



March 3, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs Cole and Collins, Vice Chair Murray, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As Congress begins to consider fiscal year 2027 (FY27) appropriations legislation for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA) urges you to provide robust funding for programs that support our industries' efforts to support long-term productivity for America's farmers, ranchers, and forest owners through critical research programs and voluntary conservation initiatives.

FACA's 80+ members represent farmers, ranchers, forest owners, agribusinesses, manufacturers, the food and innovation sector, state governments, higher education associations, sportsmen and sportswomen, and environmental advocates. Our organizations have come together to advance climate solutions across the food, agriculture, and forestry supply chains.

For FY27, FACA respectfully requests robust funding and additional resources within USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) agency and the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area.

### **NRCS Funding Request:**

- **Conservation Operations and Conservation Technical Assistance**

The Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA) strongly supports USDA's voluntary conservation programs. Farmers and ranchers rely on these programs not only for financial assistance, but for the technical expertise necessary to design, plan, and implement effective conservation practices.

The NRCS Conservation Operations account primarily funds Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), which underpins the successful delivery of USDA conservation programs. CTA supports the conservation workforce, enables conservation planning, and provides producers with specialized, science-based technical assistance — ensuring conservation practices are implemented efficiently and effectively.

Producer demand for voluntary conservation assistance remains exceptionally strong. Adequate Conservation Operations funding is essential for NRCS to meet this demand and deliver timely, on-the-ground technical support.

In addition to CTA, the Conservation Operations account funds critical NRCS activities, including soil and snow surveys, water supply forecasting, and Plant Materials Centers. These resources provide producers with essential data and regionally adapted tools to guide land management decisions.

Maintaining robust Conservation Operations and CTA funding safeguards program integrity, strengthens participation, and maximizes conservation outcomes.

*For FY 2027, FACA requests funding of **at least \$1.05 billion** for NRCS Conservation Operations, and to reject any changes in mandatory spending for conservation programs.*

### **REE Mission Area:**

- **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative**

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is USDA's flagship competitive research program and the cornerstone of federal investment in agricultural innovation. AFRI supports fundamental and applied research, extension, and education initiatives that strengthen U.S. food and agricultural systems.

AFRI-funded research advances productivity, resilience, and sustainability by generating science-based solutions that enhance farm profitability, improve resource efficiency, and address emerging challenges. These investments contribute directly to priorities shared by farmers, ranchers, foresters, and conservation stakeholders — including improved soil health, climate resilience, pest and disease management, and technological innovation.

In addition to research, AFRI plays a critical role in supporting extension and education programs that translate scientific discoveries into practical tools for producers while helping to train the next generation of the agricultural workforce. Sustained investment ensures that U.S. producers remain globally competitive and that American agriculture continues to lead in innovation.

Global competitors are rapidly increasing public investments in agricultural research. Maintaining robust AFRI funding is essential to preserving U.S. leadership, strengthening domestic food security, and supporting long-term economic growth across rural communities.

*FACA requests funding of **\$500,000,000** for AFRI in FY 2027 to ensure USDA can continue driving innovation, delivering producer-focused solutions, and maintaining U.S. leadership in agricultural leadership.*

- **Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority**

The Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA) was established in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 to support high-risk, high-reward research addressing critical challenges facing U.S. agriculture. Despite its \$50 million annual authorization, Congress has appropriated only \$4 million total to the program since enactment.

AGARDA is designed to advance breakthrough innovations and emerging technologies that enhance agricultural productivity, resilience, and sustainability. Robust investment would accelerate the development of transformative solutions in areas such as biotechnology, climate adaptation, and resource efficiency — equipping producers to address evolving environmental and market pressures.

A long-term, strategic commitment to advanced research is essential to ensuring that disruptive technologies translate into practical, producer-ready applications. AGARDA provides USDA with a unique mechanism to drive this innovation pipeline and maintain U.S. leadership in agricultural science.

*FACA requests funding of \$50,000,000 for AGARDA in FY 2027.*

- **National Institute of Food and Agriculture Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Program**

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Farm Business Management Program (FBMB) provides producers with trusted, secure, and anonymous financial resources to make informed decisions for their operations. Investment in this program is critical for small and medium sized producers who operate on narrower margins and benefit greatly from tailored financial insights. Strengthening FBMP will support farm profitability, improve lender confidence, and reinforce long-term viability of U.S. agriculture by expanding access to trusted financial data and insights.

*FACA requests funding of \$5,000,000 for NIFA's Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Program along with the following report language:*

*The Committee recognizes the critical role of the Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Program in enhancing the financial stability and competitiveness of our nation's agricultural producers. By maintaining and expanding a national, publicly accessible farm financial management system, the FBMB Program provides producers with trusted, secure, and anonymous resources to make informed business decisions. The Committee recommends increased funding for the FBMB Program to broaden its reach, enabling more producers across regions and commodities nationwide to access essential financial benchmarking tools. This investment is particularly vital for small and medium-sized farms, which often operate on narrower margins and benefit significantly from tailored financial insights. Furthermore, the Committee encourages the Department to collaborate with land-grant university extensions and farm management associations to ensure that the information collected is comprehensive and reflective of the varied agricultural landscapes across the nation. By strengthening the FBMB Program, we equip our farmers with the tools necessary to navigate economic challenges, enhance operational efficiency, and sustain the agricultural backbone of our country.*

We thank you for the consideration of these requests and look forward to working with your Committees to ensure robust funding for these critical programs.

Sincerely,

The Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance

CC:

The Honorable Andy Harris, Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

The Honorable John Hoeven, Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies