

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-226, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-255, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for COVID-19 Relief and Recovery via Agriculture Research, Education, and Extension

Dear Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your extraordinary work in passing the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The legislation provides critical support to Americans as we continue to combat this global pandemic. This crisis underscores the importance of the agricultural sector. Our nation's ongoing commitment—at federal, state, and local levels—to a robust, safe, affordable, and accessible food supply is paramount.

**As Congress considers the next supplemental appropriations package, we urge you to provide the necessary resources to our agricultural research, education, and extension system and specifically ask for \$380 million for the USDA *National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)*.**<sup>i</sup> This request reflects a commitment to agriculture, families, businesses, and communities. It includes **\$300 million of job-saving support for capacity and competitive research**<sup>1</sup> and is consistent with the research community's broader recommendations<sup>2</sup> across the science agencies. These funds will ensure research crucial to our agriculture and food systems is not lost due to pandemic-related delays and disruptions in data collection. The synergy between research and extension is essential.

The request also supports an **\$80 million request for the Cooperative Extension System** to meet the direct needs of the public related to spread of, and recovery from, COVID-19. Finally, dramatic disruptions to our research talent pipeline, including the facilities and equipment that support it, will require additional support. We are working to identify research, infrastructure, and workforce areas of national importance and share them with Congress.

### **Supporting Job-saving Supplemental Funding for Research Capacity**

***Regarding research capacity and competitive programs, we ask that Congress provide at least \$300 million of job-saving supplemental funding for 1) ramp-down and ramp-up costs to close and restart research activities; 2) salaries, benefits, and other costs associated with retaining research, technical, and work-study personnel; 3) research specific to COVID-19; and 4) core facilities supporting NIFA***

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<sup>1</sup> Hatch and Evans Allen research capacity funding, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), McIntire-Stennis forestry research, Tribal Colleges Research Grants Program (TCRGP) as well as other critical accounts.

<sup>2</sup> AAU, APLU, AAMC, and ACE COVID-19 Research [Recommendations](#)

**research.** The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting lab- and field-based research activities. In some cases, this stoppage will create a year or more of delay in critical agricultural research, disrupting the talent pipeline for agri-business and food supply chains.

Supplemental funding will support capacity and competitive grant activities for up to 12 months for existing grantees and institutions managing programs in the Research and Education, Integrated Activities, and Farm Bill Mandatory Accounts. These programs fund high-caliber research through State Agricultural Experiment Stations, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), and other critical research accounts across the U.S. agriculture, food, and natural resource sectors. Supplemental funding is needed to sustain our research and innovative capabilities. These capabilities underpin a highly responsive agriculture enterprise that allows the U.S. to pivot to address emerging threats to the global and domestic food supply, public health, and rural economic development.

### **Accelerating the United States' Cooperative Extension System Service and Response**

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) is part of the 112 land-grant institutions located throughout the nation. Cooperative Extension System educators and agents have built long-lasting and trusted partnerships with individuals, community organizations, and local businesses. There is an increased need to reach people in their homes, making it imperative that Cooperative Extension increase its capability to virtually provide essential programming and engagement services in ways that can effectively reach clientele who have varying degrees of access to adequate broadband.

**We request \$80 million for the Cooperative Extension System to meet the direct needs of the public related to the spread of, and recovery from, COVID-19.** The funding would be allocated through Smith Lever and 1890s Institution Extension capacity programs, as well as through an ongoing contract for the NIFA New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE). The NTAE provides technical assistance to Extension agents and educators for effective delivery of virtual extension programs including educational and meeting platforms, training on new meeting formats, and customized support for scaling programs. NTAE will provide 1994 tribal colleges with financial support and assistance.

This supplemental funding will enable CES educators and agents to: collaborate with emergency responders; develop innovative educational materials; assist business owners with loans and supply chain options; connect families to information on telemedicine, food, financial health and methods of socialization; support farmers and businesses; provide seniors with support; and work with clientele to be successful during the upcoming recovery period. With enhanced virtual learning capabilities, Cooperative Extension can strengthen its service as an educational and community backbone for individuals, families, farms, businesses, and communities in the coming months and year.

### **Building Food System Resilience in a Post-Pandemic America**

The rapid-moving COVID-19 crisis requires new state agricultural research infrastructure, facilities, and equipment to assist the country in understanding the short- and long-term impacts of the virus on our health, economy, and way of life. Federal investments to stimulate the agricultural research enterprise will be key to accelerating innovation and discovery across our science and economic supply chains and address current challenges while preparing for those yet to come.

Thank you in advance for considering our request.

Sincerely,

## **National**

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Agricultural Stewardship Association  
American Association of Family & Consumer Science  
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Indian Higher Education Consortium  
American Phytopathological Society  
American Society for Horticultural Science  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society for Nutrition  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Animal Science  
American Society of Plant Biologists  
American Soybean Association  
APLU Board on Human Sciences  
APLU Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching  
Aquatic Plan Management Society  
Association of American Universities  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Crop Science Society of America  
Ecological Society of America  
Entomological Society of America  
FASS  
Institute of Food Technologists  
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals - Multistate Initiative  
National 4-H Council  
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science  
National Association of University Forest Resources Programs  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research  
National Onion Association  
National Sunflower Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
Soil Science Society of America  
Supporters of Agricultural Research  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee  
Weed Science Society of America

## **Regional**

Association of Northeast Extension Directors  
North Central Regional Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors  
North Central Weed Science Society  
Northeast Dairy Producers Association  
Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors  
Northeastern Weed Science Society

Northern Pulse Growers Association  
Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors  
Southern Weed Science Society  
The Association of 1890 Research Directors, Inc.  
Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors  
Western Society of Weed Science

**State Addendum** *(This list is growing rapidly. Please see endnote.)*

CA

California Alfalfa Seed Production Research Board  
California Cantaloupe Advisory Board  
California Celery Research Board  
California Citrus Nursery Board  
California Leafy Greens Research Board  
California Melon Research Board  
California Prune Board  
California Specialty Crops Council  
California Walnut Commission  
California Wheat Commission  
California Winegrape Inspection Advisory Board

DE

Delaware Department of Agriculture, Secretary Michael T. Scuse

FL

Florida Cattlemen's Association  
Florida Citrus Mutual  
Florida Farm Bureau Federation  
Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association  
Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association  
Florida Strawberry Growers Association

ID

Idaho Onion Growers' Association

KS

Kansas 4-H Foundation  
Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association  
Kansas Association of Wheat Growers  
Kansas Bankers Association  
Kansas Cooperative Council  
Kansas Corn Growers Association  
Kansas Crop Improvement Association  
Kansas Dairy Association  
Kansas Grain and Feed Association  
Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association  
Kansas Livestock Association  
Kansas Pork Association  
Kansas Soybean Association  
Kansas Wheat Alliance  
Kansas Wheat Commission  
Renew Kansas Biofuels Association

ME

Maine Aquaculture Association

Maine Dairy Industry Association  
Maine Small Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Wild Maine Blueberry Commission  
Maine Farmland Trust

MI

Cherry Industry Administrative Board  
Cherry Marketing Institute  
Michigan Agritourism Association  
Michigan Allied Poultry Industries  
Michigan Bean Commission  
Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee  
Michigan Christmas Tree Association  
Michigan Corn Growers Association  
Michigan Crop Improvement Association  
Michigan Food Processors Association  
Michigan Forest Products Council  
Michigan Meat Association  
Michigan Milk Producers Association  
Michigan Pork Producers Association  
Michigan Sheep Producers Association  
Michigan Soybean Association  
Michigan State Horticultural Society  
Potato Growers of Michigan, Inc.  
West Michigan Food Processing Association

MO

Missouri Cattleman's Association  
Missouri Corn Growers Association  
Missouri Farm Bureau  
Missouri Pork Association  
Missouri Soybean Association

NC

NC Small Grain Growers Association  
NC Sweet Potato Commission  
North Carolina Cotton Producers Association

ND

North Dakota Grain Growers Association  
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association  
North Dakota Wheat Commission

NY

Beam Center  
Boys & Girls Club of Harlem  
Broome County Farm Bureau  
Capital Region Chamber

Cayuga Lake Watershed Network  
Change Impact  
Empire State Forest Products Association  
Erie County Farm Bureau  
First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica, Queens  
Good Shepherd Services  
Hoosic Valley Central School Garden  
Long Island Farm Bureau  
Long Island Flower Growers Association  
Long Island Sustainable Winegrowing Inc.  
Long Island Wine Council  
Madison County Farm Bureau  
New York Association of County Agriculture Agents  
New York Farm Bureau  
New York State Flower Industries  
New York Vegetable Growers Research Association  
New York Wine & Grape Foundation  
NY Dry Bean Industry Advisory Committee  
NY Farm Viability Institute  
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, Commissioner Richard A. Ball  
NYS Maple Producers' Association  
Peconic Land Trust  
Police Athletic League, Inc. of NYC  
Reach the World  
Saratoga PLAN  
STEMeducators  
Orange County Citizens Foundation

PA

American Mushroom Institute  
PA Department of Agriculture, Secretary Russell C. Redding  
Pennsylvania Co-operative Potato Growers  
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau  
Pennsylvania Forest Products Association  
Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association  
Pennsylvania State Grange  
Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association  
Pennsylvania Winery Association

WA

Washington Association of Wheat Growers  
Washington Grain Commission  
Washington State Potato Commission  
Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission  
Washington Wine Growers

Copy to:  
Members of the House Agriculture Committee Members;

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry;  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration,  
and Related Agencies;  
Senate Appropriation Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration,  
and Related Agencies;  
House and Senate Whips

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<sup>i</sup> Please note that we have received an overwhelming response and as a result will continue to collect organizational signatures until Wednesday, April 29, 2020.