

Dear President-Elect Trump:

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Coalition welcomes the opportunity to work with your administration and encourages you to maintain America's leadership in the food and agricultural sciences. Investments in research programs overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are responsible for scientific breakthroughs that benefit Americans daily lives – ensuring a safe, nutritious, affordable and plentiful food supply.

USDA's research, education and economics (REE) mission area includes intermural research conducted by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Extramural research is led by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and includes the flagship Agriculture and Food Research Initiative program.

AFRI is the nation's premier competitive grants program for the food and agricultural sciences. It funds cutting-edge science to meet 21st century challenges in public health, food production, national security and global competitiveness. The program was first created in the 2008 Farm Bill and reauthorized in the 2014 Farm Bill. Nearly a decade later the program has yet to reach its authorized level of \$700 million a year. Congress provided \$350 million in FY 2016.

The AFRI Coalition is a coalition of diverse scientific societies and science advocacy organizations dedicated to highlighting the important role of AFRI in advancing economic and environmental sustainability, enhancing nutrition, promoting health and fostering vibrant rural communities. The AFRI Coalition is united behind fully funding AFRI.

New scientific discoveries fuel the innovation supply chain – boosting U.S. competitiveness, creating jobs and spurring new business and industries. High-tech innovations, products and tools developed by the private sector are underpinned by federally supported research. The great strides in precision agriculture, next generation breeding techniques and advanced sensors would not be possible without this investment in public research. Scientific inquiry is at the heart of our Nation's agricultural system.

Food, agriculture and related industries account for almost \$1 trillion in economic output – 5.7 percent of U.S. GDP. These industries employ nearly 10 percent of the U.S. workforce, providing over 17 million jobs. An additional 58,000 jobs are created annually in the food, agriculture and natural resources industries. America's farms directly employ 2.6 million people and contribute \$177 billion to the U.S. economy. The farm economy contributes to a positive trade balance, expanding the market for U.S. agricultural products. U.S. agricultural exports are valued at \$133 billion.

Fully funding AFRI will help to spur innovation and new technologies that fuel our economy and safeguard our food security. Greater AFRI funding will rapidly accelerate our ability to solve pressing challenges facing agriculture, attract the next generation of scientists and advance innovations benefiting all Americans.

We also urge you to invest in the modern infrastructure needed to do cutting-edge research. Critical research infrastructure on agricultural campuses across the U.S. is deteriorating, harming our ability to conduct 21<sup>st</sup> century research. Failing infrastructure also weakens our capacity to recruit and retain the best and brightest scientists.

US public research capacities remain robust and competitive, but there is a question as to whether our leadership in the food, agriculture and natural resources can be sustained. Federal funding for food and agriculture research has remained flat for over two decades, while developing countries are significantly increasing their investment in research. China's public agricultural research spending surpassed the U.S. in 2009.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure America's agricultural research enterprise remains strong and continues to drive innovation and new technologies.