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

Thank you for your continued 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) 2021, we urge you to sustain this critical effort by supporting research, education and extension programs that help to ensure that the United States can remain globally competitive in food and agriculture.

NIFA’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is a vital competitive grants program that focuses on six priority areas outlined by the Farm Bill that include plant and animal health, production and products; food safety, nutrition and health; bioenergy, natural resources and environment; agriculture systems and technology; economics and rural communities. Increased investments in these key areas of research will drive the technological change that is critical to maintaining the United States ability to spur innovation for the future.

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. Grants provided by AFRI are important to research institutions of all types, not only providing critical funding to land-grant universities, but also to public non-land-grant universities, private colleges and universities, private research foundations, industry and individuals. Together these entities continue the to achieve the program’s goals of
funding research that protects, secures and improves our food and agriculture and natural resources systems to meet our growing agricultural needs and managing efficient food systems.

Agriculture research only accounts for about 2 percent of federal research and development spending, however the rate of return on these public investments in agricultural research range from 20 to 60 percent. In FY2020, the House-passed appropriations bill included $460 million for AFRI, and ultimately was enacted at $425 million. Considering the President’s FY2021 budget request of $600 million for AFRI, an increase of $175 million above the enacted levels, we respectfully request further robust increases to build on the important work made possible by the Committee’s prior support.

Thank you for your leadership in ensuring that the necessary funds to protect animals, crops, and people will continue to be available and that this important research can continue.

Sincerely,

Rodney Davis  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne Jr.  
Member of Congress

Roger Marshall, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

David Scott  
Member of Congress

Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress
Neal P. Dunn, D.M.  Member of Congress
Ann McLane Kuster  Member of Congress

Chris Pappas  Member of Congress
Tom O'Halleran  Member of Congress

Anthony Brindisi  Member of Congress
Cindy Axne  Member of Congress

Glenn 'GT' Thompson  Member of Congress
Mike Thompson  Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  Member of Congress
Jamie Raskin  Member of Congress

Mark Takano  Member of Congress
Clay Higgins  Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  Member of Congress
Trent Kelly  Member of Congress

Antonio Delgado  Member of Congress
Don Bacon  Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers  Member of Congress
Katie Porter  Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.  Member of Congress
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  Member of Congress
Jared Golden  Member of Congress

Conor Lamb  Member of Congress
Ed Perlmutter  Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos  Member of Congress
Joseph D. Morelle  Member of Congress
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<td>Julia Brownley</td>
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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

Al Green  
Member of Congress

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

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John Garamendi  
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Austin Scott  
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Jerry McNerney  
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Sean Patrick Maloney  
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Member of Congress  

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Frank D. Lucas  
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Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
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Member of Congress  

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress  

Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress  

Denny Heck  
Member of Congress  

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress
Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

Andy Barr
Member of Congress