

AGree Report Calls for Food & Ag Research Reform

Nine Recommendations to Make a Smart Investment Even Smarter

Washington, DC (June 24, 2015) – AGree today unveiled a comprehensive report on food and ag research, [*Research & Innovation: Strengthening Agricultural Research*](#), which includes nine recommendations to strengthen the impact of public research dollars by reforming the system and also makes the case for increased research funding. As a driver of innovation, research is essential to face down the consequential challenges of our time, ranging from water shortages to animal diseases, while also bolstering the U.S. economy. Targeting, tracking, and transparently sharing vital food and ag research will maximize the return on investment and build support for increasing that investment.

“We need to make a smart investment even smarter,” said Deborah Atwood, Executive Director of AGree. “The need to modernize our research system has long been discussed behind closed doors – now it’s time to have an open national conversation about needed changes.”

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said, “Our nation’s agriculture industry is the most innovative and productive in the world largely because of our commitment to research. These recommendations underscore the importance of that investment. That’s why I am proud of the work we did on the Farm Bill by creating the new Research Foundation. It is through these types of public-private partnerships, in addition to other smart strategies and targeted investments, that American agriculture will remain the gold standard throughout the world.”

Dan Glickman, AGree Co-Chair and former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, said, “Important progress has been made in recent years to bolster food and ag research. Now we need to maximize return on the dollar, which begins with Congress holding a series of oversight hearings examining long-established federal funding models with fresh eyes. I’m pleased with the interest we’ve received from the Hill and eager to move this ball forward.”

Kathleen Merrigan, AGree Co-Chair and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, said, “Laser focus is needed to address the consequential challenges and opportunities facing the food and ag sector. Issues ranging from water shortages to antibiotic use and from nutrition to animal diseases demand sharply-focused, well-funded research. We need increased investment in food and ag research while we pursue opportunities to strengthen the research enterprise through reforms.”

Jim Moseley, AGree Co-Chair, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and a long-time farmer noted, “The ag sector is constantly evolving, often driven by an innovative idea that requires validation by research. This direct correlation between research and our pace of progress across the food system – from natural resource management to consumer purchasing habits – should inspire a collective commitment to modernize our public research system.”

Emmy Simmons, AGree Co-Chair and former Assistant Administrator for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade for the U.S. Agency for International Development, said, “It is breathtaking to

consider the increased impact we could have globally if we leverage every ag research dollar. Whether it's addressing hunger or helping to grow stable economies on a foundation of dynamic agricultural development, research and innovation are critical to achieving the results that will assure our global future.”

The recommendations were developed based on meetings held across the country throughout a two year period involving more than 100 people. They were further informed by [five Point of View papers](#) commissioned by AGree, and guided by the direct engagement and insight of AGree Co-Chairs and Advisors. They are:

- Scrutinize and modernize federal funding mechanisms for public research, education, and extension to foster innovation and maximize public benefits.
- Review and reset publicly-funded research priorities periodically, employing a transparent process with input from multiple stakeholders and end users to ensure that funds are focused on high-impact areas.
- Minimize duplicative efforts and unnecessary costs by assessing the existing research infrastructure and improving grant monitoring and tracking systems.
- Target public research funding to areas unlikely to be addressed by private industry.
- Increase Congressional oversight of the U.S. agricultural research enterprise.
- Make data, information, and findings from publicly-funded research accessible.
- Strengthen the role of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Chief Scientist to help ensure the U.S. continues to serve as a global leader on food and agricultural research and innovation.
- Integrate research, education, and extension activities to promote coordination across each of these three interconnected elements at the university level.
- Maintain U.S. leadership and engagement in international food and agricultural research.

AGree's next steps include convening a diverse coalition of thought leaders to coalesce around smart, long-term changes to the public food and agricultural research enterprise. AGree will also build partnerships to advocate for near-term changes to include re-examining USDA's Research, Education and Economics (REE) mandate and practices. Finally, AGree stands ready to strengthen the ability of the new Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR), outlined in the 2014 Farm Bill, to effectively engage multiple stakeholders in identifying research priorities and public-private partnership opportunities.

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AGree is supported by leading foundations that fund food and agriculture, international development, and health and wellbeing. To learn more about AGree visit www.foodandagpolicy.org or [@AGreeAgPolicy](#) on Twitter [#GrowAgResearch](#)