

September 28, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-222 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U. S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Yarmuth, Chairman
House Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
204-E Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman
Senate Budget Committee
U.S. Senate
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Chairman Sanders and Chairman Yarmuth,

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Coalition thanks you for your leadership during the budget reconciliation process to make transformational investments in agricultural research that will help address our nation's most pressing food and public health challenges, now and in the future.

The AFRI Coalition includes organizations representing research institutions, scientific societies, and other food and agricultural stakeholders. Working together, we advocate for increased investments in AFRI, the nation's leading competitive grants program for agricultural sciences. The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) awards AFRI research, education, and extension grants to improve rural economies, increase food production, stimulate the bioeconomy, mitigate impacts of climate change, address water availability issues, ensure food safety and security, enhance human nutrition, and train the next generation of the agricultural workforce.

The proposed **\$7.75 billion for agricultural research** in the pending budget reconciliation package, **which includes \$500 million in additional funding for AFRI**, is a true game-changer that will put American agriculture in the driver's seat once again to lead the world in global food security and environmental sustainability.

Agricultural research underpins the success of our food production. Small, targeted investments in lean years can support some progress, but decades of stagnant and inadequate publicly funded agricultural research have hindered the nation's ability to address climate change and invasive species mitigation, food safety and security, and rural economic prosperity. What is needed now are long-term investments in integrated, multidisciplinary agricultural research, which will help

farmers meet production challenges while achieving long-term environmental sustainability goals.

There is no doubt that agriculture will face future challenges as a result of a changing climate, including increasingly erratic temperature extremes and rainfall patterns that will exacerbate pest pressures and hinder crop yields. Despite incremental increases in AFRI funding via the annual discretionary appropriations process, roughly 70 percent of AFRI proposals that are deemed worthy by expert review panels go unfunded, simply because of insufficient funding. Robust investment in USDA-supported research is also needed to attract, retain, and develop the next generation of scientists to address increasing pressures on our natural resources and advance innovations benefiting all.

Thus, we strongly support the proposal for **\$7.75 billion for agricultural research** in the budget reconciliation package, **especially the \$500 million for the AFRI program**. This additional funding will help the AFRI competitive grant programs close some of the massive funding gaps that exist for highly ranked agricultural research proposals while supporting more targeted research that builds climate resilience, improves food security and rural economic prosperity, and trains the next generation of the agricultural workforce to help meet these challenges.

Respectfully,

The AFRI Coalition

About the AFRI Coalition: The AFRI Coalition is a coalition of diverse scientific societies and science advocacy organizations dedicated to highlighting the important role of federally-funded agricultural research, including 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.