

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation to be Agriculture Secretary for President Joseph R. Biden.

Thank you for your previous strong support of agricultural research, education, extension, and innovation. With the ongoing battle against COVID-19, efforts to end inequity in our food and agricultural systems, efforts to strengthen that food system in light of the pandemic, and a re-energized focus to address climate change, we strongly urge you to continue that support for increased public investments in agricultural research and development (R&D) programs.

A recent study found that U.S. public agriculture R&D spending from 1910 to 2007 returned, on average, \$17 in benefits for every \$1 invested.<sup>1</sup> Increased funding of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) research and development programs will invest in our rural communities and give our farmers, ranchers, foresters, and producers the tools needed to manage current and future challenges they face, such as crop and livestock pests and diseases, invasive species, financial, and climate change. By providing solutions to help mitigate and adapt to climate change, farmers can be a part of the solution while improving our Nation's food security.

The federal share of overall R&D spending as a percentage of GDP is now at its lowest point since the 1950s, and food and agriculture lags even further behind most other federal R&D areas. Agricultural research funding at the USDA has remained fairly flat over the last fifty years.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, funding for other Federal research agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, has increased 10- to 20-fold during the same period. Additionally, other countries, including Brazil, China, and India, are investing heavily in agricultural R&D, while the United States is falling behind.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Baldos, Uris Lantz, Frederi G. Viens, Thomas W. Hertel, and Keith O. Fuglie. R&D Spending, Knowledge Capital, and Agricultural Productivity Growth: A Bayesian Approach. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. July 2018. 101(1): 291–310; <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajae/aay039>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/>

<sup>3</sup> Jahn, Molly. New solutions for a changing climate: The policy imperative for public investment in agriculture R&D. August 2020. [https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/report\\_new-solutions-for-changing-climate\\_0.pdf](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/report_new-solutions-for-changing-climate_0.pdf). Pages 1, 13.

Recently, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) released an analysis of the impact of the Budget Control Act on R&D funding. They concluded that the overall rate of R&D growth from 1978-2008 was 5.7%, before the Budget Control Act was signed into law.<sup>4</sup> The White House Office of Management and Budget's historical data shows that R&D programs at the USDA had an overall funding growth rate of 3.5% over the same time period.<sup>5</sup> AAAS concludes that the "cumulative "lost" federal funding may amount to \$96 billion for basic and applied research, and \$240 billion for total R&D. In other words, if R&D agencies had simply grown at their historical pace, the (annual) R&D budget would today be about \$33 billion or 20% larger."<sup>6</sup>

Increased investment in research, education, extension, and economics programs is a crucial step for the United States to reclaim our global lead in food and agricultural science while meeting the country's nutritional needs and rising to its climate challenges. We strongly support a balanced portfolio that includes both extramural and intramural research, competitive and capacity funding, extension and outreach, and statistics and economics.

While each of our organizations may have a particular research priority, we join together in this urgent call to substantially increase public investment in food and agricultural research and scientific innovation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you to advance science and innovation.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association  
Agricultural Retailers Association  
Alabama Farmers Federation  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Feed Industry Association  
American Institute of Biological Sciences  
American Mushroom Institute  
American Phytopathological Society  
American Pulse Association  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Society for Horticultural Science  
American Society for Microbiology

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aaas.org/news/budget-control-act-may-have-cost-over-200-billion-federal-rd>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/historical-tables/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aaas.org/news/budget-control-act-may-have-cost-over-200-billion-federal-rd>

American Society for Nutrition  
American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Animal Science  
American Society of Plant Biologists  
American Soybean Association  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
Aquatic Plant Management Society  
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation  
Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industries  
Association of 1890 Research Directors  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Board on Agriculture Assembly  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Board on Agriculture Assembly Experiment Station Section  
Biotechnology Innovation Organization  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Foundation  
Colorado Farm Bureau  
Colorado State University  
Consumer Federation of America  
Corn Refiners Association  
Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences  
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology  
Crop Science Society of America  
Delaware Farm Bureau  
Ecological Society of America  
Entomological Society of America  
Fair Food Network  
Farm Journal Foundation  
FASS  
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology  
Florida International University  
Georgia Farm Bureau  
Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation  
Illinois Farm Bureau  
Indiana Farm Bureau  
Institute of Food Technologists  
Iowa State University  
IR-4 Project  
Kansas State University  
Kentucky Farm Bureau  
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation  
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center  
Maine Farm Bureau Association  
Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation

Michigan Farm Bureau  
Michigan State University, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Mid Atlantic Soybean Association  
Missouri Farm Bureau  
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative  
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Coalition for Food & Agricultural Research  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Farmers Union  
National Grange  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Sunflower Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
NC State University  
New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation  
New Jersey Farm Bureau  
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau  
New York Farm Bureau  
North American Meat Institute  
North Carolina Farm Bureau  
North Central Regional Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors  
North Central Weed Science Society  
Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors  
Northeastern Weed Science Society  
Oklahoma Farm Bureau  
Oregon Association of Nurseries  
Oregon Cattlemen's Association  
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association  
Oregon Farm Bureau  
Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences  
Organic Farming Research Foundation  
Penn State University  
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau  
Produce Marketing Association  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Society for Range Management  
Soil Science Society of America

South Carolina Farm Bureau  
South Dakota Farm Bureau  
Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors  
Southern Weed Science Society  
Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation  
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation  
Texas A&M AgriLife  
The Food Industry Association  
The Ohio State University  
U.S. Apple Association  
U.S. Canola Association  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
United Fresh Produce Association  
United States Cattlemen's Association  
University of Florida  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
University of Iowa  
University of Maine  
University of Memphis  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
University of Nevada, Reno  
University of North Carolina System  
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture  
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee  
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council  
Virginia Farm Bureau  
Virginia Tech  
Washington Farm Bureau  
Washington State University  
Weed Science Society of America  
Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors  
Western Society of Weed Science  
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation

CC: Chairs and Ranking Members of the U.S. House of Representatives' and U.S. Senate  
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees  
Chairs and Ranking Members of the U.S. House of Representatives' and U.S. Senate  
Agriculture Committees