

August 14, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
Committee

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
Committee

The Honorable Michael Conaway, Chairman
House Agriculture Committee

The Honorable Collin Peterson, Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee

Dear Chairman Roberts, Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Ranking Member Peterson:

AgForward¹ – a non-partisan alliance of leading scientific societies, commodity groups, foundations, and associations – thanks you for your efforts on behalf of agriculture and agricultural research in developing the 2018 Farm Bill.

As your teams prepare for the work of the conference committee, we would like to present our positions on key research provisions within the House and Senate Farm Bills and our desired outcomes for the final Conference Bill:

Agricultural Research Funding

- AgForward appreciates the House’s inclusion of additional funding for the **Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)** and supports the Senate language which would make this program permanent at \$50 million for 2022 and beyond.
- AgForward appreciates the House’s inclusion of renewed funding for the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)** and supports the Senate language that would make this program permanent at \$50 million annually as part of the proposed Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program (FOTOP). Given that the proposed program would include two existing programs, we urge you to add more total funding to FOTOP in the Conference Bill to increase its BFRDP component.
- AgForward supports the Senate’s inclusion of additional funds for the **Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR)** and also recommends inclusion in the Conference Bill of a one time boost of mandatory funding for the **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)** as a down payment toward implementation of the research strategy recommendations presented in the July 2018 National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine’s [Science Breakthroughs to Advance Food and Agricultural Research by 2030](#) report.

¹ AgForward’s members include the American Soybean Association, American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Organic Farming Research Foundation, Soil Science Society of America, Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation, and Union of Concerned Scientists.

- AgForward recommends the inclusion of language within the Conference Bill acknowledging the importance of **doubling agricultural research funding** within the next decade in order to adequately meet the challenges facing our nation's producers, industries, and consumers.

USDA Program Management

- AgForward supports the Senate's inclusion of language to strengthen staffing within the **Office of the Chief Scientist**, welcomes the **Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA)** pilot project, and recommends the addition in the Conference Bill of a **Strategic Investment Fund (SIF)** with specified agency contributions to provide the Chief Scientist with modest but immediate funding to improve collaboration in addressing emerging opportunities, urgent threats, and research requiring greater interdisciplinary approaches across multiple agencies.
- AgForward supports the Senate's language eliminating the **mandatory matching fund requirements** for competitive grant programs put in place in the 2014 Farm Bill.
- AgForward supports the recognition within both the House and Senate bills of the importance of **international collaborations** that leverage resources and advance priority food and agricultural interests of the United States.

AgForward would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and your respective staffs to discuss these recommendations further and, if helpful, can provide language in support of these provisions.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you in developing a Farm Bill Research Title that serves the vital needs our nation and restores our status as the world leader in agricultural research and innovation.

Sincerely,

- American Society of Agronomy
- American Soybean Association
- Crop Science Society of America
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
- Organic Farming Research Foundation
- Soil Science Society of America
- Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation
- Union of Concerned Scientists