

January 11, 2024

The Honorable Andy Harris  
Chair  
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
Chair  
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Ranking Member  
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Ranking Member  
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Harris, Chair Heinrich, Ranking Member Bishop, and Ranking Member Hoeven:

As you work to finalize FY 2024 appropriations, the AFRI Coalition and the SoAR Foundation encourage you to support \$460 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) flagship competitive grants program for research, extension, and education in support of our nation's food and agricultural systems.

An investment of \$460 million, a \$5 million increase over FY 2023, will provide critical funding to address our nation's most pressing food, agriculture, and public health challenges. AFRI-funded research ensures our food system is resilient to shocks such as global conflict, supply chain disruptions, disease outbreaks, and extreme weather. Without new investments we will be unprepared for future challenges.

Agricultural advancements rely on a continuous pipeline of innovations. These innovations help farmers and ranchers increase productivity, improve sustainability and resilience, adapt to new pests and diseases, and lower food prices.

While we appreciate the sustained increases in AFRI funding over the years, now is not the time to take our foot off the gas. China's funding has grown to more than \$10 billion – double what the U.S. spends. China is now the world's largest funder of agriculture R&D. The United States is in dire threat of losing its preeminence as a global leader in research and innovation.

Sustained AFRI funding ensures our global competitiveness and national security. Robust investments in AFRI-supported research also attracts, retains, and develops the next generation of scientists to advance innovations benefiting all Americans.

Thank you for your continued support and consistent AFRI funding increases. We urge you to invest in our country's future by providing no less than \$460 million for AFRI in FY 2024.

Sincerely,

AFRI Coalition  
SoAR Foundation