

April 8, 2021

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 created the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AgARDA) to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing agriculture by accelerating novel, early-stage research, tools and technology. In doing so, Congress directed USDA to develop a strategic plan outlining the vision of AgARDA. We encourage you to make developing an AgARDA strategic plan a top priority and work with the stakeholder community to make it a reality.

The attached AgARDA roadmap offers the perspective of agriculture research experts with experience and knowledge at the intersection of agriculture and other federal advanced research and development entities (i.e. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy). It outlines strategic considerations we think are important to ensure the success of AgARDA and highlights key features of other advanced research programs.

The successes of other federal high-risk, high-reward research infrastructures have made untold contributions to the U.S. economy and have protected and enhanced vital components of our nation's defense and energy sectors. AgARDA is an opportunity to build a legacy of transformative innovation at USDA to more rapidly advance climate smart technologies, improve biosecurity and accelerate necessary automated farming solutions.

AgARDA is primed for success. The program is authorized, features a strong conceptual model, and has considerable stakeholder support. We hope this document will spur internal discussions at USDA about the future of AgARDA and welcome the opportunity to work with you to build this new catalytic research infrastructure at USDA.

Sincerely,

American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Plant Biologists
Colorado State University
Crop Science Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Iowa State University
Kansas State University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Soil Science Society of America
Western Growers