid-moving COVID-19 crisis requires new state agricultural research infrastructure, facilities, and equipment to assist the country in understanding the short- and long-term impacts of the virus on our health, economy, and way of life. Federal investments to stimulate the agricultural research enterprise will be key to accelerating innovation and discovery across our science and economic supply chains and address current challenges while preparing for those yet to come.

Thank you in advance for considering our request.

Sincerely,

National

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Agricultural Stewardship Association
American Association of Family & Consumer Science
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Dairy Science Association
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
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 Soybean Association
APLU Board on Human Sciences
APLU Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching
Aquatic Plan Management Society
Association of American Universities
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Crop Science Society of America
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
FASS
Institute of Food Technologists
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals - Multistate Initiative
National 4-H Council
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
National Association of University Forest Resources Programs
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Onion Association
National Sunflower Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Soil Science Society of America
Supporters of Agricultural Research
Union of Concerned Scientists
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
Weed Science Society of America

Regional

Association of Northeast Extension Directors
North Central Regional Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeast Dairy Producers Association
Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Northeastern Weed Science Society

Northern Pulse Growers Association
Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Southern Weed Science Society
The Association of 1890 Research Directors, Inc.
Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Western Society of Weed Science