

Deadline for sign-on is June 26, 2019 at 12 PM ET

Link for organizations: <https://forms.gle/pYfKctKYMetunEcW9>

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Hoeven and Ranking Members Leahy and Merkley:

We, the undersigned stakeholders, are committed to scientific integrity and to growing public funding of food and agricultural research to address pressing global, domestic, and local challenges. We are grateful for the increases you have been able to make for research over the past several years in the agricultural appropriations bill, and we urge you to keep moving forward to revitalize the research budget. We are very concerned, however, that this progress, and indeed the integrity of USDA science, is being undermined by recent administrative decisions.

In light of our commitments to scientific integrity and to enhancing agricultural research funding, commitments we share with you, we urge you to immediately take all steps necessary to support agricultural research by rejecting funding cuts and rejecting the expenditure of funds to relocate the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Economic Research Service (ERS) outside the hub of science and statistical agencies located in the National Capital Region (NCR).

As stakeholders, we know firsthand the importance of scientific research, education, extension, economics, and statistics to our nation's trillion dollar plus agricultural economy. The investments made through USDA's Research, Education and Economics (REE) mission area are essential for American trade, agricultural production, human health and nutrition, innovation, and to complement our nation's broader basic research and statistical investments. As partners who leverage public dollars to achieve solutions to local and global agricultural problems, we do not support severing beneficial ties across science and statistical institutions. We also believe that relocating these agencies with no clear multi-stakeholder engagement plan will have severe short- and long-term effects on investment efficiency and result in unnecessary transaction costs that will undermine the agencies' viability into the future.

Relocating NIFA and ERS will have a significant negative impact on the future role and strength of America's vaunted agricultural research and extension enterprise. The action jeopardizes the efficacy of state, local, private, and non-governmental sector funding for agricultural research and extension, creating a potential economic loss of more than \$26 billion,^{i,ii} and impacting tens of thousands of direct and indirect jobs in every district of every state. Keeping NIFA in NCR is essential for its interactions with the other major research agencies in Washington. Moving it away sends a clear message that agricultural research is not as important as research funded by the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy, the National Institutes of Health, and numerous other major research agencies. Simply put, these actions would needlessly unravel a strong system that provides innumerable benefits to our nation's productivity, profitability, and rural economy and human health.

We note, with alarm, that Congress was not given a cost benefit justification prior to the announcement in August 2018. Additionally, Congress has still not been given a cost benefit analysis that is informed by OMB circular guidance, a detailed budget plan, the Office of the Inspector General report, or a multi-stakeholder plan to provide input on the future of agricultural research and statistics.

We therefore respectfully request that you include bill language stating that no funding be used for relocation or reorganization of ERS and NIFA in FY20. We further urge you to withhold approval of any and all reprogramming requests. We believe a robust congressional response is necessary to uphold the future efficacy of public agricultural research investments.

Sincerely,

ⁱ OECD (2016), *Innovation, Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability in the United States*, OECD Food and Agricultural Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264264120-en>.

ⁱⁱ Alston, J.M. Andersen, J. James, and P.G. Pardey (2011), "The economic returns to US public agricultural research", *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* Vol. 93, pp. 1257–1277. <http://ajae.oxfordjournals.org/content/93/5/1257.abstract>.