

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Andy Harris  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2334 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
303 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2407 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

As your Committees consider Appropriations for the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for FY2025, the undersigned organizations, companies, and institutions urge you to provide an investment of \$50 million for the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA).

Advanced research agencies have been effectively deployed in defense, energy, and health to tackle the biggest challenges facing these industries in novel and groundbreaking ways. Established in the 2018 Farm Bill and modeled after successful advanced research agencies like DARPA and ARPA-E, AGARDA will foster research, development, and technology transfer resulting in significant benefits across the U.S. food and agriculture value chain.

The challenges facing agriculture today require bold, forward-thinking solutions. Record-high farm production expenses continue to impact growers across the country, putting farm livelihoods and rural communities at risk. These costs are also felt by consumers through higher food prices and limited availability. Climate change is altering growing conditions, threatening crop yields, and leaving livestock vulnerable to pests and disease. The global population continues to grow, placing increasing pressure on our food production systems. To adequately address these challenges, we must invest in novel research mechanisms and new technologies that prioritize mission-driven innovation and collaboration across disciplines. By providing AGARDA with sufficient funding, Congress can demonstrate its commitment to supporting agriculture as a cornerstone of our economy and a fundamental component of global food security.

While we appreciate the \$1 million in funding for AGARDA over the past several fiscal years, this amount is inadequate to support ARPA-caliber research at USDA. Programs such as DARPA, ARPA-E, and ARPA-H receive substantial funding for defense,

energy, and health research respectively, but the allocation for agricultural research falls short in proportion to its significance. All other ARPA programs received a significant initial investment to properly launch the program and support a portfolio of diverse research projects. Individual projects under ARPA-E's ROOTS<sup>1</sup> and TERRA<sup>2</sup> programs ranged from \$3-10 million. A typical DARPA project can be tens of millions of dollars. Even as a pilot program, AGARDA must be funded at an appropriate level to support the kinds of high-impact research that can produce transformative results.

While funding AGARDA at \$50 million will give the program the greatest chance at success, we understand the budgetary constraints facing the Congress in FY2025. Therefore we urge the Subcommittee to fund AGARDA at a minimum of \$10 million for FY2025 and strongly urge consideration of fully funding the pilot program. It is critical that AGARDA has the necessary funds to appoint leadership, hire staff and support a sufficient number of projects to show that this research model can produce impactful results. In doing so, we can unlock the potential for groundbreaking innovations that will not only benefit producers and consumers but also ensure the resilience of our agricultural systems and keep U.S. agriculture globally competitive.

The U.S. food and agricultural enterprise is at a crossroads: continue to underinvest in research and innovation or support a robust, diverse public agricultural research enterprise that will transform our agricultural system and maintain U.S. global leadership. AGARDA can be a key component of that future, but we can't wait, the time to invest is now.

As Congress looks for ways to respond to the challenges facing the U.S. food and agricultural system, we urge you to fund AGARDA at \$50 million in FY2025. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association  
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases  
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges  
American Conservation Coalition Action  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Farmland Trust  
American Feed Industry Association  
American Institute of Biological Sciences  
American Phytopathological Society  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society for Nutrition  
American Society of Agronomy

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<sup>1</sup> <https://arpa-e.energy.gov/technologies/programs/roots>

<sup>2</sup> <https://arpa-e.energy.gov/technologies/programs/terra>

American Society of Animal Science  
American Society of Plant Biologists  
American Soybean Association  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
Aquatic Plant Management Society  
Biotechnology Innovation Organization  
Bipartisan Policy Center Action  
C3 Action  
Cereals & Grains Association  
ClearPath Action  
Colorado State University  
Corn Refiners Association  
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)  
Crop Science Society of America  
CropLife America  
E2  
Earthjustice  
Ecological Society of America  
Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative  
Eion  
Entomological Society of America  
Evangelical Environmental Network  
Farm Journal Foundation  
FASS SPC  
FMI - the Food Industry Association  
International Fresh Produce Association  
Iowa State University  
Kansas State University  
Meat Institute  
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals – Multistate Initiative  
National Association of Plant Breeders  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Improvement Committee  
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Wheat Improvement Committee  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
North American Millers' Association  
Pet Food Institute  
Plant Based Products Council  
Soil Science Society of America  
Spark Climate Solutions  
Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation  
The Breakthrough Institute  
The Nature Conservancy  
University of Florida  
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee  
Washington State University  
Weed Science Society of America

