

# Science Policy Office

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## Headline: Ask Congress to support USDA research funding

Members of Congress are currently working on their funding requests for fiscal year (FY) 2022. **Now is the time** for constituents like you to reach out to your members of Congress to help shape their funding priorities. **Tell them to prioritize food, agriculture, and natural resources research programs in the upcoming fiscal year.**

For the past six years, the co-chairs of House Ag Research Caucus, Representatives Jimmy Panetta (CA-D), and Rodney Davis (IL-R) have authored a “Dear Colleague” letter in support of USDA research programs.

The FY2022 letter, asks the House Appropriations Committee to support three USDA research programs:

- The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the competitive grants program within USDA-NIFA.
- The Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AgARDA), a new a pilot program that targets high-risk, high-reward agriculture R&D projects.
- USDA-NIFA capacity programs, including Hatch Act, Smith-Lever, McIntire-Stennis, Evans Allen, 1890 institutions, and 1994 institutions.

Contact your Representative today and ask them to **support food, agriculture, and natural resources research by signing the FY2022 USDA research “Dear Colleague” letter.**

The deadline to sign on to the letters is Monday, April 26, so **we must act now.**

You can make a difference. Be a voice for research and contact your Representative today!

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## Headline: Support USDA Research Funding in FY2022

As a constituent living in your district, I urge you to support robust funding for agriculture research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for FY2022 by co-signing the Ag Research Caucus Dear Colleague letter.

For the past six years, the co-chairs of House Ag Research Caucus, Representatives Jimmy Panetta (CA-20), and Rodney Davis (IL-13) have authored a “Dear Colleague” letter in support of USDA research programs. The FY2022 letter, asks the House Appropriations Chairs and Ranking Members to support three USDA research programs:



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The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the competitive grants program within USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

The Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AgARDA), a new a pilot program that targets high-risk, high-reward agriculture R&D projects.

USDA-NIFA capacity programs, including Hatch Act, Smith-Lever, McIntire-Stennis, Evans Allen, 1890 institutions, and 1994 institutions.

Currently, agricultural research is one of the best investments our government can make, and yet it accounts for a mere 2% of total federal R&D spending. A recent study estimates there is a \$20 return for every one dollar invested in agricultural research through USDA-NIFA.

The need for agricultural research funding is clear: Disease, pests, market volatility, climate variability, labor instability, and water quality are just a handful of challenges which make agriculture an enterprise that relies disproportionately on good science to thrive. A significant investment is desperately needed to support the best scientists and innovators working in the crucial fields of agriculture.

Increased funding for USDA research programs will ensure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive, and it will narrow the gap between current productivity and future anticipated need.

I urge you to join Representatives Panetta and Davis in signing the below letter to House Appropriations Chairs and Ranking Members requesting robust support for these USDA research programs.

If you would like to co-sign the below Ag Research Caucus Appropriations Request letter, please use the following link: <https://forms.gle/2wbTuVgqtQvMoebQA>.

You can also contact Riya Mehta with Representative Jimmy Panetta ([Riya.Mehta@mail.house.gov](mailto:Riya.Mehta@mail.house.gov)) or Janie Costa ([Janie.Costa@mail.house.gov](mailto:Janie.Costa@mail.house.gov)) with Representative Rodney Davis.

Sign-on deadline is Monday, April 26, 2021.

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

Thank you for your continued support for agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). As you meet to consider funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, we urge you to sustain this critical



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effort by supporting several research programs, including the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA), and existing education and extension programs that provide the Department's "people power."

First, we respectfully request further robust increases for NIFA-AFRI, building on the enacted FY 2021 level of \$435 million. AFRI remains the nation's leading competitive grants program for agricultural sciences, and focuses on six priority areas outline by the Farm Bill, including plant and animal health, production and products; food safety, nutrition and health; bioenergy, natural resources and environment; agriculture systems and technology; and economics and rural communities. Increased investment in NIFA-AFRI will drive the technological change that is critical to maintaining the United States' ability to spur innovation for the future.

Historically, only about a quarter of the science that AFRI's expert review panel has deemed worthy for funding has been awarded; increased funds will support research institutions of all types including land-grant, private, public non-land-grant universities, private colleges and universities, along with private research foundations, among others. These funds will bolster such efforts to achieve our goals of protecting, securing and improving our food and agriculture and natural resources systems and help meet our growing agricultural needs and managing efficient food systems.

Additionally, we request that the Committee support the Agricultural Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA), a pilot program authorized in Section 7132 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). We request that the Committee provide at least \$2,000,000 for the purpose of completing research projects within the pilot program, only available upon USDA's completion of the AGARDA Strategic Plan as directed in accompanying report language for the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (P.L. 116-260).

AGARDA will provide an array of benefits from increasing mechanization capabilities for the harvesting of specialty crops, addressing labor needs, developing novel countermeasures to prevent animal and plant diseases, and addressing our changing climate. This type of high-risk, high-reward research requires federal government involvement to alleviate the technological and financial uncertainties to facilitate meaningful solutions. Through AGARDA, USDA can facilitate public-private partnerships and funding avenues to support innovative concepts and potential commercialization that may not be readily available through other programs.

Further, we request the Committee's support in providing increased funding for research, education, and extension activities through NIFA's capacity programs, including Hatch Act, Smith-Lever, McIntire-



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Stennis, Evans Allen, 1890 institutions, and 1994 institutions. These programs provide the essential “people power” that supports our nation’s experiment stations and extension activities that help keep the United States as the global leader of agriculture research and innovation. These programs are crucial to the long-term success of American farmers, ranchers, and foresters.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the resilience of the domestic agriculture industry, but it has also elevated the strategic need for greater investments in agricultural research across the board; we believe that NIFA-AFRI, AGARDA and capacity funding all play key roles in meeting these goals. Thank you for your leadership in recognizing the multiple components of a successful agricultural research agenda for the United States and ensuring that robust funds to protect animals, crops, and people will continue to be available.

Sincerely,

