

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 1, 2023

The Honorable Shalanda Young  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20504

Dear Director Young,

We write to ask that as you finalize President Biden's budget request for Fiscal Year 2024 you include robust funding for agricultural research. Public investment in this research has significantly declined in recent decades, allowing other countries to surpass the United States. It is important agricultural research receive funding increases to meet the evolving needs of farmers from a shortage of labor to a changing climate. Investing in research now will ensure the United States is prepared to continue providing food for both our nation and the world.

**Other countries, namely China, have passed the United States in agricultural research and development (R&D).** Our agriculture industry is critical to our nation's economy, accounting for trillions in economic activity, directly supporting 20 million jobs, and indirectly supporting 41 million more.<sup>1</sup> In order to remain competitive globally, and to not fall further behind, we must increase funding levels for research across the board.

**Publicly funded agriculture research has declined by one-third since 2002 when considering inflation and the rising cost of research, despite demonstrated benefits.**<sup>2</sup> There is a long and clear precedent that public investment in agricultural research benefits our country by providing nutritious food and significant economic activity. A study done by the Economic Research Service found that between 1990 to 2011, every \$1 of public agriculture R&D spending resulted in \$20 in benefits for the US economy.<sup>3</sup> The federal government provides most of the public agricultural R&D and for good reason – food security is a national security issue.

**Premiere universities with agriculture programs, including Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture and Land-Grant universities, need more funding opportunities.** The importance of research in agriculture has long been recognized in the United States. Significant public investment in agriculture dates back to the Lincoln Presidency when the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 created the original land-grant universities. The purpose of these universities was to benefit agricultural and mechanical arts. Thankfully, this system has been expanded multiple times including the creation of 1890 and 1994 institutions, which not only increased research capacity but include communities previously excluded. More funding is needed to allow these universities to continue their cutting-edge research.

Congress has also created a strong foundation for intramural and extramural research within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), both of which should receive increases. The primary intramural agencies include the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the Economic Research Service (ERS), and the National

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2022/june/investment-in-u-s-public-agricultural-research-and-development-has-fallen-by-a-third-over-past-two-decades-lags-major-trade-competitors/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R40819.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2022/june/investment-in-u-s-public-agricultural-research-and-development-has-fallen-by-a-third-over-past-two-decades-lags-major-trade-competitors/>

Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). This in house research helps advance the United States' ability to deliver scientific solutions, enhance decision-making, and provide accurate data and the state of agriculture. ARS facilities across the country have deferred needed maintenance to a lack of money and are using out of date equipment. When it comes to ensuring the quality and safety of researching the food we eat, we should not be sparing expenses. These scientists should have access to the facilities they need.

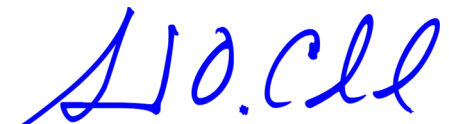
**If funding levels continue to decline the ability of agricultural scientists to discover breakthroughs that allow farmers to provide nutritious foods will be hamstrung.** Extramural research is done primarily through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). NIFA helps advance research by administering grants like the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, capacity building grants for universities, and many more. Extramural and intramural publicly funded research has led to advancements like better seed varieties, more resilient crops, and increased productivity.<sup>4,5</sup> Robust public invest will allow these discoveries to flourish instead of slow.

Farmers need to produce more food each year to meet the national and global demand. Even with the H-2A temporary agricultural program many farmers do not have enough labor and are sometimes forced to let food go bad in the fields. **To meet this need and best utilize our natural resources, we need a larger focus on next-generation research like automation and mechanization technologies.** These technologies should not replace farmworkers, but rather increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their work and raise their quality of life.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AgARDA) at \$50 million a year. This agency would allow high-risk, high-reward research to be funded that would address significant research gaps ranging from climate change resiliency to safer pesticides. Unfortunately, this agency has not received enough funding to begin research and will need to be reauthorized this year. **We hope the importance of an agency like this is recognized and prioritized within the President's Budget.**

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to ensure public investment in agricultural research receives the substantial increase it needs.

Sincerely,




Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usda.gov/topics/research-and-science>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R40819.pdf>



Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



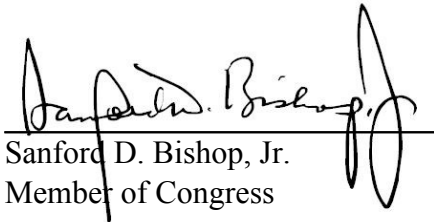
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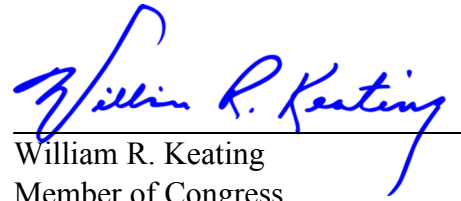
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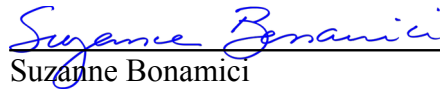
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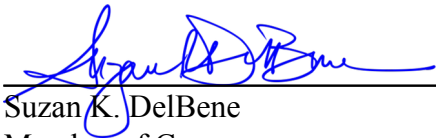
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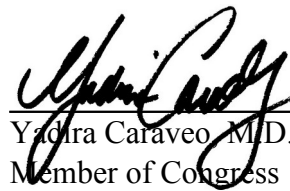
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