April 3, 2019

Chairwoman Nita Lowey
Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Kay Granger
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agricultural, Rural Development, FDA, &
Related Agencies
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Jeff Fortenberry
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agricultural, Rural Development, FDA, &
Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Granger and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

Thank you for your previous support for competitive agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). As you meet to consider funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, we urge you to sustain this critical effort. Your leadership will make a difference in helping to ensure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive globally and our country continues to lead the way in food and agriculture innovation.

Since 1948, total U.S. agricultural output more than doubled. Over the same period, the U.S. population also more than doubled. The ability of the farm sector to feed far more people today while using less farmland than six decades ago is attributed to increases in agricultural productivity.

The major driver of growth in agricultural productivity is innovation. Average rates of return to public investments in agricultural research range from 20 to 60 percent.
Investments in public agricultural research are the major factors driving technological change that leads to growth. In the 1940s, almost 40 percent of American research and development spending was focused on agriculture. Today, agriculture research only accounts for 2 percent of federal research and development spending. According to the USDA, total agricultural production has slowed significantly since the turn of the century.

In Fiscal Years 2012-2016, the USDA-NIFA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) review process identified $4.9 billion in grants worthy of funding. However, with a limited annual budget, the program could only award $1.3 billion—about a quarter of the science that the program’s expert panels deemed worthy.

In order to continue the important work made possible by the Committee’s prior support, we request robust funding in FY 2020. The Nation’s economic prosperity and security depend on our dedication to developing innovative, science-based solutions to meet our growing agricultural needs and managing efficient food systems.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We are grateful for your leadership in ensuring that the necessary funds to protect animals, crops, and people will continue to be available.

Sincerely,

Rodney Davis  
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

Dusty Johnson  
Member of Congress
Antonio Delgado  
Member of Congress

Don Bacon  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Sam Graves  
Member of Congress

Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter  
Member of Congress

Anthony Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress

Jared F. Golden  
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress
Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

Darin LaHood
Member of Congress

L. O. C. I.
Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

Mike Bost
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress
Michael Guest  
Member of Congress

Filemón Vela  
Member of Congress

Roger Marshall, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Neal P. Dunn, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Anthony Brindisi  
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress

Jeff Van Drew  
Member of Congress

Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Ralph Abraham, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Xochilt Torres Small  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress
W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

James R. Baird
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Trent Kelly
Member of Congress

Mike D. Rogers
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress
Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress

Sean P. Maloney  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver  
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress

Daniel W. Lipinski  
Member of Congress

Al Green  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

Rick W. Allen  
Member of Congress

Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress

Frank D. Lucas  
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Member of Congress
Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

Andy Barr  
Member of Congress

Kurt Schrader  
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams  
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

David Rouzer  
Member of Congress

Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress

Denny Heck  
Member of Congress

John Katko  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress