

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

As you prepare the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) fiscal year 2026 budget justification, we urge you to prioritize investments in American innovation that will ensure economic security for farmers, ranchers, and foresters and keep them competitive globally. More specifically, we recommend that you prioritize support for critical USDA innovation programs like the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA), the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

In service of its mission, the USDA has long been a global leader in agricultural research and development across disciplines, providing farmers, ranchers, and foresters with the tools needed to maximize productivity by creating solutions to on-farm challenges, including animal diseases, pests, and weather conditions. Over the last 50 years, as a direct result of USDA investments in innovation, U.S. agricultural productivity has tripled. What's more, every USDA innovation dollar spent has generated 20 dollars for the U.S. economy.

Despite this incredible success, American investments in agricultural innovation have declined by one-third over the last 20 years, and China - who is now the world's largest funder of agricultural R&D - has taken the lead. Today, China's investments in these critical technologies approximately double our own. To promote agricultural production and competitiveness, lower food costs, enhance conservation, and ensure rural communities thrive, the United States must regain its leadership in agriculture innovation by recommitting to its essential USDA innovation initiatives.

The first Trump administration recognized the value of USDA innovation programs as evidenced by the 2018 Farm Bill. This bill improved farmer and rancher access to EQIP grants, established AGARDA, a new research program to replicate the success of the Department of Defense's DARPA, and reauthorized the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, a successful public-private partnership. President Trump also strongly supported research, development and deployment of agricultural biotechnology during his first term by signing Executive Order 13874- Modernizing the Regulatory Framework for Agricultural Biotechnology Products.

We look forward to working with you to enhance USDA's innovation programs like AGARDA, ARS, and NIFA that will build on this legacy. To that end, we recommend that the fiscal year 2026 budget justification provide robust funding and targeted program direction to meet these agricultural innovation goals. We stand ready to work with you to refocus USDA's mission on serving farmers, ranchers, and foresters to ensure Americans have the safest, most affordable, and most abundant food supply in the world.

Sincerely,

agInnovation

agInnovation- Northeast

agInnovation- South

agInnovation- West

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association

AgLaunch Initiative

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

American Dairy Science Association

American Institute of Biological Sciences

American Meat Science Association

American Phytopathological Society

American Society of Agronomy

American Society of Animal Science

American Society of Microbiology

American Society of Plant Biologists

American Soybean Association

AmericanHort

Animal Health Institute

American Conservation Coalition Action

Association of 1890 Research Directors, Inc

Association of Equipment Manufacturers

Biotechnology Innovation Organization

C3 Solutions

Cereals & Grains Association

ClearPath Action

Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) Alliance

Crop Science Society of America

Enhanced Weathering Alliance

Farm Journal Foundation

Institute of Food Technologies

Longview Farms

National Barley Improvement Committee

National Coalition for Food and Agriculture

Nature is Nonpartisan

North Carolina State University

Oregon State University

Soil Science Society of America

Spark Climate Solutions

Stillwater Farms

Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council

The Breakthrough Institute

The Fertilizer Institute

University of Florida

World Coffee Research

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