

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As organizations concerned about the future of food and agricultural science, the undersigned are writing to express our support for the America Grows Act of 2023 (S.1628), a bipartisan bill Senators Durbin and Moran have recently introduced that would significantly increase our nation's investment in agricultural research and development.

Food and agriculture remain a pillar of the U.S. economy, accounting for nearly \$3 trillion of our GDP, 1 in 6 jobs, and a significant contribution to our nation's trade balance at more than \$155 billion in export value. Thanks to the U.S. government's extraordinary leadership and commitment to agricultural research and development since 1862, our agriculture sector is the most productive in the world, providing Americans with safe, affordable, and abundant food. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, emerging plant and animal pests and diseases, the increasing occurrence of natural disasters that impact farmer profitability, and increasing competition from other countries have exposed vulnerabilities in our agriculture and food system that innovation can help solve.

Although the public return on investment for agricultural research is significant, estimated at \$20 for every dollar spent, U.S. funding in this area has declined by 30 percent in real dollars since 2003 according to USDA, to roughly \$5.2 billion, while other forms of domestic research have risen dramatically. At the same time, China has ramped up spending to more than \$10 billion a year on public agriculture research as they seek to help their farmers better compete with U.S. producers. The America Grows Act would help reverse this dangerous trend by reinvesting in our nation's scientists and producers and helping reassert U.S. research leadership on the global stage. Modeled after the successful 21st Century Cures Act passed in 2016 which spurred additional funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the America Grows Act appropriates a 5% inflation-adjusted annual increase for the next 10 years for agricultural research in the following USDA agencies:

- Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
- Economic Research Service (ERS)
- National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

Agriculture has always been a bipartisan issue. As Congress comes together to negotiate the next Farm Bill and USDA begins to implement its 2023-2026 Science and Research Strategy to meet ambitious targets, the timing for the America Grows Act could not be better. Now is the time for Congress to commit to investments in agricultural research which are critical in improving productivity and nutrition, ensuring animal disease preparedness and addressing other major challenges across the U.S. food and agricultural sector which threaten our affordable, safe food supply, farmers' livelihoods and national security. This legislation represents a crucial step in meeting the vital needs of our nation's producers and consumers while retaining our status as the world leader in agricultural innovation.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of U.S. agriculture. We look forward to working with you to advance the America Grows Act.